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# EDITOR'S VIEW

BY PHIL ALSOP EDITOR

## Slow and steady wins the race?

Where to start? A project suggested by one of my Angel colleagues, to focus on how women in the IT industry are, or are not, making progress towards equality and diversity in the workplace. A request for participants to either submit written content or sign-up to a recorded video interview. To date, there have been well over 60 women who have engaged with our initiative, all of whom have provided some invaluable and fascinating insights into their experiences of the IT industry.

It is safe to say that all immensely enjoy working in this sector. It's equally fair to say that all have experienced many challenges along the way – with the vast majority believing that, at some stage of their careers, their gender has been an issue.

Almost all have cited the help and support of male colleagues as being, if not crucial, then very important to their career successes to date and virtually all have felt, however unintentionally, somewhat isolated at some stage or other of their working life because they are working in a male dominated role.

One of the most memorable anecdotes shared with me was by a woman who was organising a series of women's support network meetings within her company. A male colleague attended one by mistake, stood around looking somewhat awkward and out of place and when he shared his thoughts with my interviewee, she responded: 'Welcome to my daily life'!

I can honestly say that I had no preconceptions as to what 'typical' responses, comments and observations I would receive in the interviews and articles gathered together over the past couple of months. If there was one major, consistent surprise from the interviews I conducted, it was just how cheerful and positive were all of the interviewees.

They recognise that they are some way off achieving true, meaningful equality in the IT workplace (indeed in the vast majority of all workplaces), acknowledge that progress has been made, but seem optimistic



that further progress will be made until the day when a Women in IT focus such as this one, will no longer be necessary, because men and women have equal status, equal opportunities and equal pay.

I hope that the articles in this magazine will inspire readers (female and male) to go and read the many more articles and watch and listen to the 30+ video interviews on the Digitalisation World website. Of the many projects I have been involved with during a long publishing career, I can honestly say that putting together this body of work, alongside launching various titles over the years, has been one of the major highlights. So, thank you to my colleague who suggested the idea, and thanks to all the women who participated. Rumour has it that we might just repeat the exercise next year!



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## Now is the time for women to break down boundaries in STEM

A career that began with a summer internship at IBM more than two decades ago has grown into a lifelong passion for technology. But like so many other women in the industry, my trajectory can hardly be considered smooth sailing.



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# Alarming lack of women in executive roles, despite FTSE 350 improving boardroom gender diversity

Women account for almost 40% of directors on FTSE 100 boards and 39% on FTSE 250 boards, largely meeting the new Women Leaders Review targets; but there is an ‘appalling’ lack of progress of women into executive roles (senior board positions).

THE NUMBER of women on FTSE 100 boards has continued to rise this year (40%), but a new report released today highlights deep concerns about the lack of progress of women into key executive roles and suggests the increase has been driven – again – by boards appointing female Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) to comply with targets.



Cranfield University’s Female FTSE Board Report 2022, supported by EY, is critical of the slow progress of women being appointed into significant decision-making roles, such as Chair and CEO - and calls for executive succession planning to be taken more seriously at board level. To help address and tackle that failure the 2022 report includes a special project on how companies can boost female representation in the executive pipeline.

The Female FTSE Board Report 2022 reveals that ten companies in the FTSE 100 have 30% or less female representation. And, out of the 413 directorships held by women across the FTSE 100, just nine were CEOs, 18 were Chairs, and 377 were NEDs. The number of women in NED roles in the FTSE 100 has increased by 15% over the past year, whereas women in executive directorships increased by just 3% to 36.

Meanwhile in the FTSE 250, the number of women on boards has increased from 35% to 39% year-on-year, with 110 companies already meeting the 40% target. But despite this improvement, for the third year running only 47 women hold executive directorships in the FTSE 250.

Alison Kay, Managing Partner for Client Service at EY, UK & Ireland, commented: “The research shows that FTSE businesses are increasingly hitting the targets set for female representation. However, they are falling woefully short of the intended outcome - distributing the power and influence necessary to achieve true gender parity. My observation is that companies have exhausted all the so-called ‘low hanging fruit’ and now it is time for tough decisions to push further into root and branch reform.

“Companies must now dig much deeper and go beyond complying with board level targets to transform their business and boost its performance. It is time that we now turn our primary attention to addressing, in an urgent way, the alarming lack of progress in gender proofing executive succession planning.”

Lack of progress ‘frankly appalling’ Professor Sue Vinnicombe, Professor of Women and Leadership at Cranfield School of Management and lead author of the report, said: “We have come a long way since I started this report in 1999, but just having women in NED roles is not sufficient to have an impact on the executive pipeline.

“The lack of progress in terms of seeing women in these key executive roles is frankly appalling. For real change to

happen, women simply must be in the significant decision-making roles of CEO and Chair.”

Executive succession planning is THE key

Evidence from Cranfield’s special project, conducted as part of the 2022 report, suggests the leadership provided by the Chair and the CEO is critical to developing a diverse executive pipeline.

Executive Doctoral Researcher at Cranfield School of Management, Michelle Tessaro, who conducted the analysis, commented: “In such competitive labour markets, it’s surprising that many companies continue to ignore 50% of the talent pool. Succession planning is often left to the CEO, but there must be more Chair, and indeed Board, accountability for delivering on diversity objectives. The Board must ensure the talent pipeline is developed so women are not ‘pushed out’ or ‘opt out’ of important career development opportunities.”

Recommendations include greater guidance for Nominations Committees – making their role in improving gender diversity more explicit; and for CEOs to recognise they have ultimate control and capability to disrupt the current hiatus. Alison Kay concludes: “Whilst over 50% of the UK population is female, there is a significant absence of women from our top board roles at a time when diverse leadership is needed more than ever, to help navigate businesses through deep geopolitical and market uncertainty.

“This marks an opportunity for FTSE companies to take action beyond compliance and make meaningful changes that will help to transform their business for the better - now and in the future.”

# Flexible working inconsistencies cause talent attrition

HR must embrace accelerated change to overcome the top challenge of attracting and retaining talent.

UNIT4, a leader in enterprise cloud applications for mid-market services organizations, has published the people and HR-related findings of its second annual Business Future Index. Having surveyed 3,450 respondents across 12 global markets to understand how much people, policy and technology changes have accelerated over the past 12 months, the Index revealed significant concerns with flexible working strategies despite a dramatic acceleration in its adoption. With competition for talent growing, there is a danger that failure to improve working policies and implement the right tools could lead to more employees choosing those employers who offer a more flexible approach.

## Key Findings

- 76% of respondents say flexible working policies need improvement and 62% agree the tools to support flexible working are not adequate
- Only 18% of respondents experience a flexible working policy without restrictions
- 39% of organizations have seen people leave their business for more flexibility elsewhere over the past year
- Attracting and retaining talent (62%) is the biggest priority for companies over the next 12 months
- Only a quarter of respondents say diversity is a planning focus for the coming year

## Flexibility important but implementation inconsistent

The Business Future Index found 92% of respondents stating that their organizations have now adopted some form of flexible working policy. However, it also reveals there is much work to be done to apply these policies more equitably and ensure employees have the right framework and tools to enable such approaches. For example,

the Index discovered:

- 37% of people work flexible hours, such as working from 9am – 3pm, then making up time in the evening
- 31% work a completely flexible hybrid model (office and home based)
- 31% are mandated to spend a proportion of time in the office (for example, a certain number of days per week)

While the reasonably even split between the different types of flexible working is understandable given that not every organization can offer complete remote working, other data suggests an imbalance in how such policies are applied. While 55% say flexible working applies to all employees, more than a third (35%) say it only applies to some employees dependent on job role, and 9% suggest it depends on the manager's discretion applying only to some employees.

Given that less than one fifth of employees experience flexible working without restrictions, there is still some way to go to improve such policies and, therefore, it is critical organizations move quickly to avoid loss of talent. Big drivers for workforce strategies: recruitment, diversity and technology. Attracting and retaining talent remains the top priority for all organizations across the globe in the year ahead, but the Index reveals further challenges impacting workforce strategies, including:

- Staff retention** - organizations struggling to find and retain staff across a mix of generations (36%)
- ESG credentials** - One fifth (20%) believe their company is perceived to have poor Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) credentials
- Diversity** – only 25% of organizations plan to improve diversity within the business

Re-skilling talent (51%) and implementing a successful flexible/hybrid working policy (50%) also make it onto the list of top business priorities, compounded by 51% who believe that the real need to enhance talent strategies will hinder their ability to achieve their objectives.

Diversity is still an area where attention is needed, because although there has been an increase in the number of respondents saying their organizations plan to improve diversity compared to last year's Business Future Index, still only a quarter say they will focus on it.

Organizations that outperformed their business targets for 2021 were more likely to be further ahead in planning changes to their diversity policies compared with organizations that had performed less well.

"Given the need to attract a broad spectrum of talent into organizations from different demographic groups to meet demand for skills, the Business Future Index shows businesses must make diversity a higher priority," said Tania Garrett, Chief People Officer, Unit4. "Along with investing more in reskilling their existing workforce to help meet future requirements, the Index clearly shows there is a close correlation between investment in innovative technologies and a positive impact on recruitment and retention."

