Bylined Article

Why Tech Still Needs More Women: The Urgent Need to Tackle the AI Era's Gender Gap

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The ratio of women to men in tech roles has declined since 1990, with half the women who embark on a career in tech dropping out by age 35[1]. Ángeles Delgado, President of Spain and Portugal at Fujitsu, argues that feminine traits are foundational to a thriving digital economy and critical to the success of a new era of artificial intelligence (AI).

Here's an alarming fact: The ratio of women to men in tech roles has steadily declined since 1990. Today, half of the women who pursue a tech career drop out by the time they reach 35. While there's no single solution to closing this gender gap, there is an increasingly urgent need to address it – driven by the prospect that important decisions are being made in the near term related to Artificial Intelligence.

Today, AI is the singularly most important technology development – with far-reaching implications across multiple areas of society – and it's unthinkable that half of the entire global population is being left out of its development because the female voice is under-represented. What's more, women are cooperative, communicative and expressive – feminine traits that are essential for a thriving digital economy and strong corporate bottom lines.

Without urgent action to balance the level of female representation in key areas of tech such as AI, there is a real and present danger that new technologies which are reshaping society will be heavily male-biased. We urgently need more women to get hands-on in roles connected to the development of AI. The only way we can truly expect AI to succeed in meeting the needs of everyone in society is when its development is balanced with values from both genders. That means it is critical that women are also involved in the decision-making processes around AI. The time for women to engage in AI-related topics is now: AI has a predicted compound annual growth (CAGR) of 36.6% between 2024 and 2030[2].

More women must step up to transform society through technology
Aiming for equitable representation of women in the IT sector extends far beyond ensuring an ethos of fair play in areas such as AI. Women possess a cultural legacy of self-transformation and self-discipline, and their instinctive feminine characteristics align with societal expectations of contemporary labor. There's plenty of proof that increased female participation in society correlates with improved economic outcomes, and female-led businesses increase economic diversity and productivity.

How technology creates a level playing field
By contrast, some areas of IT, such as automation and digitalization, open new opportunities for female workers by reducing traditional barriers around physicality. Women are already a

powerhouse in areas such as e-commerce and marketing. Automation and digitalization show encouraging signs that could convince more women to explore careers in traditionally male-dominated industries, such as logistics. For example, I was encouraged after attending a recent event showcasing how digitalization is powering new roles for women in shipping and port operations.

The importance of modeling success

Technical innovation means nothing without a female appetite for tech roles and a thirst for influence. You cannot earn power without taking action and adopting a determined posture. And when you have power, you also have influence.

This theme is a critical thread in the series of Master's lectures I deliver to women and men studying for a career in tech. In recent decades, women have fought for and won many legislative rights. Much progress has already been made, and we need more women to push through to preserve our achievements as well as continuing to strive until we finally achieve gender equity. In IT, this is a continuous journey, not a destination. And that means people of both genders must proactively upgrade their skills to avoid being left out of the game.

The main challenges I see are the shortage of positive role models and the lack of a clear direction in women's early years. I see limiting beliefs in female tech workers stemming from the early years of education and development. As a society, we need to actively encourage young girls to pursue science and technology to address a slow decline in the IT sector.

Tech companies should act to make themselves more attractive to women and, indeed, to all aspects of diversity. At Fujitsu, our dedication to diversity and inclusion fuels innovation in recruitment, leadership development, disability integration, flexible work, and intergenerational collaboration. From a gender perspective, our progress is evident: In Spain, women now constitute 33% of our Management Committee. In 2021, we launched the Empowering Women program to encourage women into leadership roles. Through our e-mentoring initiative Future Me, we have achieved remarkable results: 72% of mentees report feeling more motivated to lead, women's promotion rates have increased by 23%, and retention among participants has improved by 7%. In this sense, Spain is proving as a role model in empowering women in leadership for other countries.

Fostering inclusion and flexibility does more than shape individual careers. It shapes the future of work in a world where both male and female leaders empower each other to flourish.

1.   https://explodingtopics.com/blog/ai-statistics

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Ángeles Delgado is president of Fujitsu Spain and Portugal. She is the President of the "Consejo España Japón Foundation" and independent director of Pelayo. She is a trustee of the "CEDE Foundation", "Juan XXIII Foundation", "SERES Foundation" and "Conexión España Foundation".

She is also member of the Governing Council of APD and member of the Professional Council of ESADE. Ángeles joined Fujitsu 20 years ago and led the development of the strategic growth plan in LATAM. She has also been a member of the Board of Fujitsu Laboratories.

She holds a degree in Economics from the Complutense University of Madrid and a PDD from IESE. She began her professional career in 1986, as a pioneering woman in Spain in the technology sector.
She is a frequent speaker at national and international events, being a reference in strategy and leadership for digital transformation.
Ángeles has received numerous awards for her consolidated career in a sector in permanent transformation. She actively collaborates with the academic world and passionately supports causes aimed at creating a people-centered society, in which technology contributes to building a more prosperous world with greater well-being for all, paying special attention to inclusion.