

Rebuild for an inclusive recovery

Helping women thrive
in the new reality of travel

accenture

The world is finally starting to travel again. Yet anyone who has traveled this year has experienced the new crisis sweeping the industry—a critical labour shortage. Part of addressing it means adapting to new employee needs, which can be readily accomplished by **bringing more women into the workforce.**

It isn't just a moment to rehire people

It's a chance to rebuild for a more inclusive, diverse and equitable future

The travel industry prior to the pandemic, was leading the way as an inclusive and representative industry hiring high numbers of both women and minorities. However, with millions of people having left the travel industry in 2020 and demand rising today, travel players are scrambling for talent.

Not only are travel companies grappling with the fallout of last year's layoffs and furloughs, but the industry is also feeling the absence of its "lost" workforce. Some people left for other industries, either voluntarily or out of necessity. Many aren't looking back. And a disproportionate number of them are women.



54%

of the 8.2 million travel and leisure jobs lost in the United States between March and April 2020 belonged to women.¹



Facing a double challenge

Today's needs and tomorrow's workforce

Although travel companies may operate with fewer employees in the future, restoring a balanced workforce is an immediate priority. This should not be about just rehiring people. It should be about fundamentally rebuilding the workforce for the new reality of travel. This means making workforce decisions to support new ways of working as the industry responds to shifts in types of travel, takes advantage of new revenue streams and automates certain processes.

Travel faces a double challenge—addressing today's workers needs while re-shaping the workforce of the future. Travel players can seize this moment to differentiate themselves, get ahead in the war for talent and reinforce

inclusion, diversity and equity commitments. A key part of this is helping women in Travel thrive.

The reality for women in Travel today

The travel industry has always been attractive to women, offering a career path for many women and minorities. In fact, travel firms with strong Inclusion & Diversity performance have seen significant growth when it comes to change in EBITDA over 4 years (2015-19), compared to peers with less emphasis on it.² 88% of hotel housekeepers are women, and 67% are people of color.³ And whilst there is a way to go to achieve true gender parity in management and senior leadership positions, in 2019, 35% of women occupied these roles in Travel.⁴

However, women in this industry were part of the exodus of women from the workforce overall during the pandemic. They shouldered more of the responsibility for taking care of children and aging parents. So much so that The New York Times reports that 800,000 US women left the workforce during the period.⁵ It's time for the industry to kickstart their efforts to welcome them back into the workforce.

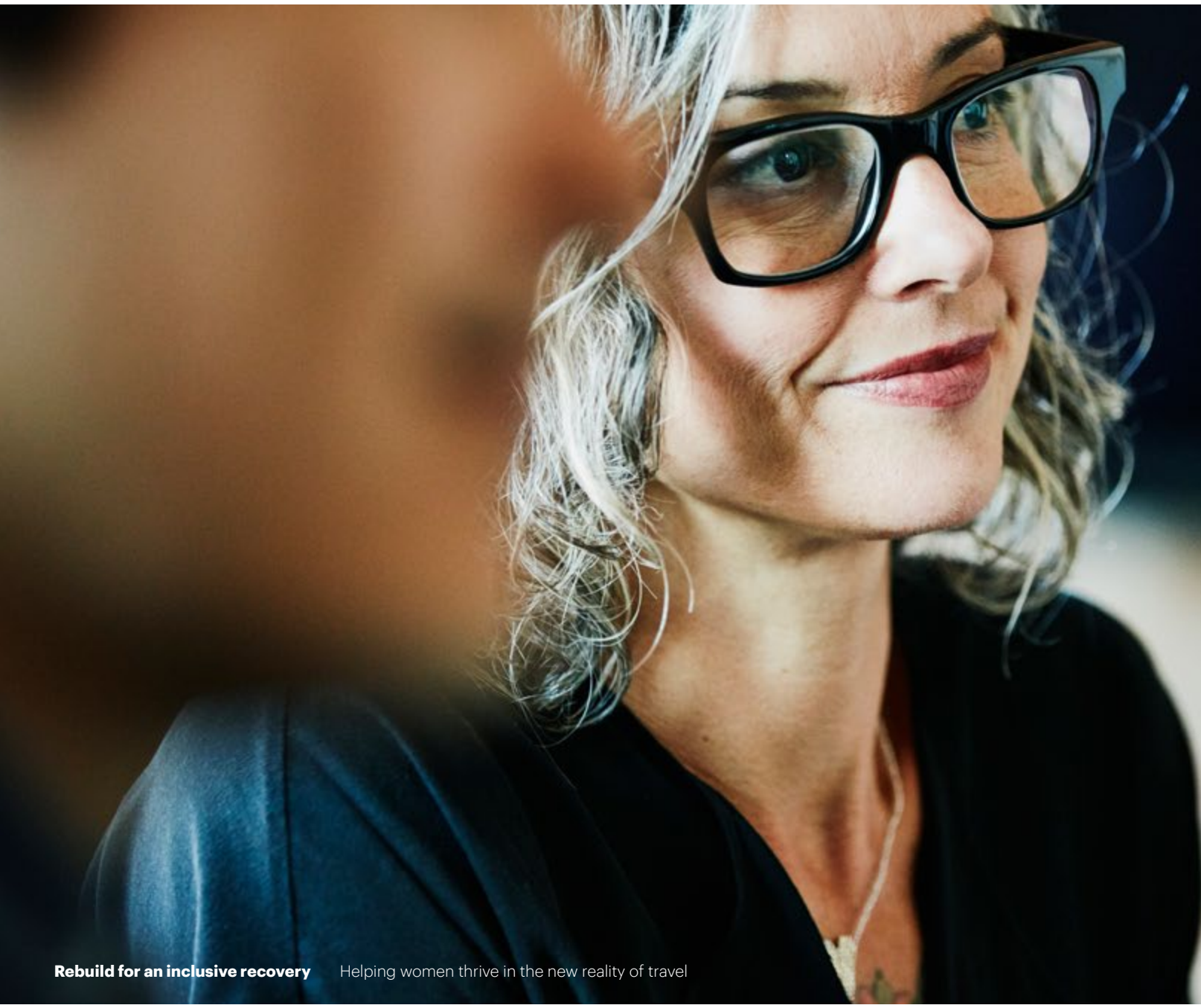
Engaging women by making the everyday rewarding