The people-related data in the Business Future Index 2022 highlights the impacts of accelerated change on workforce strategies, some of which are positive. What is clear is that those that had accelerated change in the last 12 months have seen their employees benefit from better well-being and team collaboration.

# Women in tech moving in a positive direction, helped by hybrid working

Hybrid working is now commonplace in tech, with 2 to 3 days a week in the office the average requirement.

THE Nash Squared Digital Leadership Report, in collaboration with CIONET, is based on data from the world's largest and longest running survey of senior technology decision makers. The following data are relevant to women in tech:

- This is starting to help have a positive impact on the number of women in the global tech sector:
- Female leaders are up to 14% globally
- Almost a quarter (23%) of the tech team is now female
- 28% of new hires in the last two years have been women. The pipeline is therefore slowly but surely improving.

With almost two thirds (58%) of organisations expecting to increase their technology headcount in 2023 against a backdrop of widespread skills shortages, Bev White, CEO of Nash Squared, said: "Despite continued skills shortages across the global technology sector, our research is showing that organisations are

taking innovative steps to ease the challenges – redesigning their employee offers to attract talent and, increasingly, looking beyond their own borders to access bright minds internationally, working remotely. They've also been increasing their efforts to attract more women into tech. I am heartened to see progress here: the industry is inching towards the better gender balance it so badly needs.

One area for companies to focus on is the role that men can play in improving diversity. With men making up the great majority of the workforce, it follows that their attitudes and behaviour have a huge impact.

There are many things that men can do to play a positive part in gender diversity. For instance, it's about appreciating that better diversity is in everyone's interests. Numerous studies



have shown that diverse workplaces are more productive. They foster diversity of thought and innovation.

This doesn't only apply to gender, but to diversity in all its forms. So, creating a more diverse workplace benefits us all. Men should also not be too hesitant about getting involved! This particularly applies to women's networks, which have become common in many organisations. If men are involved too, this helps increase their understanding of issues and join the dialogue about solutions for change."

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# InnovateHer releases annual impact report

Work to get girls in tech reaching over 692,000 people.

**SOCIAL ENTERPRISE** InnovateHer are celebrating their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday and world STEM day this November, with the launch of their annual Impact Report for 2021/2022. InnovateHer has been working for half a decade to get more women and girls working in tech, through educational programmes, working with partners and campaigning to raise awareness.

InnovateHer launched a new programme of activities in January of this year, including Inspiring Assemblies, introducing pupils to the world of tech. Role models also joined classrooms to talk about their careers and how they got there, with the aim of making careers in tech more tangible. Currently, only 26% of the tech workforce is female. Although this is an increase from 19% previously, the impact report revealed there is more work to be done. According to the report, issues around getting girls into tech starts at school. It's been a challenging year for STEM

education following the Covid-19 pandemic, and according to McKinsey, students are around four months behind on learning. InnovateHer's report also found that there is yet to be a significant rise of female students taking tech subjects in education - only 20% of students taking Computer Science at GCSE are female.

In the workplace, the report found that 45% more women than men leave jobs in the tech sector, and 50% of females who take a tech role leave it before the age of 35. There is also a lack of diversity, with only 0.7% of the industry made up of black women. Despite the tough landscape in school and in the workplace, the report revealed that 692,000 people interacted with InnovateHer over the course of the year. After taking courses with InnovateHer, 50% of students said they felt more confident about going to work in tech. 85% of students are aged between 13-15, highlighting the

importance of young people being engaged in STEM from school age. Chelsea Slater, co-founder, and director of InnovateHer said of the report: "Our annual impact report is an important piece of research that not only highlights the work we do, but also why we do it. It's great to see that the female tech workforce is on the rise by 7%, but this isn't enough.

"We're passionate about getting out into schools and giving girls the confidence to consider a career in tech. We've relaunched our Tech4Good downloadable workbook, and our Understanding UX course online, and soon we'll be launching further short courses to allow students to learn about the areas of tech they're most interested in."

"Our team is growing and we're now a mighty team of 10. We've never been more passionate about our work with partners and schools."



# Ensono research uncovers women in technology barriers

Survey finds women in tech roles around the world experience discouragement, harassment and inequality in the workplace.

ENSONO has released the results of its third annual Speak Up survey, uncovering biases related to women in technology. This year, Ensono surveyed 1,500 women across the United States, United Kingdom and India to better understand the experiences of women working in the tech industry, examining topics such as learning and career development, workplace harassment and gender equality.

The world is much different than it was when Ensono first started auditing in-person conferences for speaker gender parity in 2019, during the first iteration of Speak Up. This year, the company shifted its focus to what has changed for women pursuing technology careers in this new age of work, compounded with an ongoing reckoning in the industry around workplace inequity, hybrid work policies, DEI efforts, and the continued demand for tech talent. While organizations have made progress — 96% of respondents said they consider their company to be an inclusive workplace, several issues remain:

- Nearly half (44%) of the women surveyed say they've seen an increase in workplace sexual harassment during the last 5 years.
- One in five women (22%) from the U.S. and India report experiencing verbal abuse, with the U.K. following closely at 21%. In the U.K., women report more subtle forms of discrimination, such as microaggressions (23%) or being dismissed in group settings (25%).
- 91% of Latinx women and 72% of Black women say they've experienced discouragement or setbacks in their careers, compared to only 64% of white women.

"For our Speak Up initiative this year,

we chose to focus on what is changing for women pursuing tech careers, and the unique needs and experiences of women across the globe," said Meredith Graham, chief people officer at Ensono. "It's clear there is still a lot of work to be done to promote and enact real change for women in the workplace, especially in technology, which is a predominantly male industry. It's important that company leaders not only listen to women about their experiences but create a culture of communication and advocacy to help reduce the barriers women face every day."

## Additional key findings include:

- Women are discouraged from pursuing STEAM careers: 67% said they have experienced discouragement or setbacks while pursuing a career in technology.

These setbacks range from discouragement in pursuing a STEAM career in high school or earlier (45%), feeling as if the career path was male-dominated (44%) and being told the career path was too challenging for women (36%).

- Learning and development is in demand: 60% of women said they have heard from employers that a lack of skills holds them back, but in the U.S. and U.K., only a third of women said their company offers training programs or academies. With 20% of women saying they will seek a new job within the next year,



the demand for learning and training initiatives showcases an opportunity for employers to invest in the career development of female tech workers.

- Remote work remains positive: 85% of women in tech feel they have more job opportunities due to remote/hybrid work, and 82% of women in tech report that remote/hybrid work has made them happier. It's clear that the flexibility of remote work has positively impacted women and their careers, especially regionally.
- Tech experiences vary around the globe: In India, female workers continue to feel discouraged when pursuing tech roles — a quarter of female tech workers in India said they believe their company interviews women only for optics, and women in India are mostly likely to be asked questions about their family life, higher than in the U.S. or U.K. Meanwhile, in the U.K., more than a quarter of women said men and women are not treated equally in the workplace and nearly a third of women believe their companies pay men and women unequally — higher than U.S. respondents. The differing experiences of women across regions are an important distinction for global technology organizations.



# Women in Blockchain Talks launches two global chapters

Chapters now launched in Dubai and Warsaw; further chapters set to launch in Manchester, Barcelona, Berlin, Karachi, and Delhi.

The UK's leading diversity-driven blockchain educational and networking ecosystem, Women in Blockchain Talks (WiBT), has launched two new chapters in Dubai and Warsaw.

The launch ties in with an increasing global footprint of the organisation, with chapters also set to launch in Manchester, Barcelona, Berlin, Karachi, and Delhi by end of year.

The chapter launch follows increasing global attention and priority of ESG initiatives. By 2025, it is expected that around 33% of all global assets under management will have ESG mandates. This means that in fast-growing spaces like Blockchain and Web3, inclusivity

and diversity are moving from “nice to have” to necessity.

The events in the new chapters will be monthly or bi-monthly, and will focus on mini panels and fireside chats with dynamic women in the blockchain space, as well as networking and updates from the wider WiBT community.

The launches form a part of WiBT's wider mission to introduce and onboard 50,000 women into blockchain by 2023. These global chapters will enable individuals to not only connect with other like-minded individuals, but those that share their language and culture, whilst still being part of

WiBT's international and diverse community. As Lavinia Osbourne, founder of Women in Blockchain Talks, says: “Not everyone speaks English, or can travel to major cities to attend blockchain and/or crypto/web3 events, so if blockchain is the paradigm shift that many talk of, and the future of money, business and career, how do we involve those individuals?”

WiBT made the decision a long time ago to create safe and supportive spaces for everyone, particularly women, as that is our focus, to learn and prosper. We have now found the right collaborators, leaders on the ground, to do this.”





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# New job, new challenge!

I have recently taken on a new role as CEO of DiffusionData Ltd (formerly known as Push Technology) and overseen a complete strategic realignment of the company's go-to-market strategy.

BY GRETHE BROWN CEO OF **DIFFUSIONDATA**.

THE COMPANY is a pioneer and leader in real-time data streaming and messaging solutions and serves a broad range of industries including financial services, transportation, energy, retail, healthcare, and eGaming. The strategic realignment was necessary to meet the digital transformation needs of the markets we support. As you can imagine this was quite a challenge.

