International Women’s Day 2023: Embracing Equity

First celebrated in 1911, International Women’s Day is observed annually on the 8 March.

International Women’s Day honours the social, political and economic achievements of women while focusing global attention on areas requiring further action. It is an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of all women and a chance to reflect on the progress that has been made towards gender equity.

International Women’s Day at BDBF

In honour of International Women’s Day, BDBF will be hearing insight and words of wisdom from our BDBF team throughout this week and finding out what this day, devoted to celebrating the achievements of women and seeking gender equality, means to them.

The BDBF team are actively involved in bringing attention to issues within the women’s movement such as gender equality, violence and abuse against women through initiatives such as the Rights of Women’s Sexual Harassment at Work Helpline.

What sets BDBF apart from many other law firms is that we have a majority in number of female equity partners in leadership and management roles. We are proud to have accomplished this

through building a culture that truly embraces equity.

International Women's Day 2023 campaign theme

The theme for this year's International Women's Day is #EmbraceEquity, which aims to get the world talking about why equal opportunities aren't enough.

The **official website** states: "Equity isn't just a nice-to-have, it's a must-have."

'Equity' is the new buzzword being used over 'equality' – but what's the difference? The two words are often used interchangeably but many state that whilst equality provides access, equity takes it one step further and looks to address the entrenched barriers and biases that lie at the core of our systems.

So, how can we truly #EmbraceEquity, particularly in the workplace? It can be a difficult concept to demonstrate as what constitutes equitable or fair treatment is often subjective and unique to the experiences each individual employee may face.

Employers can advance equity by firstly cultivating a safe working environment that encourages open discussion and understanding. Unlike equality where equal treatment is the goal, equity is about achieving equal outcomes and "levelling the playing field".

Both equity and equality are important, but they are very different. Nevertheless, both must be present to achieve a truly fair and inclusive working environment and, more broadly, affect positive change in the wider world.

Positive action can also be used as a means of promoting this year's International Women's Day #EmbraceEquity theme. The concept of positive action allows employers to take certain steps to help individuals sharing a protected characteristic overcome workplace disadvantages. It can also be implemented by employers to help address the under-representation of those that share a protected characteristic in a particular field of work.

Positive action is a limited exception to the prohibition on discrimination in employment law, as long as the employer meets the conditions set out in sections 158 or 159 of the **Equality Act 2010**. The Act outlines two types of positive action: general positive action and positive action in recruitment and promotion. Inevitably there are certain risks involved when employers take positive action, so it is advisable to seek legal advice before doing so.

You can read more about the movement and the various events on the **IWD website**.

BDBF is a leading law firm based at Bank in the City of London specialising in employment law. If you would like to discuss an employment related issue, please get in touch with your usual BDBF contact or email info@bdbf.co.uk.