

Increasing diversity in tech brings benefits for everyone

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As International Women's Day comes around again this year, I always have mixed feelings about it. On one hand it's great to celebrate the contribution and value of women in the world however it's also sad that we have to make this a big thing as it's still not 'normal' to value women's contributions equally.

This year, seeing the United Nations get behind innovation and technological change speaks volumes to the need to focus on diversity in tech, and championing education in the digital age to empower all women and girls is a necessary move towards equality in endeavour and opportunity.

I've spent my 30+-year career in the technology field and have seen huge strides being made to reform this traditionally male-dominated world, but we're not going far or fast enough, nor with enough imagination or vision.

Data from the Boston Consulting Group reports that 20% of people studying technical subjects are women, while just 20-25% of tech leaders are women. That's a huge amount of undiscovered and wasted talent.

Being a female leader in the technology and digital space should be about working hard, achieving results and being the best person for the job when promotion opportunities arise, yet it's been shown that this is not always the case. I have been lucky to work with open-minded and supportive leaders which, sadly, is not the case for many. McKinsey and LeanIn.org's *'Women in the Workplace' 2021* report found that, across all industries and roles, 86 women are promoted to manager for every 100 men at the same level. The gender gap for women in technical roles is even greater, with just 52 women promoted to manager for every 100 men.

So how do we encourage more women into STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) careers? There is huge talent out there - if we know where to look - but what we need to address now are the barriers to entry. Does every data scientist need a degree? Do they all have to be in the office 9-5, Monday-Friday? In my experience, the answer to both is no - so is it time to remove these requirements and focus more on the skills we can't teach, such as a desire to learn, attitude and enthusiasm?

Here at Hotelbeds, changing our recruitment strategy has paid off - not just in tech, but across the board too. Some 57% of our global workforce are women and they hold 47% of leadership positions across the company.

Flexibility, support and sponsorship are essential for women but also for many across our employee base (present and future), so let's embrace this for the benefit of the company and the organisation. After all, a truly diverse workforce brings wider conversations, better decisions, innovation and opportunities for all.

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