My business philosophy is to believe in people and enable them to succeed. To do this you need to listen to what people say and then give them the framework to allow them to achieve their objectives.

For the company to succeed, I believe the best and most efficient way is to capitalise on the knowledge we already have and use it inside the organisation to develop the business for everyone's benefit (employees, shareholders, all stakeholders).

## Leading from the front

It is critical to clarify strategy and goals, and help people understand why what they're doing is needed and how it fits in the broader corporate strategy of the company. When everything flows, my job becomes easier. At DiffusionData we had a couple of strategy days very early on after I started and worked through our growth plans, thrashed out the messaging and I identified where we needed to focus in the marketplace. I set up a strategic matrix plan with each department, with key month on month goals.

As part of the market realignment I have made sure that marketing, SDR's, sales, tech sales and support all clearly know what they are responsible for and how their efforts support the success of others and the business. This may all sound straightforward, obvious even, but the key is that every individual knows their part and that their role is a critical part of the wider picture. People can do amazing things when they work together and enjoy what they do. We are also working hard to make DiffusionData a great place to work by looking carefully at the best hybrid work environments, opening new offices which provide capabilities which are not possible from the home office (like sitting round a table and thrashing out a problem!). If I listen attentively to my colleagues, they tell me what's needed, so I just need to provide that. It's all about opening doors for people and letting them breathe. This is what I do wherever I go. Not so hard when you think about it.

## Prioritising and compromising

I have to say the team really rose to the challenge, which was amazing bearing in mind that we have an interesting mix of very experienced people who have been there since the company was founded, coupled with a significant amount of new talent. The challenges come in the shape of priorities,





and this was resolved by jointly communicating and compromising. It is really quite easy when everybody wants the same thing.

DiffusionData is full of people who are very excited and proud about their product, and want to help grow the company. Everybody agreed that, for example, designing a new website that better represented what we do and changing the name of the company was something that had to happen, and everybody had to put in extra effort and compromise on one or two other things to get it done in time. This is the first time the company has come together with everybody involved.

**DW:** *How did it get into technology?*

**GB:** After graduating (in Maths) I went to work at Ericsson in Sweden as a software developer on their mobile telecoms products. After a couple of years Ericsson gave me the opportunity to move to the UK at a time when there was explosive growth in mobile networks. In Sweden, there had been a drive to get more females into technology, and Ericsson was part of this, so when I started there were 30% females in the company in Linköping, which created a very balanced working environment. After moving to England it wasn't quite like that and I have often been the only female in a meeting, but female leaders were actually fairly common already then.

**DW:** *Being a mom and juggling work commitments?*

**GB:** Technology has changed, and enabled so much expansion, but also attitudes have changed. In the UK, things like legislated maternity and paternity leave and access to childcare has improved. Before my oldest child started school, I set up an after school's club (and breakfast and holiday club) with a committee of working mums who all wanted to be able to continue working - which was very unusual back then, but the take up was good, and we also got National Lottery funding (£21,000 - thank you National Lottery!) and the clubs are still there today. The mom's I worked with to make this happen were amazing. In fact, the school made the clubs into a selling point. After that I had people ringing me up, asking me whether I could set up something similar at their school! I had to tell them I had a full time job and this was done out of necessity. Crucially, that kind of initiative really helps enable a more mixed and balanced workplace.

**DW:** *Have you seen women play more of an influential role in technology?*

**GB:** Yes and no, my first big boss in Sweden was female and there were plenty of others, but in the UK it has been more unusual. The tradition to give up work or go part time when you have children is stronger here and hence it is important that we try our best to enable flexible working so that life isn't so stressful for parents. Influential positions still tend to be expected to be full time, but I think that is also

changing and Covid has accelerated this trend.

**DW:** *What advice would you give somebody looking to enter the industry now?*

**GB:** Be brave, do something you love and work with people who are supportive, get a good boss who understands who you are and what your goals are – then put in some hard work and you will be happy and probably go far!

**DW:** *What achievements have you been really proud of?*

**GB:** In the late 90's Ericsson set up an organisation to start groundbreaking work on "Apps On Your Phone" using a development organisation who had previously worked on 1st generation mobile systems, and we managed to become known inside the whole global Ericsson ecosystem - that was fantastic fun, and a great display of the application of new technology inside Ericsson. I have always tried to look at the broader situation, whichever position I've held and facilitate growth and remove blockages whenever possible. This has resulted in me growing professional services organisations, running large software and hardware programs, enabling improved relations with customers and staff and I hope, increasing people's quality of life at work.

Be brave, do something you love and work with people who are supportive, get a good boss who understands who you are and what your goals are – then put in some hard work and you will be happy and probably go far!

**DW:** *What does the future hold?*

**GB:** What has happened after the lockdowns is very interesting with the speedy technology evolution and enablement of working from home. This is requiring a much more flexible approach to engage with people and get a sense of belonging which does not solely rely on an individual's presence in an office.

Where possible we need to have offices that are nice to go to and where people want to be, the interesting thing is how much people actually enjoy being together and a day in the office can almost turn into a treat! A balance here is very important. We are back to engaging, communicating, trying hard to make people see their important contribution to the whole and being excited by it. If people enjoy each other's company and are excited by what they do, you do not need to force them into an office to ensure strong output. Future technology management will be much more about people wanting to be on the team and part of the journey, than control and micromanagement.

# Crossing the gender gap to become Telehouse's new MD

**TAKAYO TAKAMURO IS THE NEW MANAGING DIRECTOR OF TELEHOUSE EUROPE**, the global colocation provider that brings together more than 3,000 business partners, including carriers, mobile and content providers, enterprises and financial services companies. In her new role, she is tasked with overseeing continued growth, expanding Telehouse Europe's highly connected ecosystem.

COMING FROM JAPAN, my career started at a time when women were still expected to fulfil support functions. So, it was quite unusual for women to work in sales within the IT market. I can't say that concerned me too much – I was keen to learn.

After completing my degree in sociology from Keio University in 1995, I began my career with Telehouse's parent company, the telecoms operator KDDI Corporation, working for Teleway. I was taking care of major financial companies that had entered the Japanese market and required an international network.

I joined Telehouse in 2004 as a sales manager and worked there for three years. When I started work at Telehouse, I was already married, but I decided to live away from my family, which caused a great deal of astonishment at KDDI. Upon my return to HQ, I worked as the sales manager in charge of the Japanese trading company, to provide their international network.

I was then promoted to group leader for the wholesale business, and worked for a variety of major carriers who used KDDI's network to establish their own network in Japan. Moving up to Director of Global ICT Sales and Marketing, I supported Japanese customers' international business from the network perspective. I was leading global sales and business development for major manufacturers and finance companies, which was challenging, fascinating and a wonderful learning experience all at the same time.

And then in 2020, I was appointed Senior Assistant to the board, which gave me a great opportunity to learn something very different – how to manage the company as a board member. Last year (2021) I became Deputy Managing Director at Telehouse International and in October of this year I became Managing Director.

If I offered advice to women about a career in IT, it would be to rid themselves of any ideas that sales or technology should be men's work. It is vital to forget stereotyped ideas of this kind that just hold women back.

To get on you must be hungry and eager to learn new things even though you may not be a specialist in IT or technology. My degree, it is worth pointing out, was in sociology. Women need to find their way forward by constantly updating their knowledge and expanding what they know about the industry.

This is an exciting time for me now. I'll continue to be based in London, which is our European headquarters, and I'll be putting the emphasis on innovation and customer experience. We are seeing unprecedented demand for connectivity, scalability and security, which we aim to deliver at Telehouse. We have a long-established reputation for excellence in the connectivity and data centre market and I'm determined to continue following through on our commitment to reliability, resilience and all-round best-in-class excellence.



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## Making the case for mentoring

Why providing mentorship programmes and growth opportunities to women in technology should be every organisation's priority.

**BY ALIONA GECKLER, CHIEF OF STAFF AND SVP OF BUSINESS OPERATIONS AT **ACRONIS****

MORE AND MORE WOMEN are joining the tech industry every day. Companies, no longer comfortable with the status quo, begin to realize the great benefits of having a diverse workforce, and start to provide equal opportunities to people of all walks of life. I love hearing stories about diversity changing company culture and even improving the bottom line. It shows us the workforce is evolving and women play an essential part in this process. I recently read a Deloitte article that predicted that by the end of 2022, the tech industry will reach an all-time high of 33% female representation.

This is a pivotal and exciting time for women in tech, a historically male-dominated industry. However, there are many remaining obstacles women face in the workforce. Luckily, with the proper resources and guidance, organisations can empower women with the skillsets needed to overcome challenges and lead successful careers. One such tool is mentorship.

A mentor is someone who usually has either a similar profession or background and who can offer their wisdom and share their experience with the mentee to help conquer obstacles and make

important career choices. The right mentor can even be a door opener and a long-term point of reference to confide in during the journey.

The impact of mentorship on career satisfaction is striking: 40% of women cite lack of mentorship as one of the biggest challenges in the tech industry, alongside a lack of female role models and opportunities for advancement.

