

Making Room

Reflections on Diversity & Inclusion
in the Future of Work



Center For
The Future of Work





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It's Time: Inclusion's Role in Tech

By Karen McLoughlin



To remain vital and relevant to their customers, most businesses today realize that driving diversity and inclusion throughout their organizations is an imperative. The reasons are clear. Diverse and inclusive teams are able to apply a broader range of knowledge and skills. They're better at recognizing and solving problems that others may overlook. They're more likely to understand the real, often unarticulated needs of the people they design products and services for. What's more, inclusive teams **tend to produce better results faster** because they operate with higher levels of organizational self-awareness, performance and innovation.

I believe the business case for inclusion is commonsense – if not yet common practice. And this case is especially strong in technology, an industry whose thinking, practices, products and services are permeating all aspects of our lives and reshaping most industries.

What brought this home for me is the world's growing reliance on algorithms for decision making. The way these algorithms operate and make decisions tends to reflect the preferences and priorities of those who train these systems. And despite best intentions, this can result in the embedding of unfair or harmful biases, which is known as algorithmic bias.

For example, I read about a senior MIT researcher by the name of Joy Buolamwini **who has studied the bias in facial recognition programs**, especially those used in law enforcement, border control, surveillance and hiring. These programs have been known to produce results that are biased against people of color. Her point is that it really matters who does the coding. And that speaks to the need for more diverse and inclusive teams of programmers and others who work with AI systems who can point out each others' blind spots and prevent bias from creeping in.

The encompassing perspective of inclusive teams is helpful in many other ways, as well. Let's say you're developing your organization's long-term strategy. Who do you want to be involved in the conversation? Should you default to the same half dozen people who've led the discussion year after year? Or, would it be far more productive to bring in new voices, new perspectives and new connections to the external environment that come from a diversity of thinking?

Inclusive teams are simply in a better position to more deeply explore the worlds of their diverse customers and potential customers and offer a reality check on what is meaningful to them. As Christian Madsbjerg, a founder of ReD Associates, a social sciences firm that is a Cognizant partner, **has observed**: "The greatest challenges – and opportunities – of the 21st century are cultural, not algorithmic."

Bringing Diversity Home

At Cognizant, we're striving to create an environment where everyone matters and everyone knows they matter. We know it's up to us to be alert for people who are being excluded for one reason or another. It's also up to us to pursue inclusion as systematically as we pursue innovation. Therefore, we've made it an organizational imperative to drive greater diversity and inclusion throughout our culture. To do so, we've woven diversity



“The greatest challenges — and opportunities — of the 21st century are cultural, not algorithmic.”

— Christian Madsbjerg, co-founder, ReD Associates

challenges

and inclusion into our growth agenda and into our annual operating plan measures, which are tracked and discussed monthly by the company’s executive leadership.

We recognize that the work of fully unleashing the power of a diverse and inclusive workforce is never done. At the same time, we’re gratified by the recent recognition we’ve received for our efforts. For example, *Forbes* named Cognizant to its “Best Employers for Women” 2018 rankings, the magazine’s first top 300 ranking based on an independent survey of 40,000 Americans that included 25,000 women. We are proud to be in the top quartile.

It’s clearly time for inclusion to have a more prominent role in technology, and for the technology industry as a whole to step up in advancing and valuing inclusion.

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D&I: A Mandate for the Future of Work

The future of work brings with it all the wonderment of self-driving cars, augmented reality museums and robot butlers. It also poses threats and complex problems the likes of which we've never seen.

Fortunately, the potential skills and talent needed to work through the challenges is in abundance and evenly distributed, all over the world. Unfortunately, the resources and access these budding geniuses need are often not available, simply due to where they reside, their gender or any other characteristics that have historically been used as a disqualifier for those attempting to enter the workforce. As we look to tackle the thorny human issues ahead, we recognize that diversity and inclusion (D&I) remain chief among them.

The business case for diversity and inclusion has been made time and again. Organizations with diverse workforces **perform better**. As businesses rely ever more on data-driven decision-making, it makes no sense that so many brands fail to prioritize D&I, given the myriad of data points backing its merits. With new impetus for established brands to expand their reach into untapped markets in Asia, Africa and Latin America, organizations need teams that understand these cultures, and not from studying charts and reports but from lived experiences, embedded in the day-to-day activities of these places. Previously considered a nicety or luxury of the most forward-thinking organizations, robust D&I strategies will soon be a basic necessity for recruiting and retaining the best talent across the globe.

We've assembled some of Cognizant's keenest minds to share their thoughts on the importance of diversity and inclusion in the future of work from a variety of perspectives. Our report consists of 11 original pieces of thought leadership and three works that were previously published on our Digitally Cognizant blog that merited inclusion.

Starting from the premise that the future will depend on inclusivity, we begin with two articles emphasizing the tie between D&I and the future of work, along with actionable advice on nurturing diversity and inclusion in your organization. Our next section looks at the importance of humans in our increasingly robotic reality, where the human touch will be required more than ever. Here, three writers delve into what makes us human, with pieces on authenticity, individuality and the importance of not letting human voices and perspectives be drowned out in a data-driven culture.

The very elements that make us unique in the workforce are often the source of biases that keep promising candidates from contributing or being hired at all. So in our third section, we focus on some of the demographics that face heightened scrutiny in the workplace and the tools at our disposal to alleviate such biases (when wielded properly). Finally, we close out the report with a look at some innovative programs and partnerships that have successfully extended access to the future of work to underrepresented minorities.

With so much being written and said about diversity and inclusion, we knew we needed to bring something new to the table – something beyond mere lip service. It's our hope that you'll find within these pages some new ways to think about the workforce – the individuals within it and those unfairly missing from it. We also hope you find some inspiration for actions you can take today and in the next weeks to open your doors to a more diverse workforce and more inclusive culture. The future of your work depends on it.

Desmond Dickerson, Senior Consultant, and Caroline Styr, Research Analyst, Cognizant Center for the Future of Work



Inclusion and Diversity: By the Numbers



By Manish Bahl

Are you greater than the sun
that shines on everyone:
Black, Brown, Yellow, Red and White,
the sun does not discriminate.

— Sara Ting, “Sun Poem”

You’ve seen the warning on your rearview mirror: “Objects in mirror are closer than they appear.” The future seems to be approaching faster than ever before. The rise of automation and artificial intelligence (AI) is raising questions about the employable skills, attitudes and behaviors necessary to thrive in the future of work. Given the dramatic shifts taking place in the work world, how to prepare for the future of work poses one of the biggest questions — and opportunities — of our time.

That said, the business case for diversity and inclusion has never been more front and center than it is now — and why not? Organizations with diverse workforces are better prepared to meet the complex demands of a dynamically changing business environment. In fact, multiple studies show that proactively encouraging diversity can directly impact a company’s bottom line. [The Center for Talent Innovation](#), for instance, found that firms with high diversity levels experienced an 80% performance improvement compared with companies with low diversity levels, and [research by the American Sociological Association](#) found that for every 1% rise in the rate of diversity in a business, there was a 3% to 9% rise in sales revenue. These are just some of the studies pointing to why diversity is quickly becoming a pillar of productivity, profitability and engagement.

While many companies are jumping on board the diversity and inclusion bandwagon by creating and amending workplace policies, fewer are seeing actual results. Too often, “inclusion” is the missing ingredient — simply hiring people from diverse backgrounds does not automatically make your company a future-of-work champion. In order to make diversity truly inclusive, companies need to encourage their diverse workforces to work together effectively.

We propose three ways for businesses to effectively pursue diversity and inclusion practices to master the future of work:

- **Treat D&I as a learning priority, not a training priority.** Employees need to be exposed to a range of realistic experiences so they can easily adapt to situations at work and learn to respect others’ feelings. Using augmented or virtual reality (AR/VR) technologies, employees can gain empathy by experiencing the workplace in someone else’s shoes. Viewing their office from the eyes of a disabled person, for example, could help people manage their unconscious biases by better understanding the workplace



performance

accommodations that could increase productivity and comfort for every worker. These learning experiences would be far more effective than the “overnight-fix” types of diversity training programs that are typically employed.

