

Women in Travel Retail webinar examines challenges from HR perspective

Today's [Women in Travel Retail](#) webinar, entitled 'Women in the Workplace from an HR perspective,' hosted by Gerry Monday, Global Travel Retail Director at [Furla S.p.A](#), looked at the challenges facing women when it comes to career progression.

The two speakers brought brand and retailer perspective: Jennifer Dixon, VP Human Resources at [Pernod Ricard Global Travel Retail](#), and Mona Al Ali, Senior VP Human Resources at [Dubai Duty Free](#).

In her presentation, Al Ali explained United Arab Emirates' (UAE) agenda and vision to enhance the lives of Emirati women, including balancing gender in the workplace with representation and pay, and extending maternity leave from 60 days to 90 days, plus 30 extra days in 2017.

Al Ali also notes the literacy rate of women in the Emirates has increased to 95.8% in recent years; 70% of UAE university graduates are women; women represent 45% of the national space sector in UAE; women comprise 66% of public sector workers with 30% in leadership roles and 15% in technical and academic roles.

Meanwhile at Dubai Duty Free, Al Ali points out, three out of nine executive managers (including herself) are female, and the company entitles legally married female staff who have completed two years of service in the company to 90 days of paid maternity leave (can be combined with available vacation leave and unpaid leave up to a maximum of 120 days), as well as two hours per day of "feeding hours," either at the start or end of the day until the infant turns one year-old; among other initiatives by the operator.

Al Ali says there are "no problems so far" at Dubai Duty Free, adding that personal requests can always be accommodated.

Dixon highlighted Pernod Ricard GTR's acknowledgement of "life moments beyond maternity," a policy that recognizes other important milestones a woman might encounter, such as, junior career stage, pregnancy loss, retirement, exam-age children, young children, menstruation, in vitro fertilization, menopause, elderly dependents and menopause.

Pernod Ricard GTR has recently signed up to the menopause workplace policy in the UK to find ways to be more supportive and prevent menopause specifically from getting in the way of career progression, Dixon explains.

Dixon also touched on the often overlooked mental load that women take on, whether in the workplace or at home with children and partner.

"Rather than adapting to our work environment, how can we make the work environment more supportive and allow women to step out of the workplace [temporarily] if that's what they choose," Dixon says. "When we feel sense of belonging in a culture, we feel relaxed and we perform at our best," she adds, referring to an article by female author Gill Whitty-Collins.

Dixon also explained that any initiatives and behaviours that company's internally promote to women, such as inviting male colleagues to a meeting during lunch hour, should also be promoted to the male counterparts.

And, she adds, to try to progress without addressing these systemic problems is futile.

When asked by *Global Travel Retail Magazine* about how both companies make effort to be inclusive of all people who identity as women, Dixon says the conversation is hugely relevant in London and the UK.

She says Pernod Ricard GTR is learning along with employees and it has employee resource groups which vet some policies and report back on how truly inclusive the policy is or what amendments could bring more inclusivity. Pernod Ricard GTR acknowledges pronouns, has genderless restrooms and looks for feedback “to see where we can get better.”

To the question, Al Ali says regardless of the professional position, Dubai Duty Free ensures that it takes care of its own people.