As the Chief of Staff and SVP of Business Operations at Acronis, I am proud to see first-hand the role mentorship plays in inspiring and educating women in the tech industry. We have officially launched our own mentorship programme, with already 50+ mentees involved across the world.

Our mentorship programme is part of the #CyberWomen initiative which is targeted to identify, educate, inspire, and coach the next generation of female leaders. We identified 50 high-potential women, selected through our performance review process, to be mentored by 40 of our senior leaders, executives, board members and advisors. Our mentees are fortunate enough to receive guidance from accomplished industry leaders like our

To make it a successful mentorship programme, the organisation must ensure employees have the time and resources to be able to connect with these potential mentors on a consistent and private basis

Chairman and former CEO of VMware Paul Maritz, Acronis Board Member and former CMO of Palo Alto Networks René Bonvanie, and former Vice-Chancellor of Germany Philipp Rösler, who is one of our Advisors, among several other senior executives.

Mentoring meetings are happening monthly, and we started with internal training on what mentoring is about, the role of mentor and mentee, and how to start. It's essential to agree on the goal of mentoring for each mentee, and we mainly focus on developing soft skills and support with career progression. I, myself, currently have two mentees at Acronis. I enjoy our sessions very much and am happy and satisfied when I can give support to my female colleagues. This support can be around understanding themselves better, planning their next career steps, achieving more in their current roles, navigating difficult situations, networking better internally and externally, or balancing professional goals and personal plans like marriage and children. Mentorship sessions also are beneficial for mentors. I am continuously learning from my mentees and using this knowledge in many aspects of my work.

There is also an evident demand for mentors—when the mentorship programme was first announced at Acronis, my inbox was immediately inundated with supportive women eager to join the programme. Leaders looking to implement mentorship opportunities for women can – and should – start by looking within their organisation for potential mentors. This is not to offset all mentor

responsibilities on individual employees, but having female supervisors and executive women available to provide direction and help navigate the corporate world can go a long way. These one-on-one relationships are essential to help professionals develop the proper networking and interpersonal skills, including self-preservation, self-care, and improved confidence in the workplace.

To make it a successful mentorship programme, the organisation must ensure employees have the time and resources to be able to connect with these potential mentors on a consistent and private basis. These mentored employees can go on to become mentors themselves later on in their careers, helping strengthen the bond and sense of community in the workplace between women and those from various backgrounds. Studies have even shown that employees with mentors are promoted up to five times more often than their non-mentored peers, with mentors being promoted up to six times more than their peers.

With consistent mentoring, women from all backgrounds and walks of life can thrive in their careers and inspire a stronger, more confident future generation of women to join the technology sector which will benefit both the market and individuals in the long run. My personal experiences in this field have only inspired me to continue pushing for mentorship initiatives in Acronis and spreading the word about the benefits of professional mentoring.



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# Rewiring the technology sector's DNA

It's a marathon, not a sprint, says **DIAA ELYACCO AT MONNIER**

DESPITE A GROWING REPRESENTATION in the tech sector, women still fall far behind their male counterparts, with women currently holding only 26.7% of tech-related jobs. For the majority of women, a career in tech is often not even considered a possibility. Only 3% of women would call a career in tech their top choice due to reasons such as a lack of encouragement from schools or an absence of female role models in the industry.

As it stands, there is no set conventional pathway for women to enter the tech landscape. My tech career began 23 years ago and since then, I have also been involved in entrepreneur and business areas, which have aided me in my pursuit of leading a life in tech. Shifting into business and entrepreneurship roles was not something that was originally planned, however, those experiences which made me step outside of my comfort zone helped me tremendously. Working in these different areas has allowed me to unlock a variety of new skills. The challenges in the tech sector for women are well-defined and must be addressed wherever possible. However, these challenges help offer a different insight, a way to create real change from within. Facing these challenges head-on culminated in my latest role, joining Monnier Paris, a luxury fashion eCommerce as their CEO.

## Where do the problems STEM from?

Until recently, there has been a somewhat slow but steady growth of the female population in tech, however, last year saw a 2.1% decrease in women in big tech. This drop begs the question of what more can be done for women currently in tech and those looking to break into the field. The disparity between men and women entering the tech industry begins in the early stage of education. Men are encouraged significantly more than women to go down the route of degrees in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). The issue is making women from a young age aware of the awesome reality of working in tech, and the excitement it brings. Educating and training them to join is also important. However, it then leads to the next ongoing issue: retaining female staff.

Women who enter tech are more likely to leave within the first year as opposed to those not in


STEM-related jobs. This reluctance to stay is linked to issues surrounding the ongoing pay gap, burnout, gendered biases and a lack of work-life balance. All these things together are ultimately driving women out of tech. It affects women leaders in tech as well across the board, 43% of women in these positions suffer from burnout in comparison with only 31% of male leaders. For men, working in an environment where the positions are mostly filled by other men alleviates a number of pressures and criticisms as their performance is not under a constant microscope as it is for the population of women working in tech. These pressures affect the morale of women in the workforce leaving them ultimately to end up searching for different work in sectors that offer stronger diversity, work-life balance and flexibility.

## Be unconventional

Unlike other sectors, which offer a straight career path, being unconventional in tech can in some ways be the best way forward for women. It opens up the floor to gain an array of skills from different fields and bring them back into the tech sphere from a different angle. Like any career, the majority of skills are learned through guidance and repetition, but there are some things that may come a bit harder than others such as building confidence. Nowhere is this more obvious than one of the biggest symptoms women feel in a male-dominated workplace - imposter syndrome. With 90% of CEOs in the top 10 largest tech firms being men, it is difficult to be comfortable when you make up such a small part of the minority, no less when you have few people in leadership who can relate to your struggles.

There are fewer opportunities and pathways for women to scale up and gain the same responsibilities as a man in tech. Taking the less conventional career route will make you stand out more. When I was a developer, I was surrounded by mostly male colleagues, and of course, it felt more natural when I made the switch to sales, where I quickly grew and developed skills in a more supportive environment. Moving to a different field allowed me to take time to grow, rather than being fearful of always having to play catch up. It massively equipped me to come back into the tech landscape with more confidence and in return, more respect.





To counterargue the difficulties women face in the tech landscape, these challenges can also be treated as opportunities

### A glass-half-full approach

To counterargue the difficulties women face in the tech landscape, these challenges can also be treated as opportunities. Throughout my career, I have felt the weight of these judgements and the need to prove myself and my capabilities- which in some ways being under the microscope can allow you to do more easily as your efforts stand out clearly. In the third trimester of my pregnancy, I was working for Streamcore Systems (acquired by Computer Associates 4 years later) when an opportunity arose to work with the French army in a partnership; which later came down to myself and one other candidate. Going to meet them face to face was sure to show my confidence and I leveraged the fact that I was heavily pregnant at the time to demonstrate my drive and passion, and I truly believe ultimately it helped in landing me the deal. This is only one of the many challenges women face in the workplace but if you can push through that and leverage those challenges, you can set yourself apart and instil trust in your ability to lead.

Taking on the role at Monnier was new and daunting. I found myself utilising the skills I gained

not just in my experience with technology, but all the changes in my career path as well. My time in the business and sales space made me realise how intertwined all of these aspects of businesses are. Grabbing the strongest aspects from all of my experience, I combined them to take Monnier into the next era of eCommerce. While my tech career in particular may have posed challenges, its undeniable impact on my own knowledge has empowered me to navigate this increasingly digital world.

### Confidence and comfortability

The challenges that women face when learning or entering the tech sector are well documented. We need more education, more women in senior positions and support from those around us.

These tweaks will change the very DNA of the tech sector for its own success by empowering the next generation of workers. For women already in the world of tech, we must show tenacity by being comfortable standing in a room filled mostly with men, leveraging our unique journeys against their straight and narrow ones.

# Building a sustainable pipeline of female talent

The technology sector can be a challenging and demanding environment for anyone looking to establish themselves and kickstart their career, but there are still far too many obstacles, limitations and stereotypes imposed on women.

BY ASH FINNEGAN, DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OFFICER AT **CONGA**

DESPITE THE INDUSTRY'S recent efforts, technology companies across the UK still have some way to go with regards to their diversity and inclusion initiatives and overall gender representation. According to research by Tech London Advocates, the vast majority of London tech companies still have hardly any female or BIPOC (black, indigenous and people of colour) representation at board level. In fact, industry leaders have warned that the lack of diversity will threaten the city's reputation and over time, could cost the UK tech sector its world-leading position.

This is a collective issue and requires a collective mindset, the technology industry must come together to address this challenge. In order to establish true and meaningful change, all women must draw from their unique perspectives, support one another, and inspire new ways of thinking. Support networks and company culture

According to a recent report by the British Computer Society (BCS), whilst the number of female senior leaders in the industry has increased in recent years, women make up just 22 percent of the technology sector's workforce. In order to tackle this issue head on, the industry needs to establish far more support networks and foster a collective voice.

It is important for women, especially those just starting out, to associate themselves with like-minded people who they can learn from and gain valuable experience; who can share first-hand their challenges, and career journey and how they would approach things differently. The simplest way to find

like-minded women and female focused support groups for those in tech is through social media sites or industry-backed committees.