- **Embrace inclusion as a skill that makes humans more human.** As the future of work unfolds, what makes us human will make us employable. Companies are increasingly placing a premium on job applicants who demonstrate skills like flexibility, self-motivation, empathy, resilience, creativity and communication, as they know these capabilities will become a competitive advantage when paired with the strengths of AI-driven machines. What if we made inclusion an essential skill rather than just a corporate-level concept? This small change in mindset would turn inclusion from “program-driven” to “competency-driven” and would deepen trust between employees and employers and among employees themselves.
- **Ensure leaders walk the talk.** No matter how inclusive and diverse your D&I efforts are, if leaders are undermining them, things will not change much — they can’t be passive supporters. Leaders have a disproportionate effect on setting the tone of the culture and, as such, they have a tremendous opportunity to create a space in which everyone can voice their honest, authentic feelings without judgment. People perform best when they feel valued, empowered and respected by their peers, not if they are fearful of being attacked for saying the wrong thing. When leaders are proactively engaged in discussing opportunities and challenges related to D&I, the entire organization is also engaged. For example, Frédéric Roze, the CEO of L’Oreal U.S.A., is intimately involved with the efforts to create a culture of inclusion. **He is quoted as saying**, “I have to be the champion of diversity and inclusion. It is my job to be a role model and show how important this is to our company.” The biggest driver of D&I success within a company is an unconditional commitment from the executive teams to making it happen.

We’re poised at a critical moment in time, with AI and automation driving us to rethink our existing workforce and business models. How we respond to this moment — that is, the choices and decisions we make in the next few years — will shape the fate of many individuals, educators, businesses and economies. In this moment, creating an inclusive and diverse work environment is not only the right thing to do; it is the key to businesses surviving and thriving in the digital economy.

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How Diversity Fuels Innovation

By Euan Davis



The workforce of the future is unfolding amid an onslaught of digital change that is upending revenue flows, business models and, essentially, how we work. We are slap bang in the middle of a seismic shift for organizations and the people who work for them. Thriving in this era of promise and uncertainty means increasing the speed at which we innovate, experiment and collaborate inside, outside and across companies and industries.

The people — and it *is* people — needed to do this, and how they're put to work, are changing. Different voices and views are needed to test our long-held assumptions. This is why senior executives recognize that a diverse set of experiences, perspectives and backgrounds is not only desirable but critical for the development and successful execution of new ideas.

Generating Ideas; Avoiding Blindspots

And good ideas are the lifeblood of the digital economy. Businesses are under pressure to raise the pace of innovation and capture opportunities that are now emerging, thick and fast: Digital and intelligent products and services are no longer stand-alone entities but interactive components within an extended ecosystem. This is fundamentally changing intra-and inter-organizational work structures and how people work together.

Cross-company collaboration, and even blended teams spanning multiple organizations, are now found in many of the world's largest and digitally invented companies. A signifier is the healthcare venture recently announced by Amazon, Berkshire Hathaway and JPMorgan, which aims to reduce millions of dollars from the administration, pricing and delivery of healthcare for U.S. citizens and improve the flow of innovations across the industry. New business models and partnerships like this could upend the status quo in an industry very quickly.

But at their root, these innovative approaches require people to come together and work and build a future. This is why diversity matters: Diversity ensures emerging market opportunities are better understood because contributors with a range of backgrounds and experiences are better equipped to understand the unmet needs of an underleveraged market. Without a kaleidoscope of views and voices within a product or service development process, businesses risk creating a corporate blindspot that could prove fatal. They could ignore an emerging client base, and miss out on the revenue opportunity or cede it to a competitor; they could miss an emerging technology that could unlock a business process or transform a customer experience, simply because everyone thinks the same way and misses out.

A Culture of Success

In addition to innovation, diversity also fuels the culture that's needed for the future of work. The places where we work increasingly act as cultural barometers for the people, customers and partners who work with or transact with them. Diversity is a key component of a work culture that shapes the workforce's values, beliefs, underlying assumptions, experiences and habits that guide its collective behavior. For this reason, work cultures are too important to let "just happen." With intentional leadership that prioritizes diversity, the work culture itself can perpetuate, promote and energize the business's brand.



opportunities

One simple, straightforward way of encouraging diversity is to include employees from various backgrounds, levels, roles and experiences in the ideation process. This could happen at an enterprise level or even globally. Those diverse voices are most certainly in the organization; you just might not be able to hear them. Leaders need to ask staff to help with ideating because creative concepts are nurtured and fine-tuned by bouncing ideas off one another and learning from the feedback loops.

What's becoming increasingly clear is that in the future of work, diversity and inclusion cannot be a nice-to-have. In a fast-changing world of work, businesses will need all hands on deck to capture the nuances of the marketplace, and respond in a way that makes it relevant and meaningful to not just "a few" or "the norm" but to the multiplicity, the infinite variety, the "all."

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Arena-Rocking Authenticity

By Jennifer Green Godette



When Beyoncé and Jay Z’s “On the Run II” stadium tour swung through Texas, I was lucky enough to snag a ticket. It wasn’t my first Beyoncé concert, but it was the most memorable. Why? The audience experienced the real Beyoncé.

Always a phenomenal performer, Bey has raised the bar even higher with songs that reflect what’s happening in her life and what’s truly important to her. She sings of her husband’s infidelity. Of fame and how it’s affected her. Of keeping friends close.

Observers can see and feel the difference. She’s removed her mask and is showing realness. It has taken years for her to be this open and real to her audience — and it makes her fans relate back to her — and adore her — even more.

As workplaces become more diverse and inclusive, we can all take a lesson from Beyoncé about removing our masks: When we share our true, authentic selves, it’s easier for people to relate to us. In turn, we can better connect with our colleagues, no matter their ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation or religion.

Being authentic can take a few different forms, including sharing distinctive, innovative ideas, even if they may be unfamiliar or confusing to your colleagues. By standing in your truth, you can gain the respect of your colleagues, be in a better position to introduce even more ideas and have more energy to focus on your work vs. masking who you really are.

A Responsibility to Be Yourself

Beyoncé’s current tour isn’t the first time she’s showed us how authenticity is done. At the Coachella music festival in April, she rocked a two-hour performance that paid homage to black culture and historically black colleges and universities. Her performance introduced the world to “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” often referred to as the Black National Anthem. Backed by a marching band and dancers, Beyoncé presented a step show and a probate (or coming out ceremony) for pledges of her own fictional fraternity — modeled after Black Greek fraternal organizations — which was another unique concept for many in the Coachella audience. After the performance, Beyoncé’s mother Tina Knowles wrote in an Instagram post that she was “afraid the predominantly white audience at Coachella would be confused by all of the black culture and black college culture because it was something they might not get.” But Beyoncé was undaunted, [telling her mother](#), “I have worked very hard to get to the point where I have a true voice, and at this point in my life and my career, I have a responsibility to do what’s best for the world and not what is most popular.”

Similarly, it can take time to arrive at a place in our career where we feel comfortable enough to express our authentic self. The timing can depend on how long we’ve held the job and our organization’s culture.

Once we get there, though, it’s truly the responsibility of each of us to let our uniqueness shine. Being inauthentic is like diversity without inclusion: You show up for work, but without contributing your unique thoughts and feelings, you’re not contributing to your fullest.

authenticity



Beyoncé’s realness and authenticity show throughout her work, in her performances, recorded music, magazine covers and even Instagram posts. As the “On the Run II” tour wound down, Beyoncé shared the following Instagram post: “Tonight is the first of the last 10 shows of OTRII. I’m doing what I love most with whom I love most. I wish it could never end.”

There’s no question that co-workers aren’t fans, and our workplaces aren’t arenas. But authenticity transcends pop culture and has meaning for all of us. It can give us the chance to do our best work while also doing the work we love. We should learn from Beyoncé, and be as authentic as she is in our own work.

