



Social Responsibility

Network with impact



Learning from one other, supporting each other, being seen: that is the idea behind the “women@L&R” network. Three colleagues in conversation:

Isabella Heinzl leads People & Culture in Austria and is one of the founders. **Anita Sereinig**, Division Director Mergers & Acquisitions, is one of the female executives at director level reporting immediately to L&R’s Executive Board. **Alexandra Moser** works in Global Portfolio Management and actively contributes her ideas to the network.

Isabella, how did the idea of setting up a women’s network at L&R come about?

Isabella Heinzl: Over the course of my career, I have noticed that men are very well networked among themselves. They meet up in the evening, informally, and relationships develop as a result. Women don’t have that. When I joined the company as a manager almost eight years ago, there was no one I could exchange ideas with. These days, L&R wants to bring more women into leadership positions as well as into expert roles; the target is 40 per cent by 2030. As part of the “Women in Leadership” project, we then asked ourselves where we should begin – and the answer was clear: a network for women could really make a difference.

How did the network get going?

Isabella Heinzl: For the big launch event, we invited all of our roughly 230 female employees in Austria, and more than 40 came. The aim was quitesimple: we wanted to get to know each other. We started with speed-networking, two minutes per round, which was really well received. We handed out cards so each colleague could write down



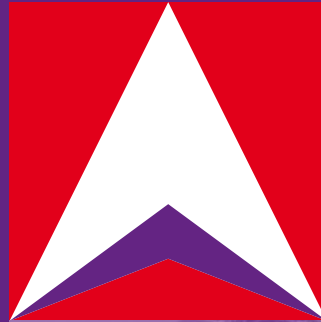
“Men are always well-connected. Women often less so. We want to change that.”

Isabella Heinzl, Head of People and Culture Austria

which topics concerned her, what she would like to see and what she herself could contribute. From this pool we selected the topics for subsequent meetings. We feel it is important that the network thrives on its members, because following the first meeting one thing was clear: we would be doing it again.

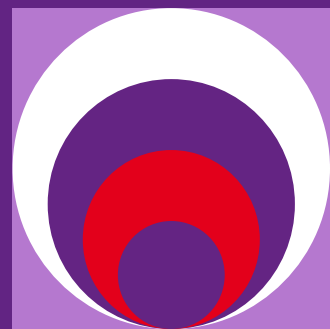
Anita, you went to several meetings and also talked about your career path. Why is that important to you?

Anita Sereinig: I have been with L&R for 18 years now, starting as an Area Manager in international sales and now heading up the Mergers and Acquisitions division. I enjoyed talking about my career path because I want to encourage women. Effort pays off in the long run. Just one successful project is not enough to get immediate promotion. You have to keep at it. And above all: Women need to be seen, need to be persistent and speak up about what they want. "I would like to take on this work, this extra training would help me get ahead, I am happy to work more hours." We were raised to be modest, but leaders are not clairvoyants; you have to tell them what you want. L&R places great importance on filling management positions internally. I seized any opportunity that came along.



“In the network, we can talk about things you wouldn’t discuss in the office.”

Alexandra Moser, Global Portfolio Manager Bandages and Supports





Alexandra, you're still relatively new to the company.

What motivated you to join the network?

Alexandra Moser: I started at L&R at the beginning of 2024. The network was also an opportunity for me to make contacts outside my own work area. I found it exciting that the company is explicitly dedicated to promoting women. And I was curious to see what this looks like here. I wanted to meet people, but also see what issues the women brought with them.

I previously worked for a large international corporation and joined the WoMentoring programme there. That showed me how valuable this interaction can be, and I think it's great that L&R now has a similar network.

What are the meetings about?

Anita Sereinig: About anything that matters to us. For example, the issue of whether women and men are paid the same at L&R. Unfortunately, discrimination and sexism in the workplace was one of the first topics discussed. This was talked about openly, and it was clear that this could not be left hanging. I later had the opportunity to discuss this with the Executive Board. I suggested introducing trusted contacts — something low-key so that colleagues can raise concerns without immediately resorting to the official whistleblower policy. This was taken up and, in the first phase, has now been implemented in Germany and Austria. I am very proud that this originally came from the women's network.

Isabella Heinzl: Yes, it was an important moment. We then launched a mandatory training programme for management which addresses precisely these issues: respectful interaction, abusive behaviour and sexual harassment. People are sometimes not aware of the consequences of their own behaviour. The training helps clarify things here. And none of this would have been possible without the network, without this candour.

Alexandra Moser: But there are also the very practical issues. A personal trainer gave a presentation on the importance of strength training. This was my suggestion,

because I do training myself and can definitely recommend it. It went down really well. It was news for many of us that as we get older, strength training, as well as endurance sport, plays a major role in overall health and physical performance.

The network therefore also has very personal dimensions.

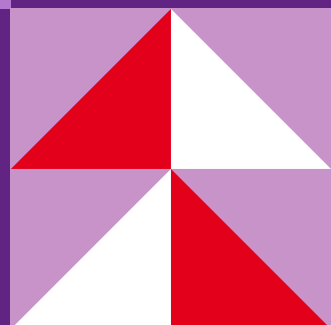
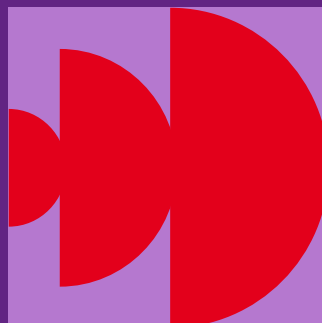
Alexandra Moser: Absolutely. It represents a safe space. I don't normally have any problem raising issues, but sometimes it just doesn't fit into what's going on at work. In the women's network, you can go a step further. The issue of balancing work and family life is a perennial one, but at some point the question also arises of how to deal with the situation after parental leave or the menopause. These are the sorts of things you don't necessarily discuss in the office.

Isabella Heinzl: And that is exactly what is important to us. We want to create a space where participants can talk about anything, including things that are not going well. This is extremely important for our corporate culture, because it allows us to reveal problems and address them. The network is for many a "safe space".

How do you find the mix among the participants?

Isabella Heinzl: We deliberately approached all female employees, regardless of whether they want to pursue a traditional career path or not. We are talking about mutual support, role models and the "Yes, we can!" attitude. The group is a diverse mix, from specialists to team leads to managers like Anita. Unfortunately, it's more difficult to reach our colleagues in production, as they don't have access to PCs. We still need to work on that.

Anita Sereinig: This diversity is what makes the network so exciting. I am part of the Global Leadership Team, which now numbers about 50 members. The proportion of



**“Women must be
clear about what
they want.”**

Anita Sereinig, Division Director
Mergers and Acquisitions



women has risen to just over 20 per cent. That's a positive development. And I appreciate how important this interaction across hierarchies is. I met a woman from the sustainability division through the network. Later, when I needed some expert knowledge, I simply called her, which sped everything up.

Alexandra Moser: For me, two aspects of the network are particularly important: the safe space for personal issues and the closer partnerships in everyday professional life, because we have got to know each other on a different level. I use that regularly.

What's next for the network?

Isabella Heinzl: We plan at least three meetings a year, some face-to-face, some a mix. We will also continue to use our channel on the continuing education platform L&R Engage. Meeting in person is great, but it needs online follow-up. And we are delighted that the network is due to be rolled out in Germany in 2027.

What advice would you give to other women who want to build a similar network in their company?

Isabella Heinzl: The most important thing is to get support from above. Management need to provide support and a budget. And of course, a team to put all of this into practice. We were well prepared, we presented our goals clearly, and then things moved very quickly. Be brave, get going, don't give up. Even if there are dissenting voices, especially from men: just do it!

Anita Sereinig: Stay strong, even if there is headwind to start. We explained why the network is a good thing, including for the company, and the Executive Board endorsed it. It's great if the initial meetings lead straight to specific outcomes. Otherwise, it's all just good intentions. You have to be willing to pass on what you hear to senior management and put it into practice.

Alexandra Moser: I would say: Start small, but start. It doesn't have to be perfect. It is important to have a platform where issues can be addressed which are not usually part of normal work. And then the participants should be given enough space to contribute. Things to ask: What do you need? What motivates you? It pays off.

Where do you see the network in three, five or ten years?

Isabella Heinzl: I hope it continues to grow. We currently have a core group of some 20 to 25 women who know each other really well. I would like our numbers to grow even more, and for the members to become more involved. Perhaps we as an organising team should step back a little. But one thing is clear: we wouldn't want to lose the network.

Anita Sereinig: I see it as an opportunity to build trust. After all, that is one of our corporate values. And ultimately, it's about motivating women to take on leadership roles. This doesn't happen by itself. Such networks are an important building block.

Alexandra Moser: I'm not a fan of quota rules, but it just takes too long to get more women into leadership roles. I find it really significant that L&R says "We care, we see the potential" and I hope this commitment will become even more intensive.