

## Gaining momentum

a report on the Ennis & Co  
“Women in the Automotive Sector” event.



## About Ennis & Co

Founded by Lynda Ennis, Ennis & Co is an Executive Search firm that works exclusively across the automotive sector. A niche provider with a deep knowledge of our industry, we have gained the trust of clients and candidates from Retail to Manufacture and within volume, prestige and luxury markets.

Ennis & Co is run by Lynda and our Managing Director, Jamie Ashman, both of whom act as Principal Consultants on assignments. They are assisted by a team of skilled Search Consultants, a Practice Manager and a Head of Marketing & Communications.

Collectively we deliver a different approach to Search.

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## Introduction

Park Lane, London, October 21st: About 80 people, mostly professional women from within the automotive industry, gathered to discuss the need to attract more women to the sector.

At the invitation of Ennis & Co founder Lynda Ennis, a panel of senior professional women from within some of the most renowned automotive brands - as well as automotive retail, media and law - shared their expertise, experience and suggestions for improving the gender split in UK automotive.

An audience of just under 70 delegates voted on a number of topical questions proposed by the speakers and hosts.

The purpose of this report is simply to show the findings of the group polling and provide a sense of the event. As far as we know, this is the first time that the thoughts and feelings of such a diverse group of professional women from automotive retail, manufacturing and related associations has been recorded on this important subject.

Ennis & Co is pleased to publish the results below.







## Why we created this event: a note from Lynda Ennis

I am proud of the UK's automotive success story, but it is clear that there is still work to be done to make the sector more attractive to women.

Several of our excellent speakers alluded to the strangeness of a lingering perception that women and cars do not mix in a world where, according to consulting firm Frost & Sullivan, women are considered influencers on 80 per cent of all new-car purchases.

Perhaps the strongest argument for closing the gender gap in our industry is the economic one. When Secretary of State for Education Nicky Morgan said at our event, "Automotive is a huge success story for the UK, but we need more senior women...we need 83,000 new engineers every year for the next ten years - and they can't all be men," she may have summed up that argument. If we can't address the gender gap in our industry, we simply won't have enough resource.

Our automotive industry is indeed a success story, and it is a growing industry, so it could lead the way in gender equality within the STEM arena.



THE VOTING

## Audience

69 delegates attended and voted.

Including the hosts and event partners, a total of 80 people attended.

Delegates comprised mid-senior specialists or consultants, middle management, Senior management, Director and Board level directors from within the automotive industry, from functions including HR and recruitment, Marketing, Finance, Legal and Training.

## Hosts

Carol Borghesi – Founder and Principal, Customers First Culture – Chair

Lynda Ennis – Founder, Ennis & Co - Event organiser and creator

## Speaker panel

1. Kirstin Furber – People Director, BBC Worldwide - "Women in leadership; learning from BBC Worldwide".
2. Rachel Sherson – HR Generalist and reward specialist, Harley Davidson - "Embracing Diversity in the workplace".
3. Nicky Morgan, Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities – gave an impromptu speech on the importance of STEM and applauding the country's automotive industry.
4. Anna Robinson – Employment Lawyer, Watson, Farley, Williams - "Agile working – a legal perspective".
5. Karen Comber, Head of HR Retail Operations, Inchcape Retail Ltd - "Automotive retail: Recruitment, Attraction, Buyers and Beyond".
6. Hazel Martin, General Manager of HR, Aston Martin Lagonda Limited - "Women in Automotive: Aston Martin's journey".
7. Sian Vernon, HR Director, Renault - "How far we've come...and how to finish the journey".
8. Leonie Williams, Head of HR Marketing & Labour Relations, Bentley Motors Ltd - "The challenges of the Boardroom in our industry".
9. Gill Banham, Group HR Director, Jardine Motors Group UK - "Automotive Retail and the Boardroom".
10. Isobel Dando, General Manager, Sales Channel Development, Rolls Royce Motor Cars - "Women in Power – Creating a Legacy".



Q: How positive do you feel that you can make a difference in attracting more women to the automotive industry?	Responses	%
Very positive	21	32.3%
Fairly positive	29	44.6%
Neutral/not sure	10	15.4%
Quite negative	2	3.1%
Very negative	0	0.0%
We don't need to attract more women to the industry.	0	0.0%
NA	3	4.6%
Total	65	100.0%

We asked this question at the start and end of the event. You can see the results of the same question at the end of this section! We hoped that people would feel a little more optimistic by the end of the session but we didn't know whether they would, since this was a serious discussion about the gender split within the industry.





**Q: In your opinion, which one of the below has the most power to influence the appeal of the automotive industry to women?**

**Responses %**

Parents and teachers	27	46.6%
Government	1	1.7%
Company Boards	0	0.0%
Internal HR and Recruitment teams	0	0.0%
Everyone, including me	30	51.7%
Total	58	100.0%

- There was a clear consensus that education has a large part to play in attracting more women to the automotive industry.
- “If we don’t help to make the change, who will?” was another theme that came through strongly from some of our speakers.



“The event was a rare opportunity for women in the automotive sector to share their experiences and expectations of working in a male dominated sector. It was a thought-provoking and inspiring evening about one of the biggest challenges facing the industry.”

