Women in STEM: #PressForProgress in the Tech Space

The 2018 theme for International Women's Day is #PressForProgress, a clarion call for gender parity. Technology companies have a unique opportunity to empower women, making a difference for generations to come. Greater equality for women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) not only benefits women but improves business, as well.

The statistics tell the story. Even after years of highlighting the issue, a huge gender disparity dominates the tech space. While women enjoy solid representation in social and life sciences, men far outnumber women in computer science and engineering. In fact, the number of women in computer science has decreased since 1990.

While the statistics are sobering, there is good news on the horizon. Women-owned businesses enjoy increasing success, and as more women step forward as mentors and role models, the barriers to progress gradually crumble.

Benefits of Women in STEM

Women around the world are beginning to realize the opportunities awaiting them in science and technology. The average yearly salary for STEM occupations nearly doubles that of non-STEM occupations. In addition, the gender earnings gap is drastically smaller in STEM jobs.
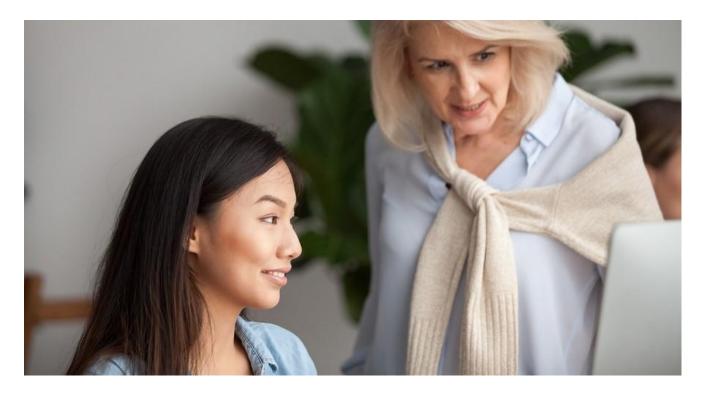
As more women choose careers in STEM, businesses also benefit. Statistics show that companies that employ more women perform substantially better than their competitors. Startups founded by women also generate more revenue than their male counterparts.

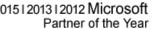## Mentoring Makes the Difference

Recent studies, as well as anecdotal evidence, suggest that mentoring plays a significant role in the success of women in STEM degree programs and careers. A majority of women in male-dominated fields report gender discrimination and the prevalence of negative stereotypes. This can be daunting and plays a significant role in women leaving the industry.

However, women with mentors, particularly female mentors, are far more likely to stay in STEM fields and find success. Those with a strong support network and positive role models are better able to develop the confidence and tools necessary to push through discrimination and take their place in boardrooms and on the front lines of innovation.

In addition, mentoring offers rewards for all involved. Both employees who are mentored and those who mentor them are significantly more likely to get promoted. Retention is higher for those involved in a mentoring program, and those who mentor are five times more likely to benefit from an adjustment to their salary grade.

Women to Watch

Every Who's Who list of women in technology includes tech superstars like YouTube's CEO Susan Wojcicki and HP's CEO Meg Whitman. These women and others like them have made incredible strides
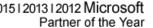
for women in technology. But millennials also include some rising stars that are building solid bridges for women in STEM.

Here are just a handful of the amazing young women making a difference in technology today:

- Shaherose Charania (Women 2.0) —In 2006, Charania co-founded Women 2.0, a global network aimed at supporting women in technology initiatives. Through workshops, events and social media, Women 2.0 has directly impacted many thousands of women entrepreneurs worldwide.

- Limor Fried (Adafruit) — An engineer and Entrepreneur Magazine's 2012 Entrepreneur of the Year, Fried founded Adafruit. 100% women-owned, Adafruit offers unique DIY electronics kits and components, inspiring a love of science, technology and engineering.

- Rebecca Garcia (CoderDojo NYC) — In addition to her day job, Garcia founded CoderDojo NYC in 2012. Through workshops and a mentoring program, CoderDojo works to teach girls and boys ages seven to 17 how to develop web sites, games and apps.

- Pooja Chandrashekar (ProjectCSGIRLS) — While still in high school, Chandrashekar founded ProjectCSGIRLS to help close the computing and technology gender gap. Through workshops and their trademark computer science competition for middle school girls, this nonprofit inspires future women technology leaders.

Inspiring by Example

These leaders represent just the tip of the iceberg for [women in technology](). As women in the tech space share their stories and build connections with the women around them, they do far more than build businesses. Their physical, visible presence in the STEM environment strengthens their peers and inspires the rising generation.

Jennifer Mazzanti, CEO of eMazzanti Technologies is one of those role models. As co-founder of the New Jersey-based [women-owned technology business](), she has provided leadership in the tech space for the past seventeen years. Her firm employs women at greater than the national average rate for women in technology, and on a par with Google.