There are many benefits that a diverse workforce can offer to organisations, from employee retention rates and improved client and customer loyalty, and even improved financial performance. Therefore, technology leaders should consider how their working models can be developed to attract and retain female talent across all areas of their organisation, beyond nurturing an inclusive environment or attractive work packages. Businesses should start by laying out clear personal and professional development pathways from the offset.

An inclusive culture of equal opportunity should be instilled in every employee from the board down to the sales team and practiced every day. Business should aim to inspire, encourage, and nurture new talent inhouse, ensuring every individual, regardless of their experience or age, is presented with opportunities to learn and take charge of their careers.

According to a study conducted by TechNation, men traditionally drive the culture within a company. Men should be reminded of their own responsibility and the role that they must play. It is with their help that we will be able to push for industry-wide change. However, change such as this is never easy and does not happen overnight. These initiatives should be approached carefully, but organisations must ensure that they inspire their entire workforce to become part of the process.

Another way of addressing the gender disparity is by prioritising employee experience when recruiting new talent. Today, 70 percent of employees have experienced discrimination at work in some form. It is critical for employers to gain deeper insight into what it means to engage with women from different backgrounds in both workplace and non-workplace settings. There are a number of strategies organisations can deploy to address this. However, leaders need to be open to criticism, prioritising transparent communication, and celebrating the unique cultural differences of all their employees in order to achieve their diversity goals.

### **Bridging the skills gap and bolstering industry growth**

The UK's skills gap is well documented. A recent government report revealed that around 82 percent of all jobs in the UK list digital skills as a requirement. Despite this, businesses struggled to fill one-third of vacancies last year due to lack of digital competency. In fact, the talent deficit is hampering industry growth, costing the UK economy approximately £12.8bn. Addressing the diversity challenge could perhaps hold the answer and provide a way of bridging the skills gap and establishing a more sustainable talent pipeline. The skills gap can be addressed directly within education. The talent deficit is partly due to the fact that most students are unaware of the vocational training or education opportunities available to them. A study conducted by PWC found that just three percent of female students considered technology as a career choice by the time they reach university, compared to 15 percent of all male students.

Clearly, young women need strong role models to look up and aspire to, but the pathways into industry need to be promoted in schools and colleges from an early age. Only then, can the skills gap be bridged from all sides. Government, businesses and educational institutions have a joint responsibility to educate young people on the unique career paths and roles within the technology sector.

Technology firms can provide outreach initiatives to girls and young women in schools and universities who may have not considered such a career before. This can be done by simply offering technology workshops to young people and students in an educational setting. The aim of such programmes should be to encourage students to consider a career in technology, help them to gain real life and practical experience, nurture their self-development and skills, and give them vital opportunities to learn as a result.

### **Female leaders must lead by example – be passionate**

It is imperative that women support one another at every opportunity. Together, they must challenge the traditional ways of thinking. Developing internal support groups, for example, which focus

Clearly, young women need strong role models to look up and aspire to, but the pathways into industry need to be promoted in schools and colleges from an early age. Only then, can the skills gap be bridged from all sides



on educating women and helping them to better navigate the career landscape offers others the support needed to becoming leaders themselves.

Ultimately, the best advice anyone could give to young aspiring women is to focus on what you are passionate about, what you love, and never stop listening to your own inner voice. Most importantly, do great work. Simply by staying focused and remaining true to yourself, anyone can make things happen, create their own career path and determine what their true aspirations are.

Once they have established themselves, all female leaders must maintain this passion and drive; pushing for further innovation, constantly looking to change things for the greater good. Never stop.



# The opportunities and challenges for women pursuing a career in the IT industry

Q&A with Eva Sóley Guðbjörnsdóttir, Deputy CEO and CFO, **ATNORTH**

**DW:** Tell us a bit about yourself, background and your current role?

**ESG:** I'm a Financial Engineer, I did both my B.Sc. and M.Sc. at Columbia University in New York. I was very lucky to get a scholarship there back in the days when I played soccer for Columbia University and did all my studies there.

When I hit the 'real world', I started my career in banking, first as an analyst then moving up the ranks to become CFO a few years later. This created the opportunity for me later on to move into an operational role in the IT sector when I became the CFO of Advania, a Nordic information technology service corporation, in Iceland in 2015. This was my entry point into the IT world. At that time, the company I work for now, atNorth, was only one department out of approximately 20, but it was already growing fast. Hence, there were always a lot of projects (and fun) around this department - it was fast-moving, exciting and successful and one of my favourites during my time at Advania.

We then saw an opportunity to divest this department, spinning it off into a separate entity in 2017, which became known as the now fast-growing company, atNorth. At that time, I stayed with Advania as the CFO; however, I always followed and kept up to date with the exciting growth journey that atNorth was on.

I then left Advania in 2019 to join Icelandair for about two and a half years, which was super interesting and

an overall great experience to learn more about the airline business. However, with my heart still in the exciting world of IT, I decided to leave the aviation industry and thankfully, my friends at atNorth knocked on my door shortly thereafter and invited me to join their exciting growth journey again!

It has been super exciting to join the company at such a pivotal point in its growth and to be connected with the atNorth team again.

**DW:** Did you ever sit down and plan your career? Have you always wanted to work in the IT industry?

**ESG:** Yes and no, I did plan to go to the US for my B.Sc. degree and find a good school there where I could play soccer and do my studies in the financial spectrum. I then deliberately decided that I wanted to move back to Iceland after graduation in 2006 to work for one of the Icelandic banks.

At that time, I foresaw myself working in the financial sector for the rest of my life, as the sector was very exciting and growing very fast.

But no, I didn't always plan to work in the IT industry. After the financial economic collapse in 2008, I stopped planning and just focused on working with great people on interesting projects. It just so happens that I've landed in the most exciting industry where technology and innovation are driving superhuman changes across the globe.



**DW:** *Have you faced any career challenges along the way and how did you overcome these?*

**ESG:** Challenges are bound to happen – probably most if not all weeks of the year. In my mind, the driving factors when facing challenges are to maintain an open mind and dialogue, listen, stay positive and strive to be as transparent as possible and honest towards people.

**DW:** *What has been your biggest career achievement to date?*

**ESG:** I believe that completion of all large projects (and even sometimes small, complex projects) is a huge achievement in and of itself. But, such wins are never something I do on my own, it is always a team effort where the whole team wins. There is no I in team, and teamwork is something I have championed my whole career and find the same strong alignment in atNorth's culture and values. In addition, and perhaps even more importantly, on a personal level, being part of business leadership teams and mentoring and supporting the career path of other women and seeing their successes brings me great joy and sense of accomplishment.

**DW:** *What one thing do you believe has been a major factor in you achieving success?*

**ESG:** Honesty takes you a long way. Focusing on leading teams by example and being part of the team all the way through projects will bring success. Hard work cannot be underestimated - it is true that nothing comes easily in life, especially not when faced with complex situations within your career. Having this hard work under your belt helps you deal with (and foresee) challenges as they arise. Striving to create diverse teams with team members that bring in skills or qualities that are lacking in the team – we all have our own strengths and weaknesses and building a strong and successful team can come down to the ability to identify these within each other and lean into others' strengths where we can. Case in point - I always strive to be surrounded by smarter team members than myself!

**DW:** *What top tips would you give to those considering, or trying to excel in their career in IT?*

**ESG:** Staying current when it comes to IT innovation and striving to keep up with the progresses and developments in this sector – which is challenging as it changes fast!

**DW:** *Do you believe there are still barriers for success for women working in tech, if so, how can these barriers be overcome?*

**ESG:** From where I stand now, I don't think there are barriers for success for women in IT. I saw this shifting back in my days with Advania where the top layers of the org chart were even and balanced when it comes to gender diversity.

There are certainly still glass ceilings of sorts when it comes to female roles (particularly at senior level) within IT and tech; however, from what I have seen throughout my journey across different countries is that much of this is due to more of a lack of education in earlier schooling years - not a lack of desire or opportunity

It is, however, sometimes challenging to find women in IT in certain positions, so we also need more women into IT that are interested in excelling in this space and find ways to make the sector interesting enough for them to step into and stay in the space. I have learned personally that once you step in, it is difficult to step out again. I did it for a short while and went into aviation, but this fast-growing ever-changing tech environment called me back!

I know there is still room for improvement, but I think the IT industry is one sector that is streets ahead in its capacity to be open, accepting and positive towards diversity. There are certainly still glass ceilings of sorts when it comes to female roles (particularly at senior level) within IT and tech; however, from what I have seen throughout my journey across different countries is that much of this is due to more of a lack of education in earlier schooling years - not a lack of desire or opportunity.

**DW:** *What resources do you recommend for women working in tech?*

**ESG:** I would say the usual suspects here: podcasts, books, conferences, etc. But, networking and being active in social circles and on social media can also be a huge motivator for women in our sector.

