WOMEN IN TECH: RETENTION BY DESIGN

Through ending 'bro culture', addressing the authority gap and identifying the right metrics to create change

Supporting women in Tech is a growth enabler. Rising female talent are choosing to leave cultures where they are unable to see a future for themselves.
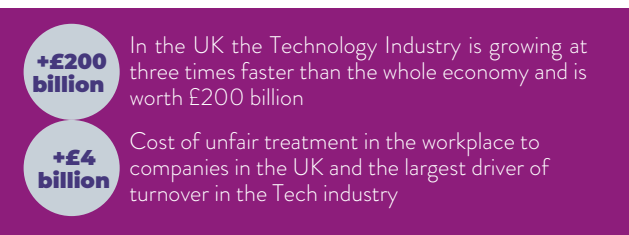
The pandemic and proceeding 'great resignation' has amplified this crisis, disproportionately affecting women.

Leaders must act to design gender intelligent retention solutions that respond specifically to the barriers faced by Women in Tech and mitigate this business critical risk.

Key elements include learning and development for all to minimise friction and maximise allyship, closing the authority gap and co-designing team cultures that move beyond a 'bro culture'.

This WDI Insights report brings together the latest research on the gender trends in Tech, identifies two critical challenges and proposes solutions and metrics to create gender equity by design.

GENDER EQUITY CREATES AN EDGE IN THE TECHNOLOGY SECTOR [1]

+£200 billion — In the UK the Technology Industry is growing at three times faster than the whole economy and is worth £200 billion

+£4 billion — Cost of unfair treatment in the workplace to companies in the UK and the largest driver of turnover in the Tech industry
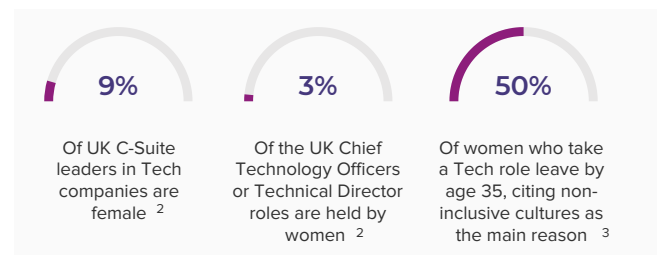
Like all sectors, Technology is experiencing the effects of the 'great resignation' where women are choosing to exit jobs, organisations and careers. Those women who remain find themselves operating in a less gender diverse workplace where their sense of belonging is diminished.

- **On average around 19% of roles in Technology are currently held by women** [1]

Fewer women weakens the employer brand, making it ever harder to attract and retain gender diverse talent and so the cycle perpetuates.

THE TECH INDUSTRY IS STRUGGLING TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN FEMALE LEADERS

9% Of UK C-Suite leaders in Tech companies are female [2]

3% Of the UK Chief Technology Officers or Technical Director roles are held by women [2]

50% Of women who take a Tech role leave by age 35, citing non-inclusive cultures as the main reason [3]

There have been active attraction strategies in place for years but this report highlights the urgency to expand the focus to active retention strategies.

Top requests from women to support women in Tech [4]

- **79% say promote more women in leadership**
- **72% say provide mentor opportunities**

Lack of role models is a key gap that must be closed to create gender equity. The absence of relatable senior role models means that diverse talent say; "That's not me; I don't lead like that" and are leaving the sector at an astonishing rate.

INCLUSIVE ORGANISATIONS ATTRACT AND RETAIN MORE WOMEN LEADERS

An organisation's ability to attract and retain gender diverse talent is linked to its equity and inclusion credentials. These credentials are disrupting a highly competitive talent market, creating a defacto polarised 'preferred employer' score. Inclusive organisations are making huge gains and low scoring employers are increasingly locked out of top talent.

In Technology, Media and Telecoms, (TMT) organisations with 'gender equality leaders', versus lagging organisations, female employees are: [5]

- **2.5x more likely to be loyal to the organisation (79% vs 32%)**
- **3.5x more likely to have high job satisfaction (72% vs 21%)**

Organisations must therefore be able to present evidence that convince female talent to stay.

INTENTIONAL DESIGN FOR GENDER EQUITY IN THE TECHNOLOGY SECTOR IS NEEDED

Many organisations are consciously designing for the future of work to include hybrid, remote and global working. However, close attention must also be paid to ensuring diverse teams can thrive if sustainability and growth is to be secured.