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Think Small: Six Ways Global Business Can Promote Inclusion

By Colleen Doherty



At the best small companies, inclusion happens naturally. Colleagues are few in number and often just a desk away. Everyone feels like they belong.

When it comes to company culture, and especially employee engagement, large companies have to try harder. At service providers like Cognizant, where employees spend a lot of time at client sites, creating a workplace that offers the welcoming feel of a small company requires extra diligence. By taking a page from our smaller counterparts, we can emulate the sense of belonging that's essential to a workplace in which everyone has a voice.

Here's how to promote inclusion even when offices are spread throughout the world and many employees work remotely from home:

- **Double down on communication regarding training and development.** The good news is that global organizations offer a wealth of opportunities for career development and advancement. Where they can stumble is on getting the word out about these opportunities. By actively promoting classes, e-learning modules and other education benefits, large companies can boost participation rates in their training and development programs. For example, through our participation with MAKERS, a U.S.-based invitation-only organization whose mission is for companies to celebrate and acknowledge their game-changing female employees, [we pledged](#) to train 12,000 women in digital skills, including cloud, analytics and machine learning. The public nature of our commitment – announced at the 2018 MAKERS conference in February – helped the program gain traction quickly. Training can be done online or in traditional classes, and employees select from among 30 skills clusters. After a successful launch, the program is set to expand company-wide this fall.
- **Create outlets for innovative ideas.** When it comes to new ideas, size should be an advantage for large companies: If two heads are better than one, 20,000 should be outstanding. It can be difficult, however, for new ideas to get noticed when corporate campuses and offices span the globe. To help bring new ideas to fruition, [our Accelerator program](#) funds employees' entrepreneurial ideas for products and services, including six months of development with technical and marketing support. We also sponsor an annual innovation forum that lets employees submit work they've done that embodies forward-thinking and emerging technologies.
- **Make the most of limited time together.** Conference calls are the lifeblood of any global company. They're literally where our voices are heard – and often our main path for getting to know each other. Calls that open with a few minutes of non-business talk help us nurture the virtual relationships that are the heart of global organizations. A congenial, supportive call sets the tone for a project and offers the opportunity to interact in a personal way. We all work best when we feel free to be ourselves, discover shared experiences and are introduced to new points of view.
- **The new game changer: Video meetings.** (Hint: casual dress permitted.) Small companies naturally spur the informal exchange of ideas and the connections that make organizations hum. Video meetings can help large organizations foster similar kinds of connections – especially when it's made clear that there's no need to worry about



looking video-ready. At Cognizant, more than one executive has been known to wear a baseball cap when on video. Messy buns are welcome. So is having your dog nearby. The emphasis is on working together.

- **Clear a path for feedback.** The annual sit-down performance review can fall short of providing the sustained connection that enables employees to grow in their jobs. Many companies are shifting to a continuous feedback model that funnels comments and guidance to employees regularly rather than once a year. The idea is to close the communication loop, so that employees receive feedback on, say, projects and presentations in the course of meetings that occur throughout the year.
- **Build a local community presence.** One of the best ways to foster inclusion in the office is to spend time together outside of it. Encouraging local initiatives, such as regionally managed volunteer programs, enables employees to follow their interests and gives them a great reason to get together and share good work, whether it's working at a food pantry, scooping ice cream at a community day or participating in a fundraising walk.

Recent data from Gallup reveals that just three in 10 U.S. workers strongly agree that their opinions count at work. It's incumbent on businesses, no matter how large, to ensure their employees are part of that 30%. By cultivating employee connections and raising the level of engagement, organizations can have the best of both worlds: the scale and scope of a large enterprise, and the intimacy of a smaller one.

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Data-Driven Cultures: Keeping Humans in the Loop

By Poornima Ramaswamy



Businesses everywhere are striving to become more data-centric, whether to improve customer experience, develop smarter products and services, or fine-tune decision-making. But while these initiatives rely heavily on technologies such as big data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI), **developing a successful data-driven culture** is not a technology problem to solve.

The main ingredient of a data-driven culture, in fact, is not technology but humans — the more diverse the better. As many businesses have found, if the human factor is not considered upfront, and if a range of backgrounds, experiences and opinions is not incorporated, the data-centric initiatives will go nowhere.

This is easy to overlook, especially as businesses turn to AI-driven technologies to derive insight from their increasingly unmanageable data volumes. Given that these systems are specifically designed for self-learning using machine-learning algorithms — and ultimately for discovering patterns to make autonomous decisions and predictions about future outcomes — it's easy to imagine that humans might as well be taken out of the loop.

The Human Element of Machine Success

This, however, couldn't be further from the truth. When businesses kick off an AI-driven data initiative, it's essential to involve human workers from many walks of life, both to provide feedback to algorithmically-produced outputs so that the system can learn and improve over time, and to remain at the center of the system's design. To do that, workers need to fully understand, buy into and trust the intent of the system.

When I was at a recent conference, for example, a speaker recalled an organization he'd worked with that had created a machine-learning algorithm and given it to a team of workers to validate the system's output. With no context for what they were doing, team members assumed their role was to provide only positive feedback for the system's conclusions. They incorrectly surmised that to play a supportive role in the program's success, they basically had to say the machine was always right. But instead of improving the algorithm, they led it astray.

In other cases, workers may distrust the intent of the program (perhaps believing it would result in the loss of their own job) and intentionally bias the algorithm. In either case, it's essential for employees to understand what their role is in guiding the machine, and to know that the interplay between humans and the machine is essential to the program's success.

We've seen similar dynamics play out **when machine-learning systems are deployed in a call center organization**. Here again, humans are integral to ensuring that the machine's learnings are based on "good" customer service interactions in order to automate a positive experience. Because the current way of working may not necessarily provide the best inputs, a wide range of human input is needed to define a good interaction and ensure the machine is learning from good, not bad, examples.

Humans: The Focal Point of Design

Humans also need to be the focal point of solution design, especially when huge volumes of data are involved. At many businesses, IT works hard to wrangle reams of data into



human-centric

what they believe to be insightful reports. The problem is, for many employees, there are too many insights to take in.

By combining human-centered design thinking, advanced analytics and AI, businesses can produce a system that – like Waze for traffic navigation – provides a “best route” for leading employees through the data and decision options.

We worked with a global consumer products company on an initiative like this. Sales teams at the organizations were struggling to get a handle on the company’s data to improve client interactions and thereby sales. The data team was frustrated because they felt they’d provided a solid asset, complete with relevant data sets and dashboards. However, the sales teams felt they were drowning in data, with no clear idea of which data was most important to look at.

To resolve the issue, we orchestrated a design-thinking approach, in which we spent a “day in the life” with several stakeholders, working to understand their underlying needs. By developing journey maps, we were able to represent how all the data needed to be synthesized for specific user personas, and how to present it, through which channels, and at what point in time.

Based on that work, we designed a daily sales digest that incorporated customized key indicators, interactive data visualization and inferences that bring the data to life through supporting text, using natural language processing. The digests now reflect the needs of each user; for instance, top-performing salespeople might be less worried about meeting their numbers because of a solid pipeline and more concerned about cross-selling or upselling recommendations. The system also goes beyond showing critical data in chart format and describes the insights in a more easily understandable, natural language format, such as month-to-month regional insights.

All of these needs were uncovered through joint workshops performed with the sales community. Because users can absorb inferences and interpretations more quickly, system adoption increased, and decision-making has improved.

Businesses need a solid foundation to enable faster intelligence across the enterprise. That can’t be achieved through technology alone. When it comes to strategic use of data – and successful data-centric cultures – humans from a wide range of backgrounds are still very much a part of the solution.

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In Praise of Digital Immigrants

By Ben Pring



Against the struggles of racism and sexism, ageism may seem a minor concern. But prejudice against older folks is a real issue and one that should be considered in any survey of diversity and inclusion.

I know ageism is real, because I've long been ageist. I feel emboldened to admit this because so many of us have been – wittingly or unwittingly. Perhaps still are.

Perhaps, like me, you agreed with Pete Townshend in hoping to die before getting old. Perhaps, like me, you thought he put it succinctly when he suggested older folks stop trying to dig what he and his generation were trying to say.