**DW:** *What do you think companies can do to support and progress the careers of women working in technology - is there more that needs to be done to encourage women to work within the IT sector?*

**ESG:** We absolutely need to attract more young female talent into this super interesting space! We must do more to mentor our younger generations, to fuel their fire when it comes to an interest in joining the IT industry. But, equally beyond this, we need senior management to continue to lend better support to females, enabling flexible work environments where young talent can maintain a work life balance, as we know this is a make or break factor for our younger generations.

# How can we eliminate gender bias in our tech future?

One of the goals of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which places a strong emphasis on STEM education and training, is to encourage careers in these fields for both men and women.

BY MARIONA CAMPMANY, MD AT **MITEK**

HOWEVER, we still have a lot of room for improvement for women and their role in STEM innovation. According to UNESCO, only 35% of students enrolled in STEM-related degrees are women and only 3% of them choose to major in IT. The lack of a more diverse workforce is more crucial than ever with the implementation of innovations like 5G, connectivity, new methods of digital security.

Equal opportunities will help make the unbiased, inclusive and innovative technological future a reality.

## We need more female role models

When young women start to make decisions that will affect their professional future, such as university degree and apprenticeship course choices, aspirational figures are a must. Choosing a career where there is a greater presence of women in leadership positions always gives the sense of more opportunities to grow and prosper, in a sector or organisation.

Unfortunately, the events of recent years may have stifled the growth of these aspirations. Jobs held by women during the pandemic were 1.8 times more vulnerable than those held by men, and moving towards a global recession this will continue to put the female workforce, and role models, at risk.

However, there is a glimmer of hope - an estimated one in four leadership positions at large global technology firms are expected to be held by women by the end of 2022.

Let us ask ourselves: do girls have enough examples of women who contributed to the advancement of science and technology? Do we think of women as CEOs and men as secretaries or nurses? Better education and visibility of women who are developing professionally in science, mathematics, or technology is needed, to provide role models for next generations. As industry leaders, we must showcase female success and celebrate their accomplishments to inspire girls making their first steps into further education and careers.

For me, I am fortunate enough to work with great role models in the tech sector. I am part of a group of more than 200 people where we share news, opinions, and opportunities for women in STEM. It has been inspiring working alongside some of the group's members including Cristina Aranda, an internationally renowned entrepreneur and expert in business digitalisation and innovation, and Cecilia Castaño, Professor of Applied Economics and researcher in social science.

## Diverse talent will unlock innovation

The visibility of women in technical and managerial positions will help to build and accelerate a more equal and inclusive industry. Not only that, but women in technology can provide a more balanced





view of the issues facing the sector and the female gender itself.

Think about it - when there is only one gender making the decisions, the issues that affect women remain largely ignored. In tech, problems can range from the development of artificial intelligence (AI) that must not fall foul of certain biases, to products or services that are not designed with the uniqueness of the female gender in mind. Digital transformation must go hand in hand with human transformation if it is to be effective.

Now, alongside the growing importance of diversity, equality and inclusion in the sector, leaders are looking to alternative sources for talent. 44% of tech professionals start their careers in non-tech occupations, highlighting the importance of a wider talent pool, and further increasing the variety of skillsets and mindsets. Tech leaders must build a more inclusive workforce to spark more diversity of thought, and with it, more innovation.

### The future requires an unbiased female digital identity

The development of digital identities is a crucial component of technological innovation and advancement. However, we still have more to do as biometric bias is a very present issue affecting gender and race. While biometrics themselves are not inherently biased, the bias comes from a lack of diverse demographic data, bugs, and inconsistencies in algorithms. If a particular demographic is prioritised over others by the training data, the solution will then follow suit.

Given how quickly these technologies are being adopted, it is essential that the industry prioritises access for everyone, including women, to influence future developments.

Diversity should be expected. Tech leaders must make a commitment to building a diverse workforce to create an ethical, fair, inclusive workplace. In turn, a diverse workforce will create solutions for people that are free from bias and discrimination.



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It is imperative that Digitalisation World magazine remains a timely resource for this industry, so we are especially interested in highlighting very recent work.



# Tackling the gender imbalance in the tech industry

At present, only a little more than a quarter (27%) of the global technology workforce is currently made up of women – despite them playing a vital and active role in the profession. Perhaps this fact is unsurprising when, traditionally, technology-related roles have been targeted at and positioned for men.

BY KATIE TEITLER, SENIOR CYBERSECURITY STRATEGIST AT **AXONIUS**

ALTHOUGH PROGRESS has been made to increase equal access to STEM education through organisations and initiatives such as ‘Women in STEM,’ the number of women in technology roles, particularly in senior positions, has clearly not seen the same level of increase.

Additionally, when there is lower representation of any group in an industry – be that gender, race, religion, or other – it’s harder for these groups to break in and feel like they are welcome, that they’ll get the support they need, and that they’ll have the same opportunities as everyone else.

To overcome this challenge, the tech industry needs strong role models to look up to, and they need to re-evaluate their current recruitment and retention strategies if they want to succeed in hiring and retaining employees amidst the current talent crisis.

## Diversifying the talent pool

It would be impossible to speak about women in tech without mentioning Ada Lovelace, one of the most notable women in the industry who is well-recognised for being the world’s first ever computer programmer. In fact, her contribution to the STEM industry is honoured and recognised every year, amongst other women, on the second Tuesday of October – which has been deemed as ‘Ada Lovelace Day.’

In the world of cybersecurity, we also have Tarah Wheeler, Runa Sandvik, and Katie Moussouris, who was deemed one of the World’s Top 50 Women in Tech in 2018.

There are many more women I could highlight here, and the industry’s attention to their incredible work is clearly starting to help draw in new talent.

A recent report on women in cybersecurity found that women now hold 25% of cybersecurity jobs globally, which is up from 20% in 2019 and around 10% in 2013. But even with this positive shift, women still remain very much in the minority and this could be one of the reasons why 3.5 million cybersecurity roles are estimated to remain vacant by 2025.

To meet this demand, the industry must diversify their talent pool and start hiring equally across gender and diversity groups. By committing to equal opportunity for all applicants, organisations can demonstrate that they don’t favour one gender group over another and benefit from the value that a diverse group of individuals can bring.

## An honest approach to recruitment

Ultimately, what we need to see from the industry is an honest approach to recruitment. Hiring executives need to recognise that unconscious bias will be inherent during the hiring process and implement controls to eliminate it.

For example, there is a need to train all hiring managers on the presence of unconscious bias in the workplace and what that looks like. Organisations should also revisit their job descriptions and pay attention to certain word choices – by using gender neutral terms like “motivated” and “committed” when describing the ideal candidate, and using neutral titles to reference a person

rather than gender pronouns. It's also a good idea to start vocalising how important diversity is to your organisation – whether at staff meetings or in company-wide written communications. It's been proven time and time again that hiring people from different backgrounds and with different experiences is a major business benefit. You need all types of thinking, and people who will challenge others' perspectives to be truly successful in business.

Giving women opportunities for these roles, especially leadership roles where they can inspire others, is a huge part of lessening the gender imbalance. In fact, women that are professionally and personally engaged with their workplace are more likely to cultivate comfortable shared experiences for other women to engage, and this is key to ensuring young women have the right role models and are inspired to enter the industry and progress in their tech careers.

### **Sending the right signals**

If a woman is applying to a tech company and sees that 75% of the leadership team and board of directors is male, that sends a signal. Any discrimination, bullying, or negative behaviour towards women that goes without punishment will also send a signal.

The work doesn't stop once women enter these roles. Sending the right signals, always, shows women that they are valued in their workplace and that they can achieve executive-level positions, regardless of their gender.

As well as overhauling the recruitment process to be less biased, we must continue to support women to stay in their roles. We do this by providing opportunities for them to attend courses that can advance their careers, building mentoring programs where they can learn from and be inspired by other women in their organisation, and identifying male



colleagues who will act as allies in helping to raise their profiles among other leaders in their company. It's these series of steps – diversifying the talent pool, re-evaluating the recruitment process, and ensuring women are supported throughout their careers – that can further help women feel more comfortable in the workplace and in pursuing careers in the technology and cybersecurity industries. The talent shortage won't solve itself. Doing all that we can to welcome women into the field will prove beneficial in our fight to meet the rising demand for talent.

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# Transforming business leaders into Women-in-Tech allies

Although the female share of the tech industry labour force is higher than it once was, it's still less than it should be. Globally, women fill fewer than a third of the roles in technologies such as cloud computing, data and artificial intelligence. That's not fair to all those tech-talented women out there—or to all those tech companies that could be benefitting from their talents.

**BY JENNIFER LEE, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER  
AT INTRADIEM**



DESPITE A TECH HIRING SPREE fuelled by the widespread uptake of emerging technologies during the pandemic, women benefitted less than men. The gender gap remains stubbornly entrenched, as the pandemic actually aggravated gender inequality thanks to the fact that more women than men left or were forced to leave their jobs to assume primary caregiving responsibilities.

Many of the hurdles faced by women in the technology sector are rooted in socially and systemically enforced gender roles and norms. These deep-rooted beliefs foster unconscious (and often very conscious) biases. Those biases need to be addressed and disarmed – for the benefit of women and tech companies alike.

