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Women in Tech Industry Still Facing Career Challenges

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Posted by [Neal Leavitt](#) on February 25th, 2015 at 7:39 pm



A few months ago a long-standing colleague of mine decided to leave her tech company after 14 years. The pay was good, benefits great, but she came to the realization that she couldn't breach that proverbial 'glass ceiling.' Despite her stellar qualifications, she resigned.

She's now getting her teaching credential and wants to teach computer programming to high school students.

Any high school that hires her will immediately be that much better.

But her story isn't an isolated one. Tracey Lien recently wrote in the [Los Angeles Times](#) that women are leaving the tech industry in droves. It's becoming a significant issue for the tech economy.

“According to the industry group [Code.org](#), computing jobs will more than double by 2020, to 1.4 million,” said Lien. “If women continue to leave the field, an already dire shortage of qualified tech workers will grow worse. Last summer, Google, Facebook, Apple and other big tech companies released figures showing that men outnumbered women 4 to 1 or more in their technical sectors.”

Vivek Wadhwa, a tech entrepreneur and fellow with Stanford University's [Rock Center for Corporate Governance](#), said that when women go to venture capitalists seeking financing for their new startups, they are sometimes treated differently from men and held to a higher standard.

In an interview with *Stanford News Service*, Wadhwa added there are a number of reasons why there are so few women in technology.

“It's still perceived to be a profession best suited to males. Parents often discourage their daughters from studying engineering because they don't believe it is for girls. In schools, girls in engineering are ridiculed as tomboys or nerds. When they join the workforce, they may face discrimination,” said Wadhwa.

And on the other side of the pond in the United Kingdom, a survey of more than 600 people in the tech industry taken by [The Guardian](#) between Oct. 12 - Nov. 10, 2014 revealed that:

- 73% of both men and women believe the industry to be sexist;
- 52% say women are paid less than men for the same job;
- Structural and cultural sexism is still widespread.

[Catalyst](#), a nonprofit research organization focused on the advancement of women, also analyzed the career paths of almost 10,000 MBA grads from 2007-2014 in the U.S., Canada, Europe and Asia. More than half – 53% - left tech-intensive professions for other work, compared to 31% of the men.

“There is still the ‘brogrammer’ culture in high tech,” said Anna Beninger, Catalyst's research director. “The tech industry has some significant culture issues, and it's really damaging their ability to attract the best talent.”

There's no magic cure-all. Joan C. Williams, law professor at UC Hastings College of the Law and coauthor of “What Works for Women: Four Patterns Working Women Need to Know,” told the *Los Angeles Times* that “companies need to research the biases that prevent women from getting ahead and devise ‘interrupters’ – instead of single training sessions, companies need to make systemic changes.”

Stanford scholar Wadhwa added that companies started by women “achieve 35% higher return on investment, and, when venture-backed, bring in 12% higher revenue than venture-backed male-owned tech companies.”

His parting caveat – “we must level the playing field for women by supporting their startups and removing the hurdles that are thrown in their way. Parents must inspire their daughters to step forth and take their rightful role in the innovation economy.”

You go girl!

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1. *Chris Brady* says:
[March 2, 2015 at 2:11 PM](#)

Part of the issues inherent to working in tech as a woman is that for whatever reason, you're only considered "in tech" if you're an engineer or programmer. Such narrow focus blocks out the bigger problem by putting blinders on everyone who's trying to examine what's going on.

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