Let's focus on the gender imbalance in tech entrepreneurship

By Selina Bieber   16 Aug 2019

It is an opportune time to review the progress that women have made in the technology industry and to ask what more we could do to encourage higher female participation in the sector - especially as entrepreneurs.

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While there has been a great deal of progress, a GoDaddy annual diversity and salary parity study shows that there is still much that needs to be done.

According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), South African women with ICT and technology qualifications are outnumbered five to two by men. Women in Tech, meanwhile, claims that less than a quarter of South Africa's tech jobs are held by women. Given that women are just over half the population, they are thus heavily underrepresented in IT.

Changing these dynamics can help to create an environment where men and women have equal opportunity to participate in a fast-growing sector that offers challenging, high-paying and exciting work. It is also important to the longer-term health and sustainability of South Africa's IT industry for various reasons:

- Getting more women trained and qualified in IT will help to grow the skills pool in a country where tech skills are in short supply.
- Studies show that more diverse companies with women represented in leadership positions outperform the rest – the diversity of thinking spurs innovation.
- When women are excluded, gender bias seeps into product and service design. Getting women involved can help

teams build solutions that meet everyone's needs.

At GoDaddy, we have embraced the importance of building a diverse, gender-balanced team because we don't believe any company can truly serve a diverse customer base without focusing on equality. This is not a goal we can achieve overnight – women still only make up 19% of our technical positions in the US – an area where we need to do better. We are tackling the problem head-on by, for example, ensuring that men and women are paid equally for the same work.

Here are some ways we believe technology entrepreneurs and companies can help empower women in the IT industry and grow female participation:

- **Open the door to women at ground level**: Talent and passion can be more important than experience. Hire young women with recent tech certificates or degrees at the ground level, giving them a platform where they can hone their skills and become an integrated part of the business.

- **Facilitate female voices in the industry**: Every technology company leader can play a small part in boosting female leaders and voices. For example, if a male CEO gets invited to take part in an all-male panel discussion at a conference, he can propose a female speaker to add to the discussion.

- **Build networks**: Introduce women entrants in the field to the IT executives you know to help them build support and mentoring network. If you are a seasoned tech leader, offer your services as a mentor to a female colleague who wishes to run her own technology business. Partner with women-run businesses when the opportunity arises.

- **Start encouraging the next generation**: Owners and leaders of tech companies have tremendous power to influence the confidence, interest and motivation of the next generation of women in IT. Volunteer to talk to a school class about the industry and the business, offer coding lessons, offer paid internships and vacation work programmes for local graduates, and work with organisations promoting a more inclusive IT industry, such as Women in Tech or Kids Who Code.

The future of women in technology

We will not achieve true gender equity and reach an even distribution of men and women in the IT industry overnight. There are still significant structural challenges and historic imbalances to overcome. Yet if technology professionals and business owners focus on the changes that are within their power to make, we can help to create an environment for a thriving technology industry of the future, where people together can flourish.

ABOUT SELINA BIEBER

Selina Bieber is the regional director for Turkey and MENA at GoDaddy EMEA.
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