METRICS THAT ENABLE GENDER EQUITY BY DESIGN

Leaders say that gender pay gap reporting highlights the problem, but not how to solve it.

The solution lies in utilising the right metrics that track the causes of gender inequality and measures the effectiveness of specific solutions.

This Insights report identifies two critical challenges to gender equity in Tech and the metrics to provide insight driven, gender intelligent solutions.

CHALLENGE 1

Make 'bro culture' redundant and inclusive cultures the new normal

72% Of women in Tech say 'bro culture' is pervasive versus only 41% of men [4]

52% Of TMT women have experienced non-inclusive behaviours at work in the last year [6]

70% Drop in the annual attrition rate of Women in Tech if all companies had a culture like the top 20% more inclusive ones [3]

5% Of managers are inclusive [7]

Exclusive 'bro culture' work environments are evidenced through dominant socialising norms that only work for some. For example, a strong drinking culture, or work hard/ play hard environment or lewd language and jokes, or 'always on' expectations. We've heard Women in Tech describe a 'bro culture' as:

- "People are here to have a good time first, over doing great work together"
- "The cool kids club – where those who socialise together get promoted".

These consciously, or unconsciously, exclude those that can't or don't want to be part of those social norms. Over the last two years, some of the 'bro culture' characteristics have been interrupted due to pandemic restrictions on socialising. However, without intentional disruption and redesign, old norms will soon return.

The solution

Equip team leaders to create inclusive cultures

Focus on co-creating inclusive ways of working to enable teams to move beyond exclusive social norms. For instance, engage leaders in co-solving this challenge with team members, exploring questions like these:

- How does your team bond together?
- How can you invest in social time together within work hours?
- How do you respect and agree work/ life boundaries – does your team know each other's preferences and ways of working?

The metrics

Measure allyship

Allyship is defined by mindset and actions. Data [5] shows that leaders who are gender equality allies create greater loyalty, motivation and productivity so the rewards are high if organisations:

- Equip managers with the skills to be effective allies
- Include allyship questions as a metric in feedback instruments
- Use engagement surveys to ask for observances of the key equality ally behaviours.

CHALLENGE 2

Address the authority gap[8] that undermines women's contribution[4]

- **78% of women in Tech feel like they have to work harder to prove their worth at work**
- **72% of women in Tech are outnumbered by men in business meetings by at least a 2:1 ratio.**

Obstacles in the way of promotion for women in Tech [4]

- **39% of women in Tech see gender bias as a barrier to promotion**
- **66% see no clear career path.**

The solution

Take targeted action for gender equal pipelines and progression

Taking a gender intelligent approach is essential to achieving an equitable talent pipeline. This involves active management of career progression for women leaders who might otherwise lose ground on their career trajectory due to the authority gap and high impact interventions which include:

- Gender intelligent leadership development for mid-career women and non-binary folk
- Career path planning for high influence technical and P&L roles and stretch assignments
- Increased social capital through mentors, sponsors and peer networks.

The metrics

Authority to influence

Track career progression data by gender through:

- The % of high authority roles held by women versus men
- The % of women who move into these roles
- The rate of time spent in current role (women versus men).

Track the systemic bias that undermines women's authority and influence through:

- Question(s) in employee surveys about an individual's confidence to influence key decisions that are made.

Where a gender difference is revealed, undertake qualitative research to surface the causes of the confidence differential.

CONTACT US TO CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION AND CREATE YOUR GENDER INTELLIGENT RETENTION STRATEGY.

WDI CONSULTING — Insights to create gender equity

ABOUT WDI:

Creating gender equity through insight and gender intelligent solutions

Our insights underpin our Gender Equity Leadership programme that has engaged participants from 15 countries across the private and public sector. Participants enrolled in our four module programme accelerate their career progression through our online multimedia classroom, network and integrated executive coaching (individual and group) experience.

The highly rated programme has been delivered to cohorts from 10-100. Programme results include: 90% of participants rating the programme as excellent, and 85% agreed or strongly agreed that their network of peers has significantly expanded.

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Reference points

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3 Accenture report; Resetting Tech Culture, 2021
4 TrustRadius; Women in Tech report, 2021
5 Deloitte article; Are you at risk of losing your female workforce?
6 Deloitte article; Women in Tech Industry: Gaining ground but facing new headwinds
7 Korn Ferry report; The Future of Work Trends 2022
8 Mary Ann Sieghart, author of 'The Authority Gap'