**Anna Robinson, Senior Associate, Watson, Farley & Williams LLP**

**Q: In your experience, do women and men have different leadership styles?**

**Responses %**

Yes	56	90.3%
No	3	4.8%
Not sure	3	4.8%
Total	62	100.0%

- Differences in leadership style was another theme discussed by several of our speakers. The biggest consensus here, anecdotally, seemed to be that men and women's different styles of working and leadership, when combined, produced the best results.



"This was an extraordinary event and it was a privilege to be part of it. It was refreshingly honest with, at last, the focus being on the business case for gender diversity at senior levels, rather than being on the age-old and now somewhat irrelevant men v women argument. Changing the way we work to facilitate a greater flexibility for men and women alike is where we're headed. It's the right thing for society and the right thing for our business, all business. An outstanding event that I was delighted to be associated with."

**Sian Vernon, HR Director, Renault**

**Q: Do women's leadership styles place them at a disadvantage in their career?**

**Responses %**

Yes	16	24.2%
No	33	50.0%
Not sure	17	25.8%
Total	66	100.0%

- Many women felt they didn't have to "play a man's game" to succeed within the industry, and our panel of speakers expressed a notable shift, anecdotally, that the industry has changed its attitude and become far less sexist over the last 20 or so years.



"As leading women in automotive it's critical that we take responsibility and action in making this industry an attractive opportunity for the women that will succeed us."

**Isobel Dando, GM – Retail, Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Ltd**

"It was a pleasure to participate at this event and share some of the work we are doing at BBC Worldwide (around Culture and authentic leadership) to support both men and women doing their best work. Whilst I can't speak for the automobile industry specifically I personally believe in the importance of having diverse senior teams to gain the best outcome"

**Kirstin Furber, People Director BBC Worldwide**

Q: As a professional woman, do you think you have to adapt your behaviours in order to progress in your career?	Responses	%
Yes	51	76.1%
No	16	23.9%
Not sure	0	0.0%
Total	67	100.0%

- Despite this, 76% of our voters felt they had to adapt their behaviours to progress within their careers in automotive.

Q: In your experience do mixed-gender working teams contribute to a good outcome?	Responses	%
Yes	67	98.5%
No	0	0.0%
Not sure	1	1.5%
Total	68	100.0%

...but only one voter out of 68 had any doubt that mixed-gender teams contribute to a good outcome.





**Q:** In your opinion, which ONE of the below “stages” of a career has the most significant impact on gender diversity in Automotive?

Responses %

Early education/school curriculum	23	46.9%
Further education	0	0.0%
Modern recruitment methods: Outreach activities, open days, talent networking , employer branding etc	3	6.1%
Workplace culture (attitudes, benefits, flexible working)	11	22.4%
Senior Management and Boardroom attitudes and culture	12	24.5%
Nationwide recognition of skills shortages/the need to address this	0	0.0%
Total	49	100.0%

- The 49 people who voted on this question seemed to echo a general consensus within the press and government that education, the culture and attitudes set within the boardroom, and workplace culture (including flexible benefits) play the most significant part in attracting more women to the industry.



**Q: In your opinion, how much more do we have to do as an industry to attract more women?**

**Responses %**

We have a lot to do.	49	87.5%
We have a little bit to do - we're close, but we're not there yet.	7	12.5%
We have little or nothing to do - we are where we need to be.	0	0.0%
Total	56	100.0%

- We were not particularly surprised to see an overwhelmingly strong consensus that there is a lot to be done to attract more women to the industry.

**Q: Are you currently taking specific action to attract more talented women to the business?**

**Responses %**

Yes	19	34.5%
No	29	52.7%
Not sure	7	12.7%
Total	55	100.0%

- We were able to verify that at least 13 of the respondents who replied "yes" to the above question were Director level, while respondents who replied "no" or "not sure" were more junior, so this particular response may be more positive than it first appears.



**Q: Are you currently taking specific action to retain more talented women in your business?**

**Responses %**

Yes	25	43.9%
No	25	43.9%
Not sure	7	12.3%
Total	57	100.0%

- A higher emphasis on retention than attraction suggests – and this was certainly backed up anecdotally by our speakers – that companies are better able to change their internal culture first, before changing how they recruit. Several speakers mentioned significant steps their firms had taken to increase flexible working benefits that might appeal to working mothers.



"I wanted to put this event together because I wanted to bring together people from all elements of the industry so they could debate, they could learn from each other and also talk about the future and what the future is going to look like. Our industry is a great success story, but we need to do more to ensure its continued success. The health of our industry depends on diversification."

**Lynda Ennis, Founder, Ennis & Co**

Q: When recruiting do you use specific messages or images to increase your company's appeal to women?

Responses %

Yes	19	35.8%
No	26	49.1%
Not sure	8	15.1%
Total	53	100.0%

- Purely anecdotally, we know that quite a lot of firms within the industry still feel there is a lot of work to be done on candidate attraction generally. The need to engage with talent pools and ensure a fresh flow of engaged candidates is a common theme within the industry, and can be a challenge for retailers who don't have a specific, alluring brand to trade on.