But perhaps, like me, you're beginning to regret the error of your ways. After all, time spares no one. Townshend is now 73. I'm closing in on 56. I've looked at clouds from both sides now (as his fellow Woodstockian Joni Mitchell would put it – literally, as the ex-lead analyst on cloud computing at Gartner) and have turned from a Young Turk into an old fart in the seeming blink of an eye.

If we're ageist now, it's because we're acting as though our inner mental models – i.e., that we're still 32 – are reflected in the reality we present to the world.

They're not. Bummer ...

I (we, if you're guilty like me) need a new script. A new narrative that justifies our place at the table. A new argument that keeps us in the game, something a younger boss would understand. And when I say "we," I'm thinking of the 41 million people over 55 that are still in the U.S. workforce, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

So what place do older folks have in the new digital *terra incognita* of 2018? A place they emigrated to (some forced, some by inclination), that resembles the analog acres they grew up in, but which runs on different rules and at different clock speeds. What unique selling proposition do they have that their younger colleagues don't? What special talents do the follicularly challenged among us possess that our hirsute chums secretly envy?

Turning Age Into an Advantage

In my line of work (i.e., white/no collar, bourgeois, quasi-intellectual, desk-bound, meeting-orientated), I see six key areas where those of a certain age can press home an advantage:

- **Writing:** More words are written than ever before, but the quality of writing has been strained (with due apologies to a famous writer). Texts and tweets and Bitmoji have seen the well-crafted sentence, let alone the paragraph, let alone the 5,000-word report, wither in the wind. Writing in business still matters, though. Internal communication – of ideas, orders, requests – is the lifeblood of any organization, be it a dinosaur or a startup. External communication – of value propositions, shareholder statements, even the small matter of price discounts – can make or break a company in the public square. I'd suggest offering to take the lead on a writing assignment for your younger boss/colleague – he/she will protest but then secretly breathe a sigh of relief and send an under-the-table IM, "tx bro o u".

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- **Tribal knowledge:** I was recently at a meeting with a very hot new start-up. After lots of first-class Vulcan mind-melding, the subject of said start-up's name was raised. Why the resemblance to the product name from a long-established tier one software company, I asked? Blank looks from the start-up CEO. Awkward. Though I've never particularly subscribed to the Santayana belief that those who forget history are condemned to repeat it (there being so much history to remember and all ...), there is value to knowing a little of the backstory before you appear on the scene, ready for your close-up. Said start-up CEO literally didn't know what baggage his company name would carry in the marketplace, a marketplace consisting of buyers who still had scar tissue from dealing with the long-established tier one software company. What the start-up CEO thought was clever and cool, had harmonics of pain and misery for the people who held his fate in their hands. Big mistake. No company or executive needs an in-house historian, but every company and executive needs to know where the bodies/mines are buried, where X marks the spot, and where the river flows fastest. A little of this knowledge, thrown in judiciously, goes a long way.
 - **Connections:** In Digitalia, you may not be in Kansas anymore but you — Professor Greyhair — probably know some folks who live there. Or at least their first cousins. The digital natives around you are calling the shots, but being able to introduce X to Y and A to B, and even X to B, goes a long way in the fog of war. Knowing Johnny who can get the printing done and Abdul who's been through the permitting process 100 times takes a load off junior and frees up more time for their agile iterating. Or next mindfulness class ...
 - **Gravitas:** Think Alec Guinness in *Star Wars*. Helen Mirren as ER II. Morgan Freeman in just about anything. You may feel uncomfortable playing up a stereotype, but the reason clichés are popular is because they contain some grain of truth. I'd suggest, cut with that grain, go with the flow. Ham up the wise-old-owl vibe. But balance it with some humility. There's nothing worse than the old bore at the bar; "You know in my day ..." Suss the time and place to be quiet and reserved, holding your counsel. When to channel a little Chauncey Gardner with a gnomish *bon mot*. When to prick your own bubble with a little ageist self-deprecation — "Oh, don't listen to an old fool like me ..." In this brave new world, there's little reverence for age but still an appreciation of intelligence, the human version, it being in such short supply.
 - **Counsel:** Counsel is an underreported and underappreciated niche in the modern corporate jungle. CEO-whisperers are low-profile, but they're more common than most people imagine. If you can play that role to your boss, a division head, anybody with some clout and a boatload of insecurity, you can lower your own job insecurity. But counseling younger, more senior folks is not easy to do well. Approaching these interactions in a spirit of selflessness and generosity requires great emotional intelligence and a managed ego, which few people possess. If you can pull it off — not just as a booster but as a hitting partner who can help your boss/colleague/friend hone their shots — you can set yourself up a valuable human resource, hard to quantify, but even harder to RIF.

age as advantage



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- **Encouragement:** The human trait most missing in business, IMHO, is something we do without being told for the kids in our life but stop doing without being told for everybody else in our life. That seems a shame. I think – given that you’re now the oldest person in the room – you should start encouraging all the younger people around you in the way you did with your children on the soccer field or your daughter as she scrapped away on the violin. The lack of encouragement that senior people in business experience is another underappreciated oddity. Underlings may frequently agree with their boss – disagreeing being a career-limiting act – but very rarely say, “You’re doing a fabulous job, keep it up!” Boards and shareholders operate on Moore’s Law – “You grew 18% this year. Next year we want 22%.” Providing an encouraging word is something an older person can do at no cost and great benefit. Rent *The Intern* if you need the instruction manual.

The Bridge Goes Both Ways

Though the center of gravity in many aspects of the Western World has skewed young in recent times – political leaders tend to be younger than in previous generations (e.g., President Macron), the CEOs of the FANG-BAT vendors are in their 30s and 40s, not their 50s and 60s – keeping older voices in the corporate work mix is existentially important. Businesses and societies overly represented by the young prioritize speed and convenience, disruption and breaking things, and downplay caution and small-C conservatism – resulting in actions that with the merest dash of hindsight we can already begin to see are having unintended negative consequences.

But the more, ahem, mature among us also have a responsibility to stay connected and relevant in a world changing faster than ever. It’s easier than ever before to age out of the conversation, lose the ability to contribute, seem uncomfortable with things. Wear short hems when long hems are in ...

Vive la difference, after all, is based on the notion of give and take. Digital immigrants should want to assimilate to their new surroundings, while also maximizing their advantages. As has been said, immigration is not just a link to the past; it’s also a bridge to the future. The digital immigrant has a vital role in the future of work as that bridge – a bridge made of differences, contrasts and alloys that make it stronger and more secure for everyone to cross it.

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Getting to Equal: The Myth of the Working Mom

By Feather Hickox



Let's flip the idea of the childrearing career penalty for women on its head: What if being a mother was seen as a career enhancement?

Think about it for a moment. When men become working dads, they're seen as settling down, getting grounded, reaching maturity. We perceive their family focus as a step forward in terms of personal growth, leadership, becoming a pillar of the community.

When women become working moms, we attach a different set of stereotypes: We are spread thin, distracted, harried or even manic – we struggle to “balance it all.” We're depicted as resenting having to work or as cold workaholics who outsource our children's care. The media reinforces this image, reminding us constantly that being a working mom is an impossible challenge and that having children is certain to slow career and salary growth. A quick Google news search found 48,000 articles about “working moms,” with top results including a description of working motherhood by celebrity Eva Mendes as being “so hard,” a *Wired* article titled, “Why It's So Hard Being a Working Mom. Even at Facebook,” and a *New York Times* article with the headline, “For a Working-Mom Reporter, ‘The Juggle’ Is Real.”

A similar search for “working dad,” predictably, does not return such dire and negative messages. It's no wonder we've cultivated biases that affect women's salaries, assignments and advancement once they join the working mom ranks. The disparity in perception even has its own nomenclature: the “mommy tax” and the “daddy bonus.” [Recent economic research](#) by Sari Kerr, an economist at Wellesley College, affirms that the gender wage gap is largely due to motherhood. The same study – and this is something that employers and managers can affect – found that the bulk of the pay gap, 73%, is due to a lack of salary increases and advancement within companies.