Although this burden for women is a symptom of larger social and economic issues, travel companies can make changes to offer more attractive employment opportunities for women.

It is a good thing to do for people—and for the business. According to Pipeline “Equity for All” research, companies experience a 1 to 2% increase in revenue for every 10% increase in intersectional gender equity.⁷ And as **Gabriel Escarrer, CEO of Meliá Hotels** has said, **“Equality is not just a trend, nor is it a legal obligation; it is an essential issue for competitiveness in business.”**⁸



Accenture research reveals that leaders can unlock up to 5x more human potential by better managing everyday work experiences.⁶



Change begins with a new mindset and being creative and pragmatic about developing equitable, everyday work experiences for women at all levels.

“Having more women in leadership positions offers an important, diverse perspective that helps us create offerings at our hotels that resonate with our guests,” explains Dianna Vaughan, Senior Vice President of brand management for the Americas at Hilton.⁹

While there is no one solution and different roles have different requirements, here are some **guiding principles**, which are taking hold across the industry and beyond:

Life happens

There is no longer a solid line between work and life. The last two years have taught women that it's okay to bring their whole selves to work. Women want employers to acknowledge this. Those that do so by providing workplace nurseries, caregiver training or back-up child or adult care options go a long way toward doing this. There is no employee benefit quite like the peace of mind of knowing that the people who you love are cared for.

