

Talking tactics for eliminating gender bias in the tech industry that will benefit all

We're already talking about the gender diversity crisis in tech - on podiums, in the boardroom, in people teams and on LinkedIn. There's excitement around the benefits of creating more diverse and inclusive tech teams, women are sharing their experiences, and change is slowly starting to happen.

Temps de lecture : minute

23 June 2023

It is estimated that 26% of women currently make up the tech workforce, up from 19% in 2019.

But despite this increase, many organisations are overlooking some key essentials for women to aspire, access, achieve - and remain - in the tech industry. According to a report by Code First Girls and TTC, half of women in tech drop out by the age of 35.

It's not just a benefit for women to improve women's representation in tech. Building more diverse and effective teams benefits employees, leaders across all functions of the business, customers, and stakeholders. A recent report by Code First Girls and Natwest highlighted that if the UK were to achieve gender parity in tech, it could add an additional £2.6B to the country's economy.

For real change, initiatives must be embedded in policies to attract and support women to fulfil their potential. According to recent research from Figures, only one in seven C-suite executives within European tech

companies are women.

Therefore, as a CEO who has driven policies to get our tech business to over 59% women, with women making up 65% of directors, I'd like to share some steps that business leaders can take to attract and support female talent:

- Drive from the top - Making women a part of the tech team isn't an HR issue, it's a board level issue. Creating a team that will strategise to support women in your tech teams should include the CEO and other C-suite representatives, senior people and recruitment leads, as well as business managers from relevant departments.
- Get the 'stats' - A comprehensive assessment of your situation is the starting point before jumping into any discussion - do you employ women in tech, what is the percentage of female applicants, what is the retention level? Then looking at women already employed, for instance are you recruiting returners to work and career changers, what percentage do women make of the overall workforce, the board, of director titles, and the delivery team.
- Map the employment journey - considering the employment journey, how are women being treated - this might include a gender neutral recruitment process, thinking about the classic drop-out points such as maternity leave or to care for an elderly relative, what policies are in place to allow flexible and remote working, to offer more time off as needed, or a phased return to work that helps women re-adapt to work life with added caring responsibilities.
- Set clear goals and metrics - Developing clear metrics for how you will measure change is critical to success. This should include pay according to position, and whether there is a pay gap. What policies currently exist for flexible working, hybrid working, working part-time, and other flexible models which allow women to retain their salary, for instance compressed hours? Look at what personal development and healthy work/life balance practices exist and whether they are policy.

- Support in policy and practice - It's essential to ensure that initiatives to motivate and support women in the workplace are embedded within policies.

Creating your own agenda for change

Making change can seem daunting but much can be achieved to assess and create policies that drive change within just a few months. Happier employees mean happier and more productive teams - with more diverse and effective teams moving the needle on the speed and calibre of work. In an era where star candidates are deciding their next role based on a business' diversity and inclusion values, leaders that create and drive their own agenda for embracing women in their technology teams will be the most competitive and successful.

Sarah Friswell is the CEO of *Red Ant*.

Article by Sarah Friswell