Revealing the Truth

I call our cultural image of working motherhood a myth because it's not real. What if having children were viewed, for women in the workplace, similarly as it is for men, as a reason to get more focused, achieve your goals, be a top performer and reach your maximum career potential. Working motherhood is nothing new, and recent examples illustrate what's possible when we reject the stereotypes. These include Beyoncé, who after having her first child and then twins, has made some of the most [celebrated and creative work of her career](#). A recent Chase ad campaign [featuring Serena Williams](#) repurposes L. L. Cool J's “Mama Said Knock You Out” to celebrate her return to the U.S. Open as a new mother. Kristin Lemkau, CMO of JPMorgan Chase (also, ahem, a mom), called the piece “[The best piece of work I've ever been a part of.](#)” These are women at the top of their games, visibly drawing strength from their experiences as moms.

On our path to equality, it's time to fix the perception that having a child is a career setback for women. Of course there are challenges, time constraints and very real lifestyle changes that may impede certain types of work – but isn't that also true of men in the workplace who are parents?



job enhancement

Could Being a Mom Improve Your Performance?

The default narrative is that once a woman becomes a parent, she has “other priorities.” Work becomes less important than it once was, and moms are less focused, engaged and effective, and certainly not looking for stretch assignments or advancement. There’s real evidence, however, including a study from the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, that being a mother actually helps women become **more focused and productive**. We know that top-performing executives make time to unplug, and what better way to “turn off” the noise of work than caring for, and interacting with, children?

In addition to being more focused, motivated and energized about work, there’s another reason being a mom makes us more effective: the working mom network. This invisible but ever-present network is a powerful career and business tool – we help each other with advice, career opportunities and best practices. Tapping my network even helped me secure my current role at Cognizant – so rather than hurting my career, embracing the common ground I now have with millions of other women has helped me immensely.

The Energizing Force of Being a Parent

Whether it’s my 4-year old, determined to be a “firefighter, astronaut and then race car driver,” or my 8-year-old, who one day is designing a robot, and another day dreaming up a kid-owned restaurant, kids remind us that we can dream big and reinvent ourselves – at any age. My own children have reignited my creativity and inspired me to do my best work. They encourage me to take time to play and rethink my own assumptions about what’s possible (just ... not the restaurant!).

Having children has certainly affected some of my career decisions: I turned down a sales job with up to 75% travel. I also declined to join a promising start-up because I wanted the stability and benefits that come with working for an established company. And it bears mentioning that my husband and I work together to manage the home-and-childcare responsibilities so that we both can succeed in our professional lives.

But having children has also taught me to embrace possibilities and be more flexible and fearless. I have taken on new challenges and responsibilities, received promotions and strategic assignments – and today, my children remind me that I can do anything with enough focus and determination.

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Assistive Technologies Don't Create an Inclusive Workplace – Committed Businesses Do



By Karen McCall

According to the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), 29.3% of working-age disabled people are employed today, compared with 73.5% of those without a disability. What's more, the unemployment rate for individuals with a disability was 9.2% in 2017, more than twice that of those with no disability (4.2%). If only there were some tools to bridge this gap ...

Ah, but there are. There are lots, actually. The problem is, while everyone is philosophically supportive of an inclusive workplace, putting that belief into practice is disruptive at a business level. For a company to truly put its money where its mouth is, it takes human resources, financial support and a change in mindset from compliance to inclusivity.

Many tools and guidelines are already in place to foster inclusion of the disabled workforce – government policies, [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#), the emergence of a more flexible gig economy and, the most exciting to me, technologies like virtual reality (VR) and facial recognition. But the growth of disabled employment won't just fall into place naturally. Companies need to *cultivate* inclusion in order to capitalize on the massive impact technology could have.

AI, Tech Gear Build Bridges to Inclusion

Discussions of accessibility tend to revolve around physical workspace accommodations. Smart cities are focusing on mobility, and autonomous shuttle systems are in development, like [Olli](#) (a partnership born of Local Motors and IBM) to help the disabled get around. But once they're in the building at work, can they do their jobs productively and comfortably? Cue adaptive technologies and devices that employers can apply to aid workers with visual, auditory, cognitive and mobility impairments.

For the visually impaired, there are application-based innovations like the [Be My Eyes](#) app that uses an Uber-like platform to tap sighted human volunteers from around the world to read or describe something. With other emerging apps, you can wave your phone across an object (like a piece of clothing or currency), and it tells you what it is. The [OrCam My Eye](#) device attaches to glasses to read text, recognize faces and identify products. Screen magnification programs like [ZoomText](#) and the [JAWS](#) screen reader provide speech and Braille output, and work with most popular computer applications.

For the workforce with auditory disabilities, hearing aids with Bluetooth connectivity help navigate phone calls. There are also video relay services that employ sign language interpreters for the deaf to communicate on calls or video conferences. And a smart-phone program called [AVA](#) transcribes spoken words as text on a listener's phone or tablet. Real-time captioning for presentations and meetings could be generated by an AI-powered communication technology like Microsoft Translator – currently being used at the [Rochester Institute of Technology](#).

For those with motor skill impairments, tools range from simple to downright extraordinary. At a basic level, using a keyboard or phone pad can be challenging. Advanced speech (like [Dragon Naturally Speaking](#)) and facial recognition programs help address those issues. For dexterity and strength issues and for more extreme disabilities, there are exoskeletal devices (like the [X-AR](#) arm), gloves and even [suits](#) that support and enable natural motion.



commitment

Follow the Leaders

But while all of these assistive technologies can enable disabled people to thrive in the workplace, only genuine business commitment can evolve the corporate culture. According to the [The World Health Organization](#), for example, only 1 in 10 people with disabilities around the world has access to assistive technologies and products. Microsoft is a stellar example of commitment with its [AI for Accessibility](#) initiatives, which have already made great strides with programs like [Translator](#) and [Seeing AI](#). Other companies have established inclusion councils and created executive-level positions to bring these efforts into their corporate culture. [Netflix](#), for example, has hired D&I heavyweight Verna Myers for its newly created Head of Inclusion Strategy role.

Combine the efforts of these corporate frontrunners with public agencies, and you'll see the groundwork is being laid. The U.S. Department of Labor's [Office of Disability Employment Policy](#) established [PEAT](#) – the Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology – in recognition of the critical role that technology will play in widening the talent pool in this digital age. PEAT offers a tremendous amount of thought leadership, best practices and evaluation tools that businesses can use to create a future of genuine inclusion.

Technology Enables and Empowers Human Work

Through my work at Cognizant's [Center for the Future of Work](#), I talk a lot about how the future is predicated on humans embracing work *with* machines. Assistive technologies for the disabled is literally the embodiment of just that. Technology is creating and enhancing work for a whole community previously shut out of the workforce. That's progress. That's the future. Important, productive, meaningful work is within reach – let's grab it (with an exoskeletal hand of course).

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Leveraging Tech to Remove Hiring Bias

By Michael Cook



Organizations are on an ongoing mission to create inclusive and ethnically and racially diverse workplaces; however, many are still struggling to make this happen — and, as a result, missing out on whole pools of talent. Both consciously and unconsciously, many organizations' hiring processes still suffer from the “comfortable clone syndrome” i.e., selecting talent that looks the same, acts the same and thinks the same as the person hiring. This is negatively impacting diversity, with profound impacts on innovation, collaboration and even profitability.

Realizing this, top businesses are seeking new approaches to hiring that help reduce the chance of bias. **One example is Unilever.** Rather than hiring entry-level workers only from elite universities — and going the traditional resume and phone interview route — for instance, Unilever now posts jobs on social media sites such as LinkedIn and invites candidates to play a few neuroscience-based games that test traits such as memory and focus. Based on those results, candidates are then asked to respond to questions on a video recording system that analyzes keywords, intonation and body language. The system algorithms then determine whether the candidate should move to the next stage, which involves a human recruiter.