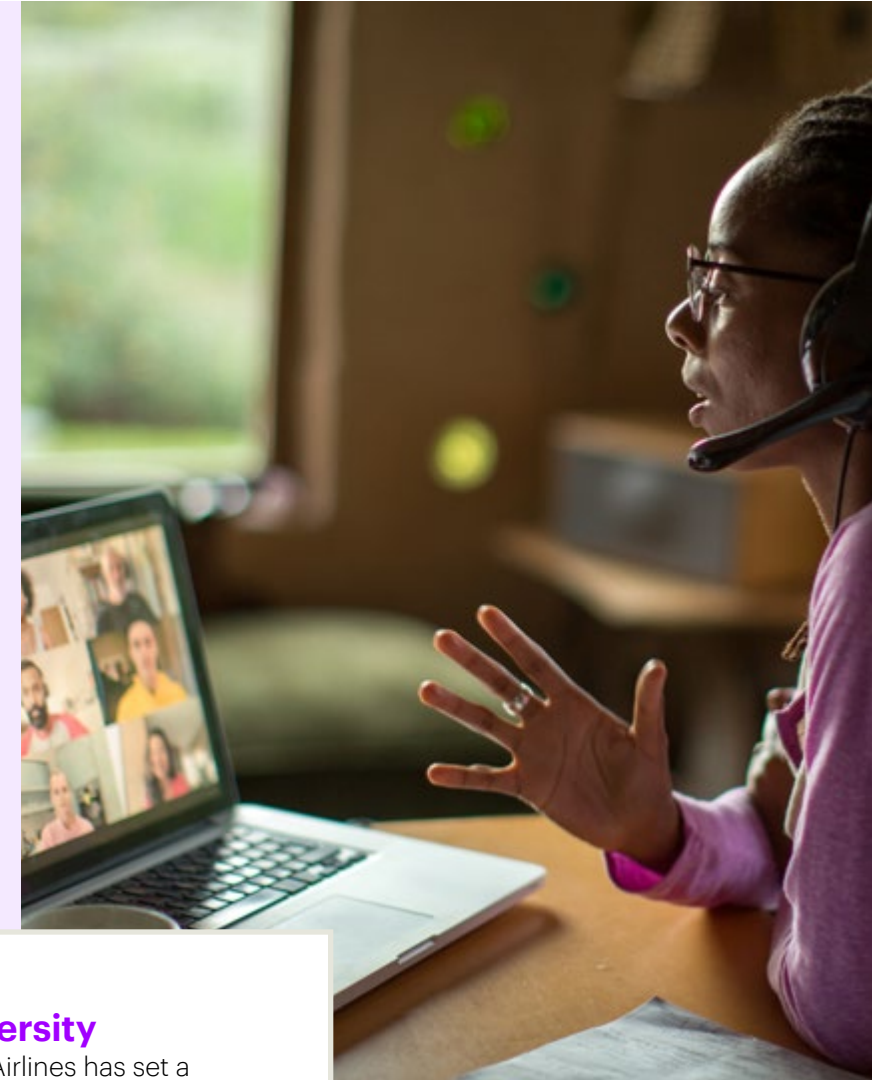
Hilton goes to work for new moms

Hotel giant Hilton offers a concierge service for parents before and during their parental leave as well as virtual training programs. Any new parents who work from home can also use the service to get benefits information. If new moms need to travel for work, they can ship breast milk home for free.¹⁰



Flexibility is the future

The lack of flexible working policies has long been a barrier for women. The rapid transformation caused by the pandemic has shown that flexible arrangements can benefit both employers and employees. It's about empowering women with the autonomy to adjust their hours to accommodate family needs or make up missed time during off hours. For many women assessing potential employers—and many people for that matter—flexibility is not a special perk or nice-to-have, it is a requirement.



United Airlines aims high for diversity

To bring more diversity to the cockpit, United Airlines has set a goal to recruit more women and people of color. The goal is to have half of the 10,000 pilots to be recruited between now and 2030 be women or minorities recruits.¹¹

Skills drive success

Automation and the advance of new technologies are rapidly redefining roles and changing ways of working on property—from contactless check-in to AI-based labor scheduling. These shifts can be a barrier for women in Travel who do not have the most in-demand skills and/or whose jobs have high automation potential. This is why reskilling and upskilling programs and even apprenticeships that improve existing jobs or create pathways to new jobs are so essential. It's about equipping female workers on property—all workers in fact—with the digital skills they need for the future.

Levi's knows new skills are in fashion

The surge in e-commerce from the pandemic has meant that retailers need more data scientists. Levi's is developing its own people to fill these roles through its machine learning bootcamp. The program is good for the business, and it's good for the participants who leave with new skills that are marketable for the future.¹²



Women want to belong

As women make choices about getting back to work, they want to feel that they belong, which means having influence over decisions, being respected by peers and managers, feeling comfortable speaking up and having sponsorship from a senior leader who supports their advancement.¹³ Whether they are focused on a future career path or a job for right now, women want to see female role models in senior leadership positions. Travel companies can help women feel a sense of belonging and career opportunity through mentorship programs, leadership training and clear advancement paths.

Companies connect to raise women up

FutureofU: Skills. Jobs. Growth. is a group of businesses working together to accelerate women's transition back to work. Candidates who are offered jobs get on-the-job, future-ready training in areas like digital, cloud and data science roles among others as well as coaching and support to succeed in their new role.¹⁴



A step in the right direction

The World Travel & Tourism Council recently announced the creation of the Women's Initiative, which is focused on improving women's representation in leadership roles in the industry.¹⁵

When women thrive

The business of Travel thrives

As they continue through this difficult period, travel leaders are fully focused on the re-emergence of the business. Delivering next-level traveler experience at the right cost is a top priority for success. This hinges on hiring more women. With more women travelers—and considering that women make 80% of travel decisions—connecting with guests means understanding women’s needs and perspectives.¹⁶

Savvy travel leaders understand this. They know that their company’s success depends on its people. All of its people.

Companies that make this moment a turning point for crisis recovery and for women in Travel will take a step toward creating a more inclusive, diverse and equitable environment. That’s good for people, business and the future of Travel.

“Women now have the opportunity to become leaders in a historically male-dominated industry.”¹⁷

Pilar Arizmendi - Vice President, Sales and Marketing Palladium Hotel Group



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