

How to Break the Bias for Women in Finance

Disruptive Forces in Investing

March 29, 2022

Anu Rajakumar: Despite important progress over the last several decades, women continue to face gender wage gaps and gender biases across industries. Break the Bias was the theme to International Women's Day 2022. And as we wrap up the month of March, which is of course Women's History Month, we ask on today's podcast episode, how can women who continue to increasingly be leaders and experts in their field make their voices heard? And particularly in the greater finance industry, where corporate leadership is dominated by men, despite roughly 52 percent of women coming in at the entry level, how do we meaningfully increase female leadership? My name is Anu Rajakumar, and I'm honored to be joined today by Amanda Pullinger, the chief executive of 100 Women in Finance, an organization focused on empowering women in the finance industry and inspiring the next generation of female leaders with over 20,000 registered members globally. Amanda, thanks so much for joining me today.

Amanda: Oh, you're very welcome. It's lovely to be here.

Anu: So let's get started with a bit of background on yourself and about the mission of 100 Women in Finance. I understand that you didn't begin your career in this industry. Is that right?

Amanda: I didn't. I've actually been in 7 different industries during my career. Finance was the last of the various industries that I was in. And I came into that industry through an opportunity to join a hedge fund back in 1999, 2000 era, with a colleague who was a very good friend of mine from Oxford. So yeah, I kind of came in through the back door of finance in many ways.

Anu: And you've been part of 100 Women in Finance for a couple of decades now. Tell us about the mission and some of the key observations that you've seen in terms of progress and just changes in the industry.

Amanda: So 100 Women, when I first started, you know, in the organization – I was actually a volunteer – you know, our mission back then was pretty much what it is today, and that was around empowering women in the industry primarily through educational opportunities, networking opportunities, but most importantly creating peer groups so that women who very often found themselves the only one in the room, the only one in their team, and in my case the only one at my fund, could find other people like them. And I think we don't talk enough in this industry about what it feels like to be the only one. And it's interesting. I did an event yesterday and it was a room of women and one man. And he commented on how it felt to be that only one. And so a lot of what 100 Women is trying to do is to A) create opportunities for women in this industry to find their people, to find people who are in similar roles, to find people who are at the same career stage as they are, and to be able to share experiences, share best practices, share opportunities with people that you can really be honest and open with. So that's really one of the things that we're focused on.

Over the years though, what's also developed is we've realized that actually if we're going to achieve demographic change in the industry, particularly in those areas that are really tough – senior investment roles, executive committee roles -- where actually the number of women percentage-wise has not changed for many, many years – if we're going to try and tackle those demographic changes, we also need to inspire the next generation of young women, pre-career, so that they can know what we do an industry, so they can know what roles are in the industry, and critically – and we'll maybe get to this in a little while – they can see women like them and they can know what the pathway was for those women to get into those roles. We do a lot around visibility, and we can certainly get to that later. But pretty the mission of the organization is, as it always was, empowering women in the industry. And we've just added this additional piece of inspiring, equipping and advocating for the next generation of women we want to see in this industry, in those difficult to fill roles that we all know about.

Anu: Yeah, that's true. Now you mentioned that the percentages haven't changed. So we've got the support networks that have been established. And progress has been made. There are still roadblocks. What are some of the key action items for overcoming those?

Amanda: So we just celebrated our twentieth anniversary as an organization last year. So it gave us a change to kind of reflect on what we've done well as an organization, but also to be confronted with the fact that those numbers aren't shifting quickly enough.

And so we set out to put together what we're calling our Vision 30 by 40, which is that by 2040 we want to see 30 percent of senior investment professionals be women and 30 percent of executive committee roles be filled by women, by 2040. Now you may say 20 years is a long time, but I actually think one of the reasons that we haven't seen the change we want to see is that we've often confronted this issue with a very short-term perspective and focus.