## Transformers of the World, Unite

Women have a key role to play in this transformation, of course, but we cannot solve the problem alone. If we are to tackle the under-representation of women in tech, we need to instigate conversations with business leaders and make clear to them the untapped value that women could be bringing to technology roles, from the executive suite to the developers' cluttered work stations. Company leaders must also understand that they have a major role to play in this transformation.

There are plenty of sources to turn to for ideas, perspectives and inspiration. Influential female-led communities such as Women in Tech – Global Movement, WomenTech Network and Women Who Code are animated by passionate, talented women working to break down barriers that hold women in check and deprive technology companies of their talents.

The mission of these communities is to empower women through leadership development, professional growth, mentorship, and networking events while creating and offering openly accessible educational resources.

## Be a Change Agent

The transformation begins with an honest willingness to be more inclusive and promote a diverse workforce. Building an authentically inclusive culture requires commitment and tenacity.

Every company's culture is different, so every company's journey will be different. But there are three key steps every ally of women in tech should take:

### 1. Raise Your Voice

Advocate for women in hiring processes, promotion decisions, and in your daily work. Make sure women's voices, insights and experiences are heard in meetings and other decision-making forums.

### 2. Be Consistent in Your Support

Speak about women's empowerment and encouragement when they're in the room and also when they're not. Integrity means doing the right thing even when no one is looking.

### 3. Elevate Others

We all benefit from hearing and sharing relatable, real-life success stories. Never miss an opportunity to recognise the successes of women in tech, or to promote women as leaders and role models in their field.

Close the Gender Gap and Open the Talent Gate  
Working on innovations that improve our lives with like-minded people can provide incredible job satisfaction, and women should not miss out on fulfilling careers in technology. They should be encouraged to explore all opportunities the sector

has to offer. But transforming this male-dominated industry will require resilience and determination because women continue to be judged on variables that have nothing to do with their competency or their ability to lead.

Re-balancing the gender equation in tech is the key to creating a work environment that celebrates and supports diversity. McKinsey's Diversity wins: How inclusion matters report highlights that businesses with more gender-diverse executive teams are 25 percent more likely to experience above-average profitability.

In addition to financial gain, the McKinsey report also links greater female representation to higher performance compared to organisations with fewer or no female executives.

The challenge is as clear as it is non-negotiable. It won't be easy, but when are worthwhile things ever easy? Women need to advocate tirelessly – while at the same time soliciting the commitment of all those male tech leaders – to make technology roles accessible to women, promote their acquisition of necessary skills, champion successful female role models, and show the technology industry that it has everything to gain by closing the gap and opening the gate.



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# How to support women in tech after a career break

For many women, whether it's taking time off to be a stay-at-home parent, care for a loved one, or for any other personal circumstances, in today's digital-first world, technology and processes evolve so quickly that they feel ill-equipped to return to work.

BY DR ANDREA JOHNSON, VP GLOBAL BUSINESS SYSTEMS AT [WORKHUMAN](#)

LUCKILY, there are proactive steps that organisations can take to support their female employees, and ensure as smooth a transition as possible. Key to this, are dedicated returnship schemes. Implementing such initiatives is not only vital for promoting gender diversity in tech, it also demonstrates leaders' commitment to an inclusive workplace culture that embraces different career journeys, creating opportunities for talented people to join the organisation.

## Internal support is key

It's vital that leaders take the time to support women who may struggle to acclimate following a career gap. Doing so will not only improve the employee

experience for those returning to work, it will also enhance performance, retention and, consequently, the company's bottom line. Research by KPMG shows that 75% of female executives across industries have experienced imposter syndrome in their careers, and this is likely compounded by a career break. As a result, solid internal support is vital to allaying feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt that could derail their return to work.

One way to achieve this is through dedicated employee resource groups (ERGs). At Workhuman, the 'Women and Allies' ERG is hugely instrumental in supporting women return to work – providing them with personal and career development resources. It's also important to acknowledge the broader external factors that may affect women's ability to successfully return to work. Workhuman's 'Women and Allies' ERG has led discussions on everything from maternity benefits, to the consequences of Roe vs Wade being overturned in the US. Employers need to consider the wider issues that may be on employees' minds – such as the current cost-of-living crisis in the UK – and from there provide the most relevant support.

Of course, it's also crucial for leaders to understand that every employee is a unique individual – and so effective support may look different for each one. Leaders should therefore take the time to actively listen to and understand their individual employees' needs, and use this to create tailored support wherever possible. This is not only helpful for supporting women returning to work, but also for organisations as a whole. In fact, Workhuman's research found that taking the time to recognise and check-in with employees frequently leads to





increased psychological safety for both men and women.

### How returnship programmes can help

One way in which organisations can support women in their return to work is by partnering with dedicated 'returnship' programmes. These schemes are specifically designed to equip women with the necessary skills and experience to return to work after a career break. Returnships are and should form part of a multi-channel approach when creating an alternative talent strategy, and they are particularly important in sectors – like tech – where attraction and retention of talent is competitive.

At Workhuman, returnships are a huge focus for getting more women into STEM roles. The main benefit of these schemes is that they force organisations to be proactive and intentional about getting women back to work. Specifically, organisations should focus on removing as many barriers as possible for women to enable them to succeed, as well as providing a clear path for women to grow within the company. Organisations can partner with external returnship programmes, such as Women ReBOOT – a programme that supports women with tech sector skills and experience to return to work after a career break. Alternatively, organisations may wish to develop their own approach internally. This option provides an opportunity for employers to create a tailored programme that best suits the needs of their own employees, and can also be implemented alongside other existing programmes within the company.

In this way, employers can ensure they are taking a holistic approach to the entire employee experience – and make sure it is a positive one for all employees. For example, a returnship programme could be run alongside an existing ERG or a reward and recognition programme. The latter is particularly effective – after all, a great way to support women in their return to work, and ensure they feel confident in doing so, is by ensuring they receive frequent recognition for the value they bring to the workplace.

How the 'new normal' of work may benefit women It goes without saying that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a massive impact on employees, including where and how they work. While this rapid change has been challenging for many, it also presents an opportunity for women returning to work. Firstly, because of the increase in remote, hybrid, and flexible working, more women are able to even consider coming back to work in the first place – as this flexibility enables them to work around other commitments. Furthermore, women's support systems – whether that be partners, parents, or friends – now also have increased flexibility, meaning women have the support needed to successfully make the transition back to work. As a result, more and more women are returning to



work, so it's crucial that organisations continue to offer flexible working options wherever possible. This flexibility is not only beneficial to employees' wellbeing, it actively enables women to continue to advance their careers, thereby ensuring diversity at work.

### Conclusion

When employees were asked in a recent global Workhuman survey: "How important is diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) for you in terms of staying at your current organisation?", 72% said it's somewhat or very important. And that number is even higher for Gen Z employees (86%) and Black employees (87%). What's more, according to McKinsey, organisations that are more diverse are simply more successful.

DEI is not just a nice to have – it is a business imperative for leaders wishing to recruit and retain top talent. Organisations that prioritise getting women back into the workplace will not only enable these employees to succeed – they will also ensure strong and diverse teams, and ultimately improve the business bottom line as a result.



## Now is the time for women to break down boundaries in STEM

A career that began with a summer internship at IBM more than two decades ago has grown into a lifelong passion for technology. But like so many other women in the industry, my trajectory can hardly be considered smooth sailing.

BY LIN SUN, DIRECTOR OF OPEN SOURCE, [SOLO.IO](#)

THIS JUST REINFORCES how important Ada Lovelace has been as a role model for every woman, regardless of age, who wants to pursue a journey in STEM. Just from my own experiences, I know how critical it is to get more women into the sciences, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) fields from as young an age as possible.

Much work still needs to be done in this regard. From 2015 to 2019, the number of female graduates in core STEM subjects only increased by one percentage point (from 25% to 26%). However, the same research found that from 2017 core STEM employment for women grew by more than 6%. As the proverb goes, a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Change is constant and won't happen overnight. The signs are positive. In the US, female high school students who entered The Research Science Institute's summer STEM program will outnumber male students for the first time this year. Just from my own perspective, I have seen a continual evolution in how women are treated in STEM and how more opportunities are becoming available, albeit slowly.

The world is significantly different to when I started as an intern in 2000. Countless technology innovations, market developments, financial crashes, and even a pandemic have contributed to an awareness from women that there's nothing stopping them from pursuing a career in STEM. From the time I spent at IBM and Cisco, and my involvement at the OSGi Working Group and the Apache Software Foundation to my more recent work as a member of the Istio Technical Oversight Committee, and Director of Open Source at Solo.io. We live in a time where opportunities are there for the taking. Unfortunately, not all women, especially girls in school, realise the scale of what's available to them.

All of us must, therefore, play an active part in highlighting the opportunities on offer in STEM. Girls must be encouraged to participate in maths and science clubs, attend coding boot camps, and build and experiment on engineering projects. These can form the groundswell of female STEM leaders, which future generations of women can look up to in the same way we're drawing inspiration from Ada today.

### Engaging with others

I've been fortunate to work on container and cloud-native technologies since 2014. At the time, these were radically different technologies from what was available. Being involved from the ground level in building and operating highly available cloud-native services reinforced my commitment to helping play a role in educating women and girls on the fulfilment that STEM can provide.

