

How to Engage Meaningfully on International Women's Day

International Women's Day (IWD) can be a powerful moment for reflection, learning, and action or it can feel performative if it's reduced to a single social media post, morning tea, or purple cupcake. Meaningful engagement goes beyond celebration. It's about individuals and businesses recognising lived experiences, addressing inequality, and committing to change.



Start with Listening, Not Leading Before deciding how to “celebrate” International Women's Day, take time to listen. Women's experiences are not monolithic. They vary by culture, age, ability, caring responsibilities, sexuality, and socioeconomic background. Meaningful engagement starts by creating space for women's voices rather than assuming what support looks like.

For businesses, this might mean staff listening sessions, anonymous surveys, or inviting women to share what inclusion and equity actually look like in their workplace. For individuals, it can be as simple as reading, listening to podcasts, or engaging with stories shared by women without defensiveness or the urge to fix.

Move Beyond Celebration to Action Celebration matters, but it shouldn't be the end point. Flowers, posts, and events have impact only when paired with action. Ask: What will change because of this day?

Organisations can use IWD as a catalyst to review policies, pay equity, flexible work arrangements, leadership pathways, and responses to gender-based harassment and discrimination. Individuals can commit to everyday actions, challenging bias when they see it, sharing domestic and caring labour more equitably, or supporting women-owned businesses and initiatives.

Educate, Don't Just Inspire Empowerment messaging is uplifting, but education drives understanding. International Women's Day is an opportunity to build awareness of systemic issues such as the gender pay gap, unpaid labour, workplace discrimination, and the impact of intersectionality.

For workplaces, this could involve facilitated discussions, training sessions, or sharing evidence-based resources that encourage reflection rather than guilt. For individuals, it may mean learning about issues you haven't personally experienced and being open to discomfort.

Share the Load Literally and Figuratively Gender inequality isn't just about representation or leadership; it's also about who carries the invisible load at home, at work, and in communities. Meaningful engagement means recognising and redistributing this load.

In workplaces, this can look like valuing emotional labour, ensuring women aren't always expected to organise events, take notes, or mentor without recognition. At home and in personal relationships, it means noticing what often goes unseen and sharing responsibility more fairly.

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Be Inclusive and Intersectional IWD should reflect the diversity of women's experiences. Engagement that centres only one type of story risks excluding many others. Businesses and individuals alike can ask: Whose voices are missing? Consider how race, disability, age, cultural background, sexuality, and caring responsibilities intersect with gender. Inclusive engagement involves amplifying diverse voices, avoiding tokenism, and acknowledging that progress does not look the same for everyone.

Commit to What Happens After the Day

Perhaps the most important question to ask on International Women's Day is: What happens after March 9?

Real impact comes from sustained effort. For organisations, this might mean setting measurable goals, tracking progress, and maintaining accountability throughout the year. For individuals, it could be choosing one ongoing action, continued learning, advocacy, or allyship and sticking with it.

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