Not only does Unilever claim to have hired its most diverse class to date, but it's also seen a significant increase in hires of nonwhite applicants, achieved gender parity in new hires, and increased its talent outreach to a much wider range of universities.

Turning to Technology

Here are some additional ways for businesses to remove bias throughout the entire recruitment value chain, from sourcing to onboarding, using artificial intelligence and other digital platforms:

- **Removal of bias in job descriptions:** Recruiters can fall at the first hurdle by unintentionally using biased wording in their job descriptions. **Platforms such as Textio** can score a job description on its gender and ethnicity neutrality and then suggest ways to improve it. The predictive analytics engine uncovers patterns within the language and highlights words or phrases that wouldn't be attractive to diverse candidates (like “world-class ninja,” “rockstar” or even “ambitious”), and suggests ways to make the language more diversity friendly.
- **Automated candidate selection:** With the addition of machine learning, automated candidate selection platforms can generate benefits beyond simple cost reduction and speed to hire. Programs such as **IBM's Watson Recruitment**, for example, can now identify the traits of top-performing individuals for specific roles and autonomously and in an unbiased manner progress short-listed individuals through to next-stage interviews. A potential pitfall of this system is that historical bias could lead to continued bias, such as an historically high correlation of rugby players being top-performing salespeople. With the majority of rugby players being male, this would immediately bias the outcome. These types of systems, then, should be directed to rely on qualifications, skills and behavioral characteristics that remove unintentional gender bias.
- **Removal of bias in candidate reviews:** Many organizations shy away from the concept of automated candidate selection, especially for more senior roles, relying instead on recruitment specialists to select a short list of candidates for interview.



APPLY NOW

new hiring practices

To remove bias from the human review process, businesses can use programs such as the [Unbiasify Chrome extension](#) to automatically remove gender and name from LinkedIn and other social sites. In addition, human capital management (HCM) suites such as SuccessFactors [have implemented machine learning systems](#) that remove gender and race information from applications.

- **Onboarding and mentoring:** Even if you've mastered unbiased hiring practices, you can't assume that success will extend to your onboarding processes; an example is pairing new hires with mentors just because they're similar and not by matching their skillsets. HCM systems, such as [SuccessFactors' Succession & Development platform](#), can match new hires with mentors based on skills, competencies and personality to make this process more equitable and inclusive.

While some businesses may be concerned that the introduction of AI, algorithms and automation could "dehumanize" HR, these systems are not meant as substitutes for recruiters and hiring managers. By shaking up age-old practices, in fact, they can help HR discover new hiring practices and processes that could elevate this function to a strategic level in the company – and help the business realize its diversity and inclusion goals.

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Making the Future with the Lower Eastside Girls Club

By Kathryn Nash



I first visited the **Lower Eastside Girls Club** (LESGC) in November 2015. I remember it vividly. My Uber driver inquired, “Does this look like the right place?” I looked around and felt a bit swallowed up by the endless rows of ruddy-colored brick tenements lining the narrow streets that crisscross the Lower East Side. I thanked the driver and, as yet unsure of my bearings, exited the vehicle before making my way to a secured, steel-framed glass door. I was let in and immediately knew I had arrived at the right place. I was engulfed with a sense of purpose in the movements and sounds of creativity and community.

After introductions, we began our ascent through the stairwells of each of the three floors that are the home of the LESGC. As doors opened, we meandered through spaces, each one more inspiring than the last: a Gulf Airstream outfitted as a music production studio; a Makerspace with garage door access to the rooftop garden; a fully-equipped kitchen with a commercial pizza oven; a planetarium/digital theater that reaches beyond the stars; and additional laboratories for photography, bioscience, art and sewing.

More amazing were the people I met and the stories I heard. Girls stopped to share their individual and collective projects. I met teachers who were experts within their creative spaces, passionate facilitators of Maker-centered learning. I had an opportunity to visit with Lyn Pentecost, a cofounder and crusader who saw a need, made a plan and went to work with a team of like-minded dedicated activists.

What I experienced on that day was Joy. Power. Possibility.

The LESGC Story

The best way to understand the origins of the LESGC is to hear it in their own words:

The LESGC was founded in 1996 to address the historic lack of services available to girls and young women on the Lower East Side. The effects of inner-city social turmoil which took place in the 1960s and 70s throughout the nation hit the Lower East Side community in Manhattan very hard. Many social service agencies closed their doors and moved during these years, leaving “boys-only” services and clubs available.

One of the few agencies to remain open and “tough it out” was the Boys Club of New York, operating two full-service facilities for boys. A diverse group of Lower East Side women consisting of mothers, workers, artists, educators, scientists, athletes, business-women and community activists organized in 1996 to address this obvious inequity. Soon thereafter, The Lower Eastside Girls Club was founded.

Our founding vision was a dual one: to reframe the field of youth development as a “whole community” issue, and to construct a building to house that vision.

Today, the LESGC connects girls and young women to healthy and successful futures. The LESGC breaks the cycle of poverty by training the next generation of ethical, entrepreneurial and environmental leaders. Girls Club members overcome adversity, perceive opportunity, develop self-confidence, make ethical decisions and healthy life choices, thrive academically, embrace leadership, and have the ability to enter college or the workforce as fully prepared and connected adults.

Cognizant’s Making the Future and LESGC

I was introduced to the LESGC by a colleague at the New York City Economic Development Commission who was familiar with our **Making the Future initiative**, which



possibility

is focused on life-long education and skill regeneration. The intent of our initiative is to invigorate a passion for STEAM disciplines (science, technology, engineering, art and math) from an early age by encouraging young learners to use their head and hands to create and design in a process known as “Making.” “Making” fosters curiosity, interdisciplinary problem-solving, risk-taking, adaptability, collaboration and intrinsic motivation – the essential employable skills for the future of work.

Since the launch of Making the Future in 2011, our flagship Making program grants have funded 225 programs, providing 2.5 million hours of “Making” activities to approximately 40,000 young people. A significant number of programs, over 95%, are awarded to nonprofit organizations serving underrepresented and underserved populations. The importance of such programs is undeniable, considering that the lack of access and opportunity are cited as major factors that contribute to the low number of minorities represented in technology jobs.

After that first unforgettable visit to the LESGC, we partnered with the club in 2016 as part of our Making the Future program. LESGC Maker Girls is a stellar example of how our initiative is advancing digital literacy and scientific knowledge by marrying technical skills with creative expression. The content of the classes is a true testimony to how programs evolve as industry practices evolve. Over the course of multiple cycles, Maker Girls has offered:

- Physical computing (Arduino, Raspberry Pi).
- Basic coding (Scratch, Ruby and JavaScript).
- Robotics.
- 3-D scanning modeling and printing.
- Classes that incorporate virtual design with physical fabrication.
- Classes that utilize new creation tools to create “hands-on” interfaces in 3-D to grab, choose and build objects and navigate through a VR space.

Classes are designed to give girls the opportunity to participate in activities that create familiarity and a knowledge base leading to academic pathways in STEAM while building technical skills for the 21st century marketplace. What we see at LESGC is a cross-disciplinary approach to Maker-centered learning that lays the foundation for lifelong learning. The interplay of curiosity and creativity develops a sense of agency, joy, adaptability and confidence.

We stand committed to building a diverse workplace. Partnerships like the LESGC are born through a shared vision that this is a goal worth achieving. Investing in robust programs like the LESGC is a business imperative to shift the shortfalls in gender parity and shape an inclusive workplace.

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Empowering Women to Thrive through Sponsorship

By Carol Cohen



When Sean Middleton, a senior executive at Cognizant, recently advocated for Irene Sandler, a vice-president and member of his team, he never thought of it as sponsorship. He believed he was doing what all good leaders do. As Sean explains, “I have regular conversations with everyone, asking questions like, ‘What are you doing now? Where do you need help? What do you plan to do next? What roles could we put you in that would help you grow?’” From his perspective, it’s a no-brainer to look for ways to support, challenge and develop every member of his team.

