

Tech Departments: Let's Hear It for the Girls

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Interviewed by Michelle Manafy, Editorial Director, Digital Content Next

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This is good news, right?

- This year, the University of Toronto announced that it broke a slew of gender gap records, with women accounting for 30.6% of their first year engineering cohort.
- In 2015, a record-setting 40% of incoming students enrolling at Carnegie Mellon's Computer Science program are women.
- Women now outnumber men in UC Berkeley's introduction to consumer sciences course.
- At Harvey Mudd, 40% of its undergraduate Computer Science majors are women.



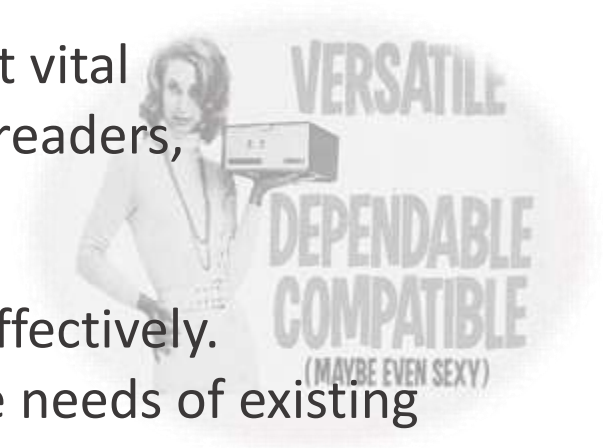
Maybe, but not good enough.

- While women earn 57% of all bachelor degrees, they only represent 12% of computer science degrees.
- Among the women who join the field, 56 % leave by midcareer, a startling attrition rate that is double that for men.
- At least half of women are gamers, yet women represent only 12% of game developers.
- Women comprise only 26% of the computing workforce in 2013 (3% Black women, 5% Asian women, 2% Latina women).



So what?

- By 2020, American universities are on track to graduate about 400,000 computer scientists. Unfortunately, the US Department of Labor predicts the nation will actually need 1.4 million by then.
- Women's choices impact up to 85% of purchasing decisions.
- More women than men are downloading movies and music.
- Women are the heaviest users of today's most vital technologies: the Internet, mobile phones, e-readers, other e-devices, social networking.
- Diversity helps groups solve problems more effectively. It also helps businesses better understand the needs of existing and potential customers.



Let's talk about it...

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What can we do about it?

New laws of attraction:

- Work on your want ads: Avoid words that evoke masculine stereotypes (rock star, ninja); emphasize company values that support diversity, like mentoring and a belief in work/life balance.
- Offer beneficial benefits: work/life balance; flex hours, remote working, paid leave for new parents, childcare facilities, and good family healthcare.
- Highlight women in leadership roles: Even if they aren't in tech, female leaders of any kind help attract female tech talent.
- Make the career path clear: Demonstrate that everyone has the same opportunities for advancement and remuneration.
- Focus on the reasons why: Women are more attracted to roles in which they can see the big picture/ higher level goals.

What can we do about it?

Keep your tech talent satisfied:

- Make the business case for diversity in technology with top-level executives, colleagues, and others
- Change starts from the top, but leaders all the way down to the frontline supervisor must model the change.
- Create a culture that recognizes employees' contributions and cares about their well-being; one that has zero-tolerance for misogyny and respects employees' work-life obligations and responsibilities.
- Invest in skills-based training and overall professional development as well as systems and opportunities for formal and informal mentoring.

