



A woman with a VISION

Helping companies make the most of their top talent in these changing times

By Rosalind Miles

A city banker and management consultant turned entrepreneur, Kate Grussing is committed to encouraging corporate CEOs and HR departments to retain and promote talent and experience too often lost when inflexible systems fail to move with the times. In particular, top female employees seeking to adjust their work/life balance have traditionally been encouraged to leave - a chronic waste of company investment and economic talent.

Professor Susan Vinnicombe OBE, Director of the Cranfield International Centre for Women Leaders and author of the Female FTSE report, commented that "the work Sapphire Partners is doing to promote senior executive women in business and making sure their talents are fully utilised is incredibly important and needed by UK plc."

Grussing founded her head-hunting company, Sapphire Partners, in 2005 to address

this female brain drain. With an MBA under her belt, the years she spent at JPMorgan, Morgan Stanley and McKinsey showed her that companies often struggle to hire, retain and develop their female talent. The challenge gets harder at senior levels when individuals often identify their own mountains to climb.

Although women make up a large proportion of Sapphire's talent (especially compared to typical search firms), the candidates are men and women looking to work for enlightened companies.

Over the last four years, Sapphire has developed a talent pool with over 1,000 high-achieving vetted professionals and the firm's unique approach is getting employer's attention. Sapphire's client base includes FTSE100 corporates, top tier consulting, accounting and law firms, charities, hedge funds and start-ups.

The current economic climate should, Grussing

says, be a positive incentive for employers to think more creatively. Will companies rise to the challenge to recruit differently and better leverage their female assets? Will companies invest in training and personal development and better support flexible working to build loyalty? Grussing goes to pains to say getting more women in senior roles isn't about political correctness or affirmative action but about bottom line sense.

On the back of international resentment against those responsible for the global downturn is a recent groundswell of opinion calling for more women in the boardroom and the executive suite. With the enterprising Sapphire Partners already out there charting the waters, those Chief Executives who are listening will now know where to go.

www.sapphirepartners.co.uk