That’s why, when Irene raised her hand saying, “I want to get promoted,” it wasn’t a surprise. As she points out, “Because we’d been regularly communicating, it was a natural output of my work. It wasn’t daunting to make that request.” While ultimately it was Irene and her work that firmly established the case for promotion, because of Sean’s active career sponsorship, it was an easier case to make. “I’m ambitious myself,” Sean says, “so I knew it was on her mind. I recognized it was something she wanted and deserved.” In the end, the two worked together on building awareness and showcasing Irene’s accomplishments while demonstrating the value of her contributions.

Most Women Don’t Have Sponsors

For women, it often takes more than a stand-out performance to nab the high-visibility projects, plum assignments and big promotions — it also takes a proactive sponsor. Sponsors can provide crucial coaching and advocacy for women when career decisions are being made. This is something women can’t always do for themselves, as they are sometimes penalized for obvious self-promoting behavior.

While many think the most important source of career advice, development, mentoring and sponsorship for women is their direct manager, unfortunately **only one in four women** has had a high-quality conversation with their manager about skill development, according to Right Management, a subsidiary of ManpowerGroup, and **a full 84%** don’t have an identified sponsor. To fill the gap, many women instead focus on active networking across a wide array of people inside and outside of the organization. But because these networks tend to be dominated by peers, family and friends — and not sponsors, especially ones with influence — the reality is that women often don’t have a strong presence in places where promotional decisions are being made.

Why is it so difficult to find a sponsor? There can be a certain amount of “kismet” in finding one — a function of chemistry and trust. Indeed, these relationships often develop by working together, much like Sean and Irene. But sometimes, it’s a matter of asking. A bold female leader in our UK office asked me for “18 minutes of mentoring” once a month. Those monthly 18 minutes have now expanded, and our relationship has moved from mentoring to active sponsorship.

Developing the Leadership Pipeline

But we as organizational leaders can’t wait for kismet to intervene or for women to “ask” for sponsorship.

If we truly want to impact the gender composition of our workforce, we as leaders have a responsibility to drive that process forward. Great leaders add value to their organization by becoming known as someone who encourages and supports women. They:



- **Look for high performers:** They are attuned to the talent pipeline, actively looking several levels down into the organization for high-performing female talent to support their success.
- **Engage in high-quality conversations:** They hold ongoing conversations with female employees to understand and explore career goals, personal preferences and potential fit with upcoming opportunities.
- **Actively advocate:** They champion women for potential opportunities that will expand skill sets, leverage untapped talents or expose broader thinking.
- **Promote visibility and connections:** They introduce women to their networks as a way to help them create relationships for opportunities down the line, and they build awareness, showcase accomplishments and demonstrate the value of women's contributions.

Benefits Flow Both Ways

The good news is that genuine sponsorship is a two-way street. It's a professional relationship designed to help propel women into senior leadership positions through coaching and advocacy while extending the reach and impact of the sponsoring senior leaders. Sponsorship offers a unique opportunity for senior leaders to broaden their perspectives and expand their own networks.

Furthermore, [according to a landmark study](#) by nonprofit organization Catalyst, leaders involved in a sponsoring relationship tend to be more satisfied with their jobs, committed to their organization and more likely to stay with the company longer. The spillover effect of sponsoring can be significant in building a high-performing, diverse pipeline.

Setting the Tone

At Cognizant, we believe it's important that we create an environment where sponsorship thrives. Consequently, we've made the leadership decision to intentionally sponsor and facilitate [the movement of women throughout our leadership pipeline](#).

The question is – what will you do?

Real change starts at the individual level, and now is the time to get started. In what ways will you as a leader own the change? Who will you hire, develop, mentor and sponsor? One proactive step by each of us can lead to major shifts in how we promote and advance women in our leadership pipeline.

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Upskilling Underrepresented Talent for Private and Public Gain



By Eric Westphal

Job displacement is a big topic these days. Whether you believe digital advancements like AI-driven automation will create or destroy jobs, no one can deny that all workers, in any profession, will need to reassess how they can adapt to a new – and likely technologically-enhanced – role. That’s why, amid the seemingly endless barrage of start-ups intent on disrupting industries and entire workforces, there’s an emerging consciousness that an equal amount of attention and intention needs to be paid to what’s left in the wake of the digital storm.

One of the most compelling and ambitious efforts of this type is the [World Economic Forum’s IT Industry Skills Initiative](#), which is committed to reaching one million people with [resources and training opportunities](#) for upskilling over the next three years. The effort, of which we’re a founding partner, is in response to [an earlier WEF report](#) that found one in four adults reporting a mismatch between the skills they have and the skills they need for their current job.

While the skills mismatch is clearly an issue for wide swathes of the population, it’s especially detrimental to individuals living in underprivileged and often overlooked geographies, such as inner cities, remote or rural locations, and areas left behind in the post-industrial era. For these people, the already low odds of employment are even worse in the digital age.

The burden is not theirs to bear alone; by failing to hone the potential of these workers, employers are overlooking a large population of workers to increase the available talent pool, in the specific skill areas they need. That’s why forward-thinking companies are increasingly investing in public-private partnership programs that target hard-to-find skills and then work on upskilling individuals who can be placed directly into much-needed tech openings.

Working Together on Targeted Upskilling

One example is [Per Scholas](#), a non-profit tech training academy we partner with that offers tuition-free training to workers in six major markets: New York, Atlanta, Columbus, Cincinnati, Washington, D.C., and Dallas. Employers communicate their specific skill and talent needs to Per Scholas – whether it’s coders, IT support staff, network administrators or something else – and co-develop the curriculum. Per Scholas vets the applicants, administers the training to those who qualify and certifies graduates who successfully complete the coursework. Upon graduation, the employer interviews and hires preferred candidates.

So far, Per Scholas has achieved an 85% graduation rate (compared with [about 20% for community colleges](#), according to the National Center for Education), and graduates have seen a 429% boost in income. At Cognizant, [we’re partnering with Per Scholas](#) to hire at least 350 graduates from our Bronx Training Center, which serves the Bronx and surrounding New York region.

Because Per Scholas is funded by public grants and investments from private companies seeking to fill their tech openings through upskilling, tuition and certification is entirely free for students, compared with [an average student loan debt](#) of \$30,000 for a four-year degree, according to The Institute for College Access & Success. Per Scholas’s certification programs require little more than a few weeks of training to fewer than seven months at most, depending on the needed skill.



Advantages for Employers, Employees and Communities

Thanks to the program, talent-strapped companies get to hire what they need for the same (if not lower) cost than traditional recruiting approaches, while underprivileged communities can lower their unemployment and increase residents' marketable skills. Further, candidate suitability and employee retention might be higher for these workers compared with four-year college graduates because the latter may be less eager to accept an entry-level tech job. In this way, public-private partnerships focused on upskilling could lead to better employer-employee alignment and a more loyal workforce.

In addition to Per Scholas, other upskilling programs have emerged, including numerous [nonprofits](#), collegiate co-ops such as [Revature](#) and free academies such as [Launch Code](#) and [Tech Talent South](#), all of which are also working to increase worker skills for the digital economy.

Success Stories Abound

Individual success stories prove the value of these programs. Consider Kevin Kovack, a U.S. Army veteran who returned home from a tour of duty in Iraq. Kevin was one of the first participants in the Quality Engineering career training track at our [Bronx Training Center](#). Upon graduating from the 12-week program, we hired Kevin as a programmer analyst.

There's also Vani Bhattacharjee, who had previously worked in IT and wanted to reenter the workforce after taking off 15 years to raise her family. Vani also reskilled herself at our Bronx Training Center, and upon graduation was hired by Cognizant as a quality assurance analyst.

Kevin's and Vani's stories exemplify the kind of immediate and life-changing impacts that this type of partnership can create. We hope to share many more stories like these in communities across the country.

Making a Difference

Given that our success is built on human capital, we believe we can make a difference in closing the skills gap. In May, we launched the [Cognizant U.S. Foundation](#), with an initial grant of \$100 million. The foundation will focus on funding education and upskilling programs at the local level, in multiple cities and states, to help improve opportunities for high school grads, community college and college students, military veterans and others seeking the specialized skills needed to land digital technology jobs.