"The " Women in Automotive" networking event run by Ennis and Co was extremely informative and thought provoking with excellent speakers on a range of topics related to getting more women into automotive. Whilst there are many women working in automotive businesses in admin type roles the picture is not so healthy when looking at sales and management. We are always bemoaning how difficult it is to get good people into our sector, yet we are not attracting a massive female pool of talent. We have to ask ourselves why and take action to fix it."

Linda Stansfield B.A. (Hons) FIMI, Chief Operating Officer, IMI



**Q: Do you believe making a flexible working request would jeopardise your career promotion prospects?**

**Responses %**

Yes	24	40.7%
No	29	49.2%
Don't know	6	10.2%
Total	59	100.0%

- Quite a high “yes” response here, when many of our speaker panel (and an earlier vote) highlighted flexible working as one of several factors that might help to attract more women to the industry. It is also interesting that one of our speakers discussed, at some length, the excellent flexible working benefits within her firm, and the fact that very few people seemed to take advantage of them. Clearly, work needs to be done to ensure that knowledge and understanding of flexible working benefits is shared.



“It was a privilege to attend and speak at the Women in the Automotive sector event on October 21st. It was a fabulous opportunity to connect with other women in the industry and discuss common topics of interest and share best practice. Women are still the minority in an industry where sociological pressures and the industry’s reputation have played a part in preventing more women from entering the industry. Yet, as this event showed, many women have pursued automotive careers and serve as valuable inspiration for future females in the industry. It is every women’s role to ensure that young females see the industry as an exciting, aspiring and viable option for their careers and that we sustain the career advancement for women already in the industry.”

**Rachel Sherson, HR Business Partner, Harley-Davidson Europe Ltd**

**Q:** Are you in favour of legislation (e.g. quotas) to increase the number of women on boards of listed companies, as is being seen in a number of European countries?

Responses %

Yes	11	19.6%
No	41	73.2%
Not sure	4	7.1%
Total	56	100.0%

- Anecdotally, many delegates seemed to be against this as a broad theme, feeling that this can be achieved through education, culture and their own attitudes.

**Q:** Have you analysed why women are under-represented on the board of your company?

Responses %

Yes	14	24.6%
No	37	64.9%
NA	6	10.5%
Total	57	100.0%

- All of the "yes" responses here were from delegates who were at Director or Manager level apart from one, a Design Engineer.



Q: Do you believe women have to adapt their management style in order to make it to the boardroom?

Responses %

Yes	26	48.1%
No	26	48.1%
Not sure	2	3.7%
Total	54	100.0%

- In an earlier vote, 50% of the audience felt that women's leadership styles do not place them at a disadvantage within their career. In a different question, 76% felt they had to adapt their behaviours to progress their career. Here, opinion was divided about the need to adapt management styles to get to the Boardroom.

Q: In your opinion, how appealing is the automotive industry as a whole to women?

Responses %

As appealing as it is to men	7	12.7%
Less appealing than it is to men	39	70.9%
The same	7	12.7%
Not sure	2	3.6%
Total	55	100.0%

- Pretty clear consensus here, although most were keen to change this!



**Q: How positive do you feel that you can make a difference in attracting more women to the automotive industry?** Responses %

Very positive	25	43.9%
Fairly positive	26	45.6%
Neutral/not sure	5	8.8%
Quite negative	1	1.8%
Very negative	0	0.0%
Total	57	100.0%

- Although fewer people voted at the end of the night, a significantly higher percentage (89.5%) said they felt fairly or very positive that they could make a difference in attracting more women to the industry, compared to 76.9% at the start of the evening. Also notable is that over 43% of these felt "very positive" at the end of the night, compared to just over 32% at the start.



"The evening created something very rare: thinking and action. The range of excellent speakers ensured that different dimensions of what is too often seen as simply a "quota" problem were explored and discussed: the instant feedback and energetic format ensured a fantastic 'let's get on with it' mode. And things started happening the very next morning. An excellent event; an excellent model for other networks."

**Penny Hunt** ChangeChemistry







## Next steps – our Working Group

As a search firm, we've seen the success and fresh approach brought by several senior women we've delivered to automotive clients.

There was a very strong consensus on October 21st that we should continue the conversation about the gender gap in automotive. Many of our peers within the industry are committed to ensure that we continue the good work already begun in the sector, and to this end we intend to form a working group to ensure we continue to attract women to the industry.

Ennis & Co will invite a panel of interested parties to participate in the group and to help address some of the challenges discussed at our event. We hope the group will be one of the most representative within the industry, taking in retail, manufacture, industry associations, consultancies and media.

It will aim to report on successes and challenges, share best practice and learning and communicate through specifically-created networks, taking steps to encourage more women to join this exciting and important sector.

## The Ennis & Co difference: our approach to Search.

As an automotive Executive Search firm we distinguish ourselves through:

- The depth and accuracy of the way we take a client brief, and how swiftly we respond to it.
- The quality of research we undertake and present to clients.
- The way we enrich the search process for candidates and the positive impact this has on a client's brand.
- Our fee structure, which is based on basic salary only, not total package.

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