



## Let people bloom – and innovation will too

***Elsie De Nys, Global Director of Brand and CSR at Yanmar Compact Equipment, on why difference – not sameness – builds stronger companies, cultures and outcomes.***

In construction, engineering, and industrial sectors, innovation depends on diversity. But inclusive workplaces don't just happen by default – they require focused action, cultural awareness, and consistent leadership.

“Innovation comes from people seeing the world differently,” says Elsie De Nys, Global Director of Brand and CSR at Yanmar Compact Equipment (Yanmar CE). “You need a mix of experiences and perspectives to solve complex challenges and keep pace with change.”

Operating in 70 countries with a multilingual workforce, Yanmar CE draws on its Japanese heritage while advancing global progress – including in Diversity and Inclusion (D&I).

### **Culture as a catalyst**

Elsie leads Yanmar CE's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts, structured around three ESG pillars: Environment, Social and Governance.

At the heart of this is *Hanasaka* – a Japanese philosophy meaning 'let the people bloom'. It's about creating environments where individuals feel empowered to realise their potential, and where difference is seen as a strength. “Inclusion breaks down when people feel pressure to conform,” says Elsie. “We want our teams confident in what makes them unique.”

She offers a simple analogy: “Diversity is inviting people to the table. Inclusion is giving everyone a chance to speak. Equity is making sure each person feels safe and supported to raise their voice – because not everyone starts from the same place.”

One small but powerful initiative is weekly ‘coffee chats’ – informal video calls between colleagues in different regions and roles. “It began with one colleague in Japan wanting to practise English,” says Elsie. “Now, it's helping people connect across borders in a relaxed, human way.”

### **Brand and CSR, in sync**

What sets Yanmar CE apart is how brand and CSR work together – not as separate functions, but as one aligned approach. “When brand and CSR move in sync, our values show up in everything we do,” Elsie explains. “It builds stronger trust with employees, customers and stakeholders alike.”

Running the two together turns social responsibility from a side activity into a core part of company identity, making the impact more meaningful and sustainable. This synergy helps the brand stand out in a crowded market by demonstrating a real commitment to purpose, not just profit.

### **Group-wide commitment to sustainability**

Yanmar CE's strong focus on D&I is part of a group-wide commitment led by Yanmar Holdings, Chief Sustainability Officer, Mariko Shirafuji: “The spirit of *Hanasaka* will guide us in making this future a reality,” she said in a recent message. “Across every business unit,



teams are combining technologies and human insight to support prosperity for both nature and humanity.”

### **Supporting regional progress**

Yanmar CE recognises that D&I develops differently around the world. In places like North America, inclusion is more established, and women often move into leadership roles more readily – though there is still significant ground to cover. In others, including Japan, change is happening more gradually. “You can’t copy and paste culture,” Elsie notes. “But you can equip every region to grow through mentoring, training, storytelling and shared platforms.”

One example is *Mentorise*, a new global D&I mentoring programme connecting close to 30 mentor–mentee pairs across departments and regions, encouraging learning and visibility. The program is open to all employees across different departments and geographies. Elsie sees it as an example of Yanmar’s “Culture Hacks” – small, human actions that create meaningful change.

“When individuals see leaders like them, it expands what feels possible,” she explains. “You don’t just imagine the future – you can see it.”

### **Building with You**

This inclusive mindset also extends to customers. A diverse internal culture helps Yanmar CE better understand and serve a global audience: “As a customer-centric business, we shape solutions around real needs and real voices – grounded in collaboration, empathy and understanding. And ultimately, our customers tell us how we’re doing – through trust, loyalty, and tools like Net Promoter Score.”

While surveys and data show trends, Elsie believes inclusion is built through daily behaviours: “Who we listen to, who we promote, who feels safe to speak.”

A persistent gap, however, is the underrepresentation of women in technical and engineering roles. Too often, women are steered toward historically accepted paths like HR, comms or admin – while STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) roles remain out of reach. “We need them in every room,” Elsie urges. “Especially in engineering, where different perspectives can genuinely reshape the future.”

Her message to industry leaders is clear:

“Create space for people to grow. Make room for different voices at the table. And keep listening. Difference isn’t a risk – it’s where innovation begins.”

Ends.

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#### **About Yanmar Compact Equipment**

Yanmar Compact Equipment (Yanmar CE) is a global leader in the design, manufacture and support of compact equipment for a range of segments, principally construction and other earthmoving applications. Its products include extensive ranges of mini and midi excavators, wheel loaders, wheeled excavators, compact track loaders and tracked carriers. These are supported by a wide range of services designed to ensure customer success. A global company with proud Japanese heritage, Yanmar CE has manufacturing facilities in Asia, Europe and North America – and an extensive international dealer network. Renowned for its innovative approach – it was the first to market with the now-benchmark mini-excavator, and is credited with popularizing the zero-tail swing concept – Yanmar CE remains a trusted brand known for its reliability, performance and commitment to customer satisfaction. These traits are demonstrated through the company's tagline – 'Building with you'.

For more details, please visit the official website. <https://www.yanmar.com/global/construction/>

#### **About Yanmar**

With beginnings in Osaka, Japan, in 1912, Yanmar was the first ever to succeed in making a compact diesel engine of a practical size in 1933. A pioneer in diesel engine technology, Yanmar is a global innovator in a wide range of industrial equipment, from small and large engines, agricultural machinery and facilities, construction equipment, energy systems, marine, to machine tools, and components. Yanmar's global business operations span seven domains. On land, at sea, and in the city, Yanmar provides advanced solutions to the challenges customers face, towards realizing A Sustainable Future. For more information, please visit [www.yanmar.com/global/about/](http://www.yanmar.com/global/about/).