Enabling and empowering workers to update their skills will increasingly be a key concern for businesses and societies across the globe, both for the common good and the benefit of the business itself. By participating in this and other innovative upskilling programs, business leaders can pave the way for digital success, both for themselves and the communities in which they reside.

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The Way(s) to the Future of Work

By Rob Brown



In 2010, Martin Sheen starred in *The Way*, an underrated but beautiful film. His character is a curmudgeonly, set-in-his-ways, late-middle-age, Type A workaholic from Los Angeles. A series of events lands him on *El Camino de Santiago* (translated into English as “The Way”), where circumstances compel him to interact — in life-affirming ways — with an assorted set of individuals he encounters on the journey.

The future of work offers a similar opportunity for people from all walks of life — as long as they can see the path forward (and we can also see *them*). For all the wonder and “art of the possible” that new technologies present, the age of automation, AI and algorithms can also propagate fear. That is, whatever the existing sociopolitical issues we’re grappling with today (racism, sexism, homophobia, tribalism, capitalism, communism, socialism, unemployment) — let alone finding a good job — there seems to be a pervasive belief that AI will only exacerbate them. It’s all too easy to feel a bit lost, a little unclear on the first steps to take or whether there’s some sort of on-ramp to the future of work.

But in the fog of uncertainty, there are signposts pointing The Way ahead, not just for those who are currently gainfully employed but also for the historically dispossessed and the less advantaged. Here’s just a small sampling:

- **Jewel Burks, an advocate for representation and access in the technology industry** and founder of Partpic — think the Shazam app but for maintenance and repair parts — has curated an amazing list of accomplished black entrepreneurs who are worth watching. She compiled it to start answering the question: “Who is the Serena Williams/Michael Jordan of tech in the African-American community?” Those on her list have already produced products and have money, customer bases and excellent employees. Some are newer to tech but bring breakthrough ideas that need to scale. For these rising stars, The Way won’t necessarily be funding but the leverage that well-connected networks and introductions can bring.
- **Lili Gangas, the Chief Technology Community Officer at Kapor Center**, has a mission to activate the U.S.-based Latinx population to be not just consumers of technology but also founders, financiers, builders and owners of technology. She concentrated her efforts on Oakland, Calif., where African-American and Latinx professionals make up less than 20% of the tech community, and scaled to nine additional cities in 2018. Through the formation of the Latinx in Tech Summit, Gangas strives to demystify pathways of entry into tech jobs, and create links into investment banking and tech entrepreneurship, areas where Latinx representation is currently negligible.
- **Technology business journalist Kara Swisher has done an admirable job** trying to showcase The Way “from coal to code.” As cofounder of tech news site Recode, she’s hosted discussions on how socioeconomically disadvantaged people struggling in the middle of the country can get opportunities in tech. This echoes some of the writings of J. D. Vance (of *Hillbilly Elegy* fame), who poignantly notes steps on The Way from Appalachia to the Ivy League that were invisible until he got to Yale. Vance has partnered with former AOL CEO Steve Case to oversee the “**Rise of the Rest**” seed fund, which is focused on catalyzing growth in emerging start-up communities throughout the U.S., such as Texas, Tennessee, Alabama and Kentucky.



visibility

It Starts with Visibility

For those of us with privilege (and if you're one of the human beings on Earth with an education, count yourself as among this group, let alone being white and/or male), to be inclusive requires awareness. The list above is a starting point for the enlightenment that's increasingly essential for making the future of work all it promises to be. As a parent with a teenage daughter who loves math and may wish to pursue a job in engineering data science, I refuse to let the messaging of "women don't go into those fields" propagate into a self-fulfilling prophecy. That needs changing — drastically — and visibility is a key first step.

The theme of visibility was a big focus of our recent participation at the [Aspen Action Forum](#). As Dan Porterfield, CEO of the Aspen Institute, underscored, inclusion means saying, "I see you, and I see the impact that you can bring as a difference-maker, and I can and will help others see you." By broadcasting examples of the pathways to digital opportunity for all people and not just the usual suspects, we can catalyze participation and push awareness of the results to inspire other people and fortify their belief that they have a place in the future of work.

Importantly, finding The Way needs to happen in partnership with the individuals and communities it's supposed to benefit. This will take listening (in some cases, persistent listening) to engage people in telling their real life stories, their perspectives on the future, and what they see as the opportunities that they want to pursue.

Leaving a Light On

For any of us, our fear of the future can be assuaged when we find a reliable route, or at least a signal, a street lamp, a sign or a map pointing us in the right direction. At the CFoW, we've begun developing a cartography for the future of work, both in our book [What To Do When Machines Do Everything](#), and in our ["21 Jobs of the Future"](#) reports (Parts 1 and 2).

Like the list above, both are a start, and we hope to see — and create — more. Like the *Camino* of old, these efforts can form the basis of our version of "The Way:" a latter-day *El Camino del Trabajo de Futura*.

Are you ready to take the first step?

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Engage. Educate. Inspire.

We hope that in reading this booklet, whether you dipped your toes in or read end-to-end, you are provoked to take the next step in addressing the urgent issue of diversity and inclusion facing the world of work today.

If any of these articles has ruffled your feathers, made you feel uncomfortable or if you disagree, we hope you'll strive to learn more, by reading more about it, talking to those around you and listening to a diverse range of opinion. That's how we'll break down this weighted topic and collectively open our eyes to the range of subjects and solutions under the umbrella of inclusion. It's the first step toward making an impact at our places of work, where we can educate others and inspire change.

Organizations today cannot hide from the public discourse on diversity. New regulations like the Gender Pay Gap Reporting in the UK or online review sites like Glassdoor are increasing the transparency of organizational attitudes toward inclusion.

We're excited by the solutions out there, in the fields of technology, social science, organizational psychology and beyond. This collection highlights the steps you and your organization can take toward a more inclusive future:

- **Get on board with technological advancements (but don't forget the power of human interaction.)** The rapid pace of change in fields such as machine learning and AI are opening up huge opportunities for tackling bias in the workplace – from attracting new candidates, to hiring and keeping them. However, we can't place all our eggs in the tech basket. Get back to the roots of what makes us human, such as social interaction and community. Ensuring that effective sponsorship and mentorship programs are available is a great place to start.
- **Get engaged with local communities and prioritize upskilling across the workforce.** We hope you've been inspired by the work we're doing with clubs like LESGC and our Making the Future and Cognizant U.S. Foundation initiatives. A focus on skills regeneration will be crucial to succeed in the future of work, so ensure you've got the tools and partnerships in place to support workforce upskilling.
- **Be yourself, and support others to be themselves.** Running a global organization is not an excuse to implement a one-size-fits-all people policy. Embrace authenticity and work hard every day to seek out the opinion of someone who doesn't fit into the same categories as you, whether they're older, have kids or have experienced a different education.

With any luck, it won't be long before discussions like those in this book are redundant, and that instead of concerning themselves with what they look like or where they come from, our kids and grandkids will focus on their unique skills, distinct perspectives and inimitable personalities. Once we start celebrating the value of the individual, we're ready to take on the future of work.

Desmond Dickerson, Senior Consultant, and Caroline Styr, Research Analyst, Cognizant Center for the Future of Work

About the Editors



Caroline Styr

Caroline Styr is a Research Analyst in Cognizant's Center for the Future of Work in Europe. In this role, she develops thought leadership to challenge perceptions of the future of work. Above all, she is dedicated to demystifying what the individual needs to succeed in the modern organization. Prior to joining the CFoW, Caroline was part of Cognizant Consulting, working in international digital services and transformation across the retail and healthcare industries. She has a bachelor of arts degree (Hons.) in German from the University of Bristol, alongside which she certified in theatre and performance at Bristol Acting Academy. Caroline can be reached at: Caroline.Styr@cognizant.com.



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Desmond Dickerson is a Senior Consultant in Cognizant's Center for the Future of Work. Leveraging his experience in digital transformation and marketing, Desmond consults clