




During the February 11 Women Leading in Technology event, more than 60 questions were asked of our panelists. Here is a selection of additional questions we asked and their reply. The next WLIT event is on April 28.

	<b>Question:</b>	<b>Answer:</b>
 <p data-bbox="220 690 378 722">Mike Connly</p>	<p data-bbox="472 381 840 592"><i>To Mike's answer, it may be a leadership issue but what about when the bias is not even recognized as occurring. How do you bring visibility to the invisible issue?</i></p>	<p data-bbox="871 381 1890 592">That is a difficult situation, and I can imagine someone feeling at risk in trying to address it. Still, I believe it is ultimately a leadership issue, including whether bias is recognized. If the issue is invisible, then I believe change within an organization starts with a sympathetically minded leader becoming (or being made) aware. I realize that in some circumstances, that is easier said than done. But organizations need diverse talent and experience, and smart leaders understand that.</p> <p data-bbox="871 625 1890 698">On a broader scale, the WLIT community is great example of something that can and is bringing visibility to the issue. Your engagement matters.</p>
 <p data-bbox="220 1031 378 1063">Anne Finch</p>	<p data-bbox="472 722 840 893"><i>If you had one piece of advice you would give to the younger generation interested in technology, what would that be?</i></p>	<p data-bbox="871 722 1890 966">Take every technology class you can even if you don't think you will like it. This will expose you to parts of technology stack so you can see which part(s) really excite you – you might be surprised at the different careers out there. Talk to people in IT and ask them about their jobs – what is a day in the life of that job. I remember someone told me about “program management” – I had no idea what that was. Then three years later I had 160 of them under me. Your next new job/career step might be one conversation away.</p>
 <p data-bbox="210 1380 388 1406">Marc Kermisch</p>	<p data-bbox="472 1063 840 1307"><i>How do you recommend coaching a manager that allows the mansplaining and doesn't provide advocacy for most of the team members unless they are in the “boys club?”</i></p>	<p data-bbox="871 1063 1890 1307">I would approach the manager on the impact that their actions and words are having in the larger organization. I would set the tone that perceptions are reality and assuming you are driving an inclusive culture, that their actions are counter-productive to the culture the company is building. I would want to correlate the conversation to something that would resonate with them, assign them a female and male feedback partner, so they can be made aware of when they aren't inclusive, and finally would want to be clear that there is a zero tolerance of exclusionary behavior.</p>



Priya Senthilkumar

*How would you recommend advocating for flexible work situations to organizations that have historically been adverse to anything but full time positions?*

Assuming the type of work you are advocating for can be done in a flexible situation, I would go with a complete proposal including – A clear need for an enhanced talent pool that full time positions alone cannot fill, Options to address the need using several flexible solutions, Weigh in on factors like allowing more women to opt-in vs opt-out of the workforce, showing risks and mitigations on how there is still accountability with flexibility, and an idea to at least do a pilot run to learn from and adapt. In today's times, the examples of companies being successful with almost all flexible workforce are everywhere and can be easily tapped into for best solutions that would work for your organization.



Mike Connly

*For men in the room, how often do they notice if the person they are interacting with is a man or woman. And if they have different reactions depending on the gender*

I believe that if asked, staff could recall the gender of their coworker's with a high degree of accuracy, so yes they notice.

I am not certain I understand the intent of the second question, but I will take a shot a couple ways:

Whether men *have* different reactions will depend on the individual involved. Hopefully we are progressing towards no difference in reaction though awareness and familiarity.

Whether men *notice* if they have different reactions is separate matter and a really interesting one. I think this also varies with the individuals involved. One of the most important points of awareness efforts is to help people become aware of their own bias and reactions.



Anne Finch

*How are your companies incorporating young women careers? (i.e internships, etc.)*

We are having great success with internships. We do extended internships meaning we try and find interns in the summer before their Junior year. Have the work that summer then they go part time during their Junior year, then work all the summer before Senior year, then part time Senior year. Then ideally we offer them a job before they graduate. They get a chance to learn on the job while going to school and we get an employee with almost two years of experience with us. We have 90% acceptance rate. AND we don't just hire from IT programs some of our best IT people come from the business programs (Testers/BA/PMs)



Marc Kermisch

*How can I show a team of all male leaders that they need to care about things they don't seem to care about? (I.e. EQ, culture, etc)?*

First, I would want to validate that this group of male leaders truly doesn't care. My instinct would be to assume that they are unaware, and by making them aware of their behaviors as a start is the first step. Second would be to call out the impact that their behaviors are having within the larger organization and talk through why, how others are feeling and then turn the discussion to what is in it for them. Third, I would want to give them tools on how to improve their EQ, shift to being more inclusive, improve their situational awareness, and reinforce their role in building our company culture. Finally, I would want to bring together a diverse group with these male leaders to role play, build bridges, and eventually assign feedback partners for them so they can continue learning about the impact their actions are having in the organization. Circling back to the first statement, if it turns out these male leaders don't care, I would want to enforce that our culture is inclusive and exclusionary behavior isn't aligned with the company's value system.



Priya Senthilkumar

*Confidence and bossiness, it's a fine line between two. Speak about your experience with male vs female "bossiness" and confidence.*

Unfortunately, I have to say, this is still true in 2020 on how the bossiness/arrogance is seen differently with men and women. I have a female boss who is very confident and strong-willed and I have heard my male peers comment around her bossiness without looking at how they have acted themselves as jerks in a similar situation. They have probably not seen too many confident women in their careers/lives to understand how a strong, assertive woman behaves. Data would also support that there are more strong-headed men we see in the workforce than women. One thing that I have learned to work on myself when speaking confidently on my opinions is to be passionate without being too intense. We sometimes tend to use our body language and bring the intensity on a topic much more than men, which may lead to misinterpretation of being bossy.



Mike Connly

*Do you think women of color have to prove themselves even more? Any thoughts on how to create more awareness?*

I must sheepishly admit that I don't know, but it would not surprise me given that it appears women of color are even more underrepresented than women in general in technology. This question inspired some reflection, so I did a bit of searching, and found some interesting resources, like these two:

<https://www.rebootrepresentation.org/about-the-coalition/>

<https://builtin.com/women-tech/women-color-tech-inclusion/>

While I have no personal experience with either of these organizations, one way to create more awareness is to support efforts of this type and use the tools they create.

We need everyone's talent.



Anne Finch

*What advice would you give to someone early in their career who wants to move into a leadership role eventually?*

Volunteer for the jobs no one else wants. (be a gap filler – see a need – fill a need). Almost every large leap in my career was taking that role others didn't want. Volunteer to coordinate large meetings, events – gives you practice planning, considering others' needs – while giving you informal leadership experience. Often in many meetings "whoever is holding the marker" is leading the meeting. ;) )

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