I'm an IBM Master Inventor and hold more than 200 patents issued by the Patent and Trademark Offices all over the world. This illustrates just how much Ada's inspiration drew me to pursue more challenging targets and achieve greater heights continually. If all of us women can take her example and awaken that same passion in today's generation, then the world of STEM will become a significantly more diverse one than the one that currently exists.

From my various speaking engagements at leading cloud-native conferences like KubeCon, ServiceMeshCon, ContainerCon, and DockerCon, I've been exposed to so many different viewpoints on technology issues. Engaging with others, debating hot-button topics, and featuring as a guest speaker on various podcasts are all examples of how we, as women, can achieve great things in STEM.

### Don't hold back

Any woman looking to start a career in STEM must not be afraid of speaking up and having her voice heard. It can be as simple as networking with fellow professionals, asking questions or providing insight in a meeting, or even writing blogs, speaking at conferences, and chatting over podcasts. The central message is to get yourself involved in the conversation. It's as much about having confidence as it's about putting the necessary STEM skills to work to make a difference.

Technology is not just about hardware and software, coding, and networking. We need to show children the broad context of technology and its potential and teach them the problem-solving skills essential to making a difference in the future world of work. Because STEM permeates every industry sector, women can play a role across any vertical and at any size organisation, whether a humble start-up or a rapidly expanding multinational. The key is not to hold back.

I spent ten years working at the same job level, with countless hours of overtime and many a weekend spent at the office. Getting increasingly frustrated, I spoke to another woman at the company who was a distinguished engineer. Her advice was that working hard is only part of the equation. I needed to make myself known to others both inside the company and externally. This was a lesson that is still close to my heart as I continue to position myself through writing or speaking on the topics I am passionate about.



### Following through

By harnessing their passion and channelling that in a STEM field, women can bring fresh perspectives and invaluable insights. The hybrid world of work has shown us that managing the complexities of our professional and personal lives can be overcome. Organisations are more flexible than they were even two years ago. As long as the job gets done, it doesn't matter where people are working. This flexibility provides women with a great enabling environment to still raise a family if they choose to do so while remaining influential in STEM.

It comes down to increasing awareness of the possibilities for women in STEM and showing them that they can pursue any opportunity they want. Thanks to the work Ada and other influential women have done in this regard to help empower my generation of women, we can build on their legacy and create even more capacity for change.

The central message is to get yourself involved in the conversation. It's as much about having confidence as it's about putting the necessary STEM skills to work to make a difference



# It's time to crack the B2B sales gender diversity code

Diverse organisations deliver better business results. As Millennial and Gen Z employees wield more influence in the workplace, B2B buyers and sellers have fully realised the importance of having diverse sales teams.

BY MARY SHEA, VP, GLOBAL INNOVATION EVANGELIST AT **OUTREACH**

IN A RECENT B2B buyer survey conducted by Forrester on behalf of Outreach, 74% of respondents said sales teams need to be diverse and reflect the world around them. In a B2B seller motivation survey conducted by Dynata on behalf of Outreach, 90% of respondents agreed a diverse sales team was generally more successful.<sup>1</sup> Fostering inclusive cultures and devising strategies for recruiting, retaining, and ensuring diverse sales talent thrives is top of mind for B2B sales leaders.

As a former principal analyst at Forrester, and Outreach's Global Innovation Evangelist, I have been

tracking the monumental changes in B2B sales for ten years. Generational shifts have paved the way for the rise of social consciousness in the workplace. Once exclusively the realm of B2C brands, B2B chief executives must now clearly articulate their company's values and take a stand on social issues. Sales leaders agree too, as 82% of respondents in our chief sales officer study said they expect their CEO to take a stand on social issues.

On the buy-side, 73% of respondents said they would reconsider a business purchase if the supplier's values did not align with their own. Similarly, a staggering 79% of B2B sellers reported that their employer's stance on social issues had a mostly positive impact on sales and customer retention efforts.<sup>2</sup> While the data are clear, many business leaders struggle to create inclusive environments and build diverse teams.

## A Perfect storm of challenges

In the Fall of 2020, I led the research team and wrote an article covering the state of women in B2B sales published by Northern Illinois University's Journal Of Selling.<sup>3</sup> The study revealed that in addition to dramatic underrepresentation in B2B selling organisations women sellers dealt with a host of other challenges – including conscious and unconscious bias, being left out of decision loops, and pay inequity – all things not typically faced by their male counterparts.

As the pandemic intensified, there was no shortage of predictions on how women in the workforce would be disproportionately impacted. Companies like McKinsey, Accenture and others sounded the alarm bells. At that time, women made up 39% of global employment yet accounted for 54% of COVID-induced job losses.

Today only 25% of B2B sellers identify as women — an 8% drop since my article was published 24 months ago. And the data is worse in management, as only 16% of sales managers identify as women.<sup>4</sup> In



addition to lack of representation, sales leaders still haven't cracked the code on leadership approaches, management styles, and corporate policies that resonate with women. Our B2B sell side research showed that female sellers were 11% less likely to be satisfied with their company and 9% less satisfied with their actual job duties, day-to-day tasks, and interactions than their male counterparts.<sup>5</sup>

### Diversity starts at the top

Commitment to diversity and inclusion starts at the highest level of an organisation — its Board. Yet according to a 2022 UK Spencer Stuart Board Index, only 17% of the top 150 companies with a premium listing on the London Stock Exchange achieved gender parity on their boards.<sup>6</sup>

More work needs to be done to diversify boards, but once companies do add more women, it helps to focus on the number three. To create meaningful impact, you need at least three women, not just one. This means the commitment to diversity is more than symbolic. With three diverse voices, not everyone needs to agree, and it's more likely for those diverse voices to be heard.<sup>7</sup>

### Pick and retain diverse talent

I am excited about the role technology plays in equalising the playing field. HireQuotient is a talent assessment platform that drives efficiencies in the candidate evaluation process and helps its customers eliminate bias when making hiring decisions through its anonymized role-based skill assessments. Varicent, a sales compensation management technology provider makes its Gender Pay and Diversity apps complementary to its customers. The Gender Pay app highlights median pay by role and gender and the Diversity app highlights ethnic and racial diversity by roles and levels and monitors voluntary and involuntary departures.

Sales leaders must also ensure they have strategies and formal programs to ensure underrepresented sellers can thrive, and advance within their organisation.

This involves creating a work environment that minimises biases, encourages mentorship, and allows for affinity or Employee Resource Groups (ERG) to flourish. In our B2B seller survey 91% said Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE+I) programs were valuable or extremely valuable.<sup>8</sup>

At Outreach, one of our core values is “we find value in diversity and inclusion.” We embrace that internally through our nine ERGs that provide a safe space for our employees to interact, support each other, and engage in social activities. Our ERGs include but are not limited to colleagues from former or active military families, disabled and LGBTQIA+ people as well as employees with a variety of cultural backgrounds (Outreach Black Experience, Mosaic, and Adelente).

Earlier this year we launched a program we call RISE. This program was originally created to help our female sellers gain the necessary tools, access, and experiences to rise up through the ranks of the sales organisation. Building on the success of RISE we have now launched RISEUP, a similar program designed to cultivate the “unlimited potential” of a select set of high potential Black employees. B2B companies must seek out Board and executive team members with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and ways of thinking.

With the collective perspective they can then cascade values, expectations, and policies that foster diversity and inclusivity. Diverse corporate structures and sales teams don't occur by chance; they happen when every member of the organisation intentionally focuses on the end game.

## END NOTES

➤ 1. Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Outreach, April 2022  
Base: 212 B2B directors and above that influence purchasing decisions across North America and UK organisations in various industries

➤ 2. Source: Seller Motivation Online Survey conducted by Dynata on behalf of Outreach, June 2022.  
Base: 1201 (922 male and 279 female) Global B2B sellers and managers

➤ 3. Source: Zoltners, Andris P., PK Sinha, Sally E. Lorimer, Tania Lennon, and Emily Alexander (2020), “Why Women Are the Future of B2B Sales,” Harvard Business Review”. Available at: <https://hbr.org/2020/05/why-women-are-the-future-of-b2b-sales>

➤ 4. Source: Seller Motivation Online Survey conducted by Dynata on behalf of Outreach, June 2022.  
Base: 1201 (922 male and 279 female) Global B2B sellers and managers

➤ 5. Source: Seller Motivation Online Survey conducted by Dynata on behalf of Outreach, June 2022.

Base: 1201 (922 male and 279 female) Global B2B sellers and managers

➤ 6. The 2022 UK Spencer Stuart Board Index covers the top 150 companies with a premium listing on the London Stock Exchange.

➤ 7. Source: Konrad, Alison M., Vicki Kramer, Sumru Erkut, “The Impact of Three or More Women on Corporate Boards”. (<https://www.wcwonline.org/Publications-by-title/critical-mass-on-corporate-boards-why-three-or-more-women-enhance-governance-executive-summary>)

➤ 8. Source: Seller Motivation Online Survey conducted by Dynata on behalf of Outreach, June 2022.  
Base: 1201 (922 male and 279 female) Global B2B sellers and managers