I don't think you create real meaningful change overnight. I think it takes time. I think it takes everyone on the journey together. I certainly think it means engaging men in our industry to make sure that this is not us against them. It really is a journey that we go on together. And I think the other thing is that there is no single simple answer to this. At the end of the day we're all human beings and we all respond to different things. So what we're wanting to put in place to bring about that Vision 30 by 40 are a series of initiatives, some of them that we put on, some of them where we see best practices in organizations, and we share those best practices with other industry partners. In fact, we've just started this year a new award, that we're calling our DEI Award, which we're going to give to a company in the industry that has shown progress specifically in the areas of senior investment professionals and with executive committee percentage of women; but also have been deliberate about putting in place both policies and initiatives internally. And we're really excited to share some of those best practices with the industry. Because, as I said, I don't think it's one simple thing. But I will give a couple of thoughts about this.

I think – we talked about role models and – and visibility. I think that it's absolutely critical that particularly in those areas where women are massively underrepresented, we have to create visibility for women are in those roles. A number of years ago there was an article that was entitled "Where Are the Women?" And it was specifically focused on investment professionals, female portfolio managers in the industry. And it made me really furious because as I traveled around the world, I met female portfolio managers. It wasn't that they didn't exist, but they tended to be one here, one here, one here. And then tended not to be visible. What we've got to do is we've got to change the perception of what an investment professional looks like. It's not dissimilar to what does a CEO look like.

By changing the perception through visibility, through giving women opportunity to be seen as an expert on a stage, whether that stage is real or virtual, I believe that we will not only enhance those women's opportunities to be promoted, to be seen as the experts that they are, it will also inspire the next generation. And we're seeing this in a number of different ways. So last night we did our first impressions dinner in New York. We actually had the honor of having Her Royal Highness the Countess of Wessex, who's our global ambassador, with us last night. We did a dinner for 120 people, some of them industry professionals, some of them role models for about 80 teenage girls who sat around tables and talked to each other but also to the role models about, what is this industry? And it was really interesting seeing these girls come into the room and leaving saying, "You know what? I'm going to be a portfolio manager when I grow up." Well, they didn't even know what that meant when they walked into the room. So initiatives where we're really bringing role models to these pre-career young women, I believe will change how many young women want to be in this industry and also set these young women up on a track to become portfolio managers, to become the leaders in the industry. So those are just a couple of examples but there are obviously many ways in which we need to be empowering women in the industry, engaging men. Giving men a role to play I think is a really critical piece. But as I said, no single solution. And that's why, again, I'm so excited to be able to share some of the amazing things that the industry, companies in the industry, are actually putting in place.

Anu: Well, that dinner sounds like it must have been very fascinating, not just for the people who were involved and participating but just for the current environment that some of those, you know, investment professionals are working in. I'm sure that was terrific. You spoke a little bit about engaging men on this journey. Men, of course, play a crucial role in identifying and combatting bias. Let's talk a little bit further about that. What are some of the ways that men can help elevate their female counterparts?

Amanda: So I think the first thing I want to say is that I think there's been a tendency for a number of men to feel like the whole DEI focus is, particularly for white men, some kind of attack on them, that somehow they're going to be diminished in this process. The message for men is, number one, actually if we can create a more diverse workplace where different perspectives are brought to bear, I actually think it's a better place for everybody. I think particularly in an industry like ours, where we're trying to solve for really complex problems, you can't do that by having the same people around the table with the same experiences and the same perspective on things. And so I think, you know, increasing access to everybody, giving everyone opportunities, I think ultimately is good for everybody. I also think, and it's interesting on my travels around the world, where I've met with men, I think one of the other big motivators for many men is – particularly if they have daughters or they have nieces – they do want the world to be an equal place. And I think they're often surprised when they come to our events that actually, you know, the world isn't equal yet. And so that often motivates men to say, "What can I do, because I want my daughter, I want the people who are in my life who are women to have those opportunities." So a bit of emotional pressure isn't bad either. But

let me give you a couple of examples of what I say to men. And then what I would say is that I'm finding increasingly that men want to be helpful; but they often don't know what to do. I think there's a lot of conflicting messages out there.

