

ADVANCING WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



BY SUSAN H. BURNELL

Every day, highly qualified professional women in science and technology are using their skills to find practical solutions to problems that affect our society and our world. Yet many women scientists and technologists are not taken as seriously as their male counterparts when it comes to career advancement. Organizations that recognize the strategic advantages of recruiting, hiring, mentoring, retaining and promoting women gain a competitive edge.

A Vital Business Issue

Why is it so vital for organizations to maximize the leadership potential of women professionals? “It’s not a women’s issue, it’s a business issue,” says Erin Cadwalader, Public Policy Fellow for the Association for Women in Science (AWIS). “Companies with more women in leadership roles have the advantage of diverse opinions and greater creativity and problem solving, as well as a performance edge.”

“Attracting and keeping women should be a strategic business initiative that starts at the executive level,” says Carolyn Leighton, Chairwoman and Founder of WITI (Women in Technology International). “The demographics of the business world have changed, and companies are missing opportunities if they don’t understand the influence women have on their companies. When talented, intelligent women do not see opportunities to advance, they will move on to a company that understands their value, or they will start their own businesses.”

Best Practices in Gender Diversity

Women can help science and technology companies relate to a customer base that includes a higher percentage of women. Leading companies recognize the importance of having women involved in product development and innovation.

“The most important thing that a company can do to improve their gender diversity is to measure where they are in total numbers and by level,” says Telle Whitney, President and CEO of the Anita Borg Institute for Women and Technology (ABI). “This is the first and most important step because if they measure it, they will change it over time.”

Beyond measuring gender diversity, training can make a difference because company leaders and hiring managers may not even realize their own gender bias. “Consciousness-raising can work well,” says Cadwalader. “One of the industry best practices we’ve seen in this area is implicit bias training for everyone involved in hiring and recruitment.”

Companies also can attract a more diverse group of applicants when they use gender-neutral language in their recruiting efforts. Blind resume screening—removing names and other information that identify the sex of the candidate—likewise can help companies find the best possible candidates based on their skills and expertise. AWIS also recommends that companies track the number of women and minorities that apply, are interviewed and are subsequently hired. Those metrics will help guide further outreach efforts.

Redefine the Pipeline

The U.S. Department of Labor projects that there will be 1.4 million new jobs created in computing and computer-related roles by 2018. By 2016, U.S. companies will only be able to fill half of their technical positions with computer science graduates. “There are consistent blind spots in recruiting and hiring practices that prevent companies from tapping into the full range of technical talent available—men, women or underrepresented minorities,” reports the ABI in its “Solutions to Recruit Technical Women” report.

The report’s authors, Caroline Simard, Ph.D., and Denise L. Gammal, Ph.D., suggest that companies can overcome a talent shortage by redefining the talent pipeline. That means creating alternative pathways to technical positions and establishing

The U.S. Department of Labor projects there will be 1.4 million new jobs in computing and computer-related roles created by 2018. By 2016, U.S. companies will only be able to fill half of their technical positions with computer science graduates.

mechanisms to bring women back to technical roles. “Pathways can include hiring graduates from adjacent science, math and engineering fields, such as mathematics, biology, information sciences, symbolic systems, physics, bioinformatics and other related fields. Another way to broaden the pool is to provide training for those inside or outside the company to onboard to technical positions.”

Internal and external mentoring programs also can be valuable for helping women move to positions of greater responsibility and connecting them with role models in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) professions.

Retaining Valuable Talent

Professional development opportunities are part of a winning formula for keeping top technical talent. Pay equity issues should be addressed as well—and they do still exist, says Cadwalader. “A recent study on lab manager positions, for example, showed that male applicants are still more likely to be offered higher salaries

than their women peers,” she says.

Work-life satisfaction is important for women as well as men. Family leave, on-site childcare and flexible scheduling can increase job satisfaction. Recognition and promotion are also a big part of keeping good employees. Women tend to be underrecognized, yet it’s essential for them to feel that their work is valued.

Recruiting and retaining women in science and technology is not about quotas or checklists, says Cadwalader. “It’s about enlisting the best possible range of talent to maintain economic and innovative competitiveness.” ■

Resources

Anita Borg Institute
www.anitaborg.org

Association for Women in Science
www.awis.org

WITI (Women in Technology International)
www.witi.com

SAP

For SAP, a diverse workforce is essential to our sustainable growth, innovation and success. By embracing diversity, we attract and retain our industry’s best and brightest. Historically, women have been underrepresented in technology. In 2011, SAP made a formal commitment to focus on women as a strategic lever for growth.

To this end, we have launched programs to increase the percentage of female recruits, effectively identify and mentor women with management potential, and increase the number of women in leadership positions. We continue to foster employee networks, including



Geraldine McBride, President,
 SAP North America

Business Women’s Networks, as powerful grassroots engines to advance a culture of insight and inclusion. We are also raising employee and manager awareness of the important role diversity and inclusion play in our success, and how we can work together to advance inclusion at SAP.

Diversity, inclusion and daring to be different: It’s what makes us run better.



Learn more about career opportunities at
sap.com/careers

RUN

anytime and anywhere.

Opportunity can appear out of nowhere. With SAP mobile solutions, your people can take advantage of serendipity — remotely, easily and securely. Use analytics to validate a hunch, brainstorm new ideas across time zones, launch a project from the jogging trail. Now, no matter where your people run, your business runs, too.

Run like never before at sap.com/runmobile

© 2012 SAP AG. SAP and the SAP logo are trademarks and registered trademarks of SAP AG in Germany and several other countries.

RUN BETTER.