So I actually have a bit of a cheat sheet, 10 ways that men can help move the needle for women in finance. And I often say, you know, if you hand a woman a list, it's patronizing, but men love their lists of things to do, right? So, on top of that list, going back to visibility is, what I say to men who want to be helpful is, look at your team and look at women on your team and find opportunities for them to be visible, internally and externally. So if you're a company that sponsors a conference, look at the conference possibilities and find a panel that that woman on your team is expert on. And if she is not comfortable going on that panel, find her a communications coach and support her and kind of give her a little push, a nudge to say, "I'd love you to do this." And I think the power of that is, that it's – yes, it's just one person who you're encouraging to do that, but actually I think men will be very happy to feel like they've done something. When they see that woman speaking so articulately on the stage, I think they'll be really happy that they've played a part. And it will make a difference. When you get on a stage, people think you're smarter than you actually are. And in our industry, we have to be seen as an expert. Otherwise we don't have credibility. And so that's a very simple way for men to be helpful. Another way is to be thoughtful about how – and obviously we're now going to be going back into an era where there is networking after work, there are the conversations with a team outside of the workplace.

And I think in the past, women have felt quite uncomfortable very often in those networking environments. And I think what men often forget is that women – I'm not saying that men don't have other responsibilities, but women tend to have a pretty packed life, which is pretty planned out. And so things like going out for drinks after work spontaneously tend not to work for women. However, if it is organized and it's, you know, every second Tuesday of the month – women are really good at planning. You know, we can make all the arrangements to do that. And so just thinking very specifically about what can encourage women to be part of the team. We know that important conversations happen in those environments, and speaking of those environments, I mean don't just always go out for drinks. Think about other things that you might do. I always say something that people kind of laugh at. But you know, think about something like going bowling. You know, bowling is great because no one's – no one's great at it. You know, no one's training for it. You know, it's better than golf, where you have to dress up and you have to be an expert in golf, or at least women feel they have to be. So thinking, you know, to have men think about what can they do to make those kinds of experiences more inclusive? Being deliberate about being inclusive I think will make a difference.

And the final thing I'll say is there is a wonderful 8-minute animated film that Pixar put together called "Purl," P-U-R-L. And it's the story of the first woman – and it is animated, which I think is brilliant, because it kind of takes away any kind of, thought that this is an actual workplace. But it's the story of the first woman, Purl, to join an investment firm called Bro Capital. And it's really her journey from feeling very different to then getting to a place where the second woman joins the firm and seeing how she then takes that role of being that person that can be inclusive. But I – I really encourage men to watch it and to think what it feels like and what the journey was that Purl went on and how they might help someone like Purl through that journey in a less traumatic way than Purl had to go through it. So again, really, really encourage – only 8 minutes but it actually is incredibly insightful.

Anu: Yeah, I will definitely have to check out "Purl." That sounds brilliant. You know, as I was hearing you speak, there's so many nuggets of wisdom that you're sharing and one that just really – I feel like I'd be remiss if I didn't say I have so much gratitude and recognition for the advocates at Neuberger Berman who encourage me to be the host of this podcast. And as you're speaking, it just reminded that there were people out there, men and women alike, who both were really encouraging for me to take this role and I'm greatly appreciative of that. So anyway, another thing I wanted to get your insights on was about how women have managed during the pandemic, and some of the shifts in the goals that you've seen about gender gap within the industry because of the coronavirus. What have you seen there?

Amanda: So I think it's a real, real mixed bag. So on the one hand I think that women have clearly had to take up more than their fair share of the responsibilities. And I think for those women that haven't necessarily felt comfortable taking back their share of the ability to work on their terms – by that I mean we've all been in situations with our partners, with our families, where, you know, trying to figure out which room are we going to sit in so that we can do our Zoom calls, our conversations. Who's going to take care of the kids and do the homework with them while that's happening?

So on the one hand I think those that didn't have the conversations with their partners I think really suffered. And I think we've lost – we have lost some, some of those women. But on the other hand, I think it was a wakeup call to many men about what does happen outside of the workplace and a wakeup to how much responsibility women were taking. And so what I've seen is for those women that have been willing to have that difficult conversation around hold on a second, you say that you believe

in equality, and you say that you're supportive of my career; well, guess what? We're going to have to share the responsibilities here. Actually, I think it's been a real positive. So I think it hasn't been one way or another. Here's the piece that I think is again a plus but a potential worrying factor for me as we come out of the pandemic. And that is around flexibility. So I think we've all appreciated the flexibility of working from home, of being able to perhaps spend more time with our families doing things that we normally wouldn't be able to do because we were commuting, or we were out for dinner in the evening with clients or whatever. So I think just anecdotally, but obviously there are reports coming out – my sense is that women enjoyed that more than men did in terms of the flexibility. I think for men – and again, I'm generalizing – I think the separation between home and work has traditionally been much more important to men. And so I think, I think it was quite tough for a lot of men to be at home. And certainly from what I'm hearing, in terms of who wants to be back in the office full time, there seem to be two groups of people. One is men. I'm not saying every man, but a lot – you know, men to be the ones who want to be back in the office. The other are younger people, who I think really suffered through the pandemic. I don't think that was a gender issue. I think that was just, you know, stuck in a small apartment in New York City, you just started a new job, you're not in an office environment.

Doing everything virtually I think was really tough. But coming back to the gender issue, I think the big challenge as we come out of this pandemic is, that as companies consider what does flexibility mean, one of the policies they're going to put in place, it does seem that most companies are wanting to offer some form of flexibility of working from home a certain number of days a week. What worries me is, where are the decisions going to be made? One of the things about COVID that was interesting is, the screens that we have with Zoom created a kind of more democratic environment. Like every square was equal. In some ways, everybody could be seen if they chose to put their camera on. And so accessibility of people to other colleagues in some ways was greater. You didn't have to be in the office to necessarily get someone's attention. As we go back to an office-based environment – and I personally believe as human beings that while there have been some benefits that have come out of the virtual, I think we want to be in person with each other. I think there are things you miss when you're virtual. I think there are subtle ways that we can support each other in person that you just can't do on Zoom.

And so I think the big question for firms is how do you ensure that the decisions, the really big strategic decisions, aren't made around the water cooler as they have been in the past, or in those sessions after work, right? How do you ensure that everybody's included in that conversation? And I do worry that if women opt for more flexibility, more working from home, that they're not going to be in a place where their voices are going to be heard during those conversations. So that's something that I'm, you know, I've actually mentioned to a number of firms as something that I think we're going to have to watch. So those are just a few of my own perspectives.

Anu: Yeah, no. I think that's a really important perspective that managers need to be thinking about, how to ensure inclusion in those strategic decisions. But also, as you mentioned, just understanding the rationale for team members for why they want that flexibility, why they need it. Just looking beyond someone's work responsibilities, there is a lot of life that happens to everyone, men and women, and just thinking about the under the hood and just having a little bit more empathy for people's life situations I think is very important. Amanda, this has been a terrific conversation so far. I want to begin to wrap up today's episode. And as I mentioned at the beginning of the episode, the theme for this year's International Women's Day was Break the Bias. So would love to get your key takeaways for our listeners who want to support breaking that bias across gender, not just in finance but also just the corporate world at large.

Amanda: So it's really interesting. We had a fantastic conversation yesterday for our members with Rebecca Napier, who's the CFO of British Airways. She became the CFO at 38 years old right before the pandemic. She's the first female CFO and the youngest CFO ever at British Airways. She is breaking the bias. But she wouldn't be able to break the bias if we didn't know that she existed. And so for me, breaking the bias is around changing the perception of what a woman can do out there.

For me personally, when I was growing up, I was the first in my family to go to university. I went to a state school. I didn't go to a fancy girls school. And I went to Oxford or applied to Oxford and got into Oxford because of a woman who I never met but who is visible to me. And that was Margaret Thatcher. And interestingly, my curiosity about her was not because she was the first female Prime Minister, but that like me she was the first in her family to go to university. Like me she went to the local school. She didn't go to a fancy girls school. And she got into Oxford. And so I said to myself, "Well, if she can do it, I can do it." That's breaking the bias, right? That's changing the perception around who it is that goes to Oxford, right, in this particular case. And so I think we all owe it to ourselves but also to the next generation to be visible, to be vocal, to talk about what we do and why we love what we do and how what we do can have an impact, and to talk around the pathways that we've all taken. So to me, it's about making that decision to – to change the perception of what an expert looks like.

And that might be in the corporate world for what does a CFO or a CEO look like, and in our world it's what does an investment professional look like, what does someone in FinTech look like? And so that to me is what breaking the bias is. And what's really exciting about it is that – and I say this all the time to women who are members of 100 Women – by the way, men can become member of 100 Women as well. But for those women, I always say, you know, you can all do something for yourself and for the next generation by being visible.

Anu: Wow, terrific. Thank you very much. You know, Amanda, so we typically end our episodes with a bonus question. And you may have answered the bonus question already with the mention of Margaret Thatcher. But I'll ask it again in case you'd like to pick someone else. But I was just going to say, as two British women I would love to know who you would like to have a cup of tea with, which woman alive or not. And again, you can carry on with Margaret Thatcher or you can pick someone else as well. But who would you like to share a cup of tea with?

Amanda: I would actually have loved to have had a cup of tea with Queen Elizabeth I. Now talk about breaking the mold. I mean she lived in a male-dominated environment, survived so much, and created for herself, really changed – again, changed the perspective of, you know, could a woman go to war, could a woman lead a country? So that would be my choice. I think she's fascinating.

Anu: That's terrific. Thank you very much. I just want to recap a few of the key messages that you shared from this terrific conversation. Just briefly, you talked about the importance of finding your people, creating visibility for women, changing the perception, embracing diversity of experiences and perspectives; for men, looking at women on their team and finding ways to raise their visibility. And you mentioned "Purl," an animated video that I think our listeners would really enjoy seeing. So Amanda, it's been an absolute pleasure to have you on the show today. Your passion for what you do is really contagious, and I greatly appreciate your insights on the progress and the continued challenges faced by women across all industries and not just in finance. I really do think that all of our listeners, men and women, are going to find some words of wisdom from our discussion today as we strive to achieve a more gender-equitable future. So Amanda, thank you very much for being on the show today.

Amanda: Thank you for having me.

Anu: And to our listeners, as always, if you've enjoyed this episode of "Disruptive Forces," I encourage you to subscribe via Apple Podcast, Google Podcast, or Spotify, or you can visit our website, www.nb.com/disruptiveforces, where you can find previous episodes as well as more information about our firm and offerings.

This podcast includes general market commentary, general investment education and general information about Neuberger Berman. It is provided for informational purposes only and nothing herein constitutes investment, legal, accounting or tax advice, or a recommendation to buy, sell or hold a security. This communication is not directed at any investor or category of investors and should not be regarded as investment advice or a suggestion to engage in or refrain from any investment-related course of action. Investment decisions should be made based on an investor's individual objectives and circumstances and in consultation with his or her advisors. Information is obtained from sources deemed reliable, but there is no representation or warranty as to its accuracy, completeness, or reliability. All information is current as of the date of recording and is subject to change without notice. Any views or opinions expressed may not reflect those of the firm as a whole. This material may include estimates, outlooks, projections and other "forward-looking statements." Due to a variety of factors, actual events or market behavior may differ significantly from any views expressed. Neuberger Berman products and services may not be available in all jurisdictions or to all client types. Diversification does not guarantee profit or protect against loss in declining markets. Investing entails risks including the possible loss of principal. Investments in hedge funds and private equity are speculative, involve a higher degree of risk than more traditional investments and are intended for sophisticated investors only. Indexes are unmanaged and are not available for direct investment. **Past performance is no guarantee of future results.**

Discussions of any specific sectors and companies are for informational purposes only. This material is not intended as a formal research report and should not be relied upon as a basis for making an investment decision. The firm, its employees and advisory accounts may hold positions of any companies discussed. Specific securities identified and described do not represent all of the securities purchased, sold or recommended for advisory clients. It should not be assumed that any investments in securities, companies, sectors or markets identified and described were or will be profitable. Any discussion of environmental, social and governance (ESG) factor and ratings are for informational purposes only and should not be relied upon as a basis for making an investment decision. ESG factors are one of many factors that may be considered when making investment decisions.

This material is being issued on a limited basis through various global subsidiaries and affiliates of Neuberger Berman Group LLC. Please visit <http://www.nb.com/disclosure-global-communications> for the specific entities and jurisdictional limitations and restrictions.

The "Neuberger Berman" name and logo are registered service marks of Neuberger Berman Group LLC.

© 2022 Neuberger Berman Group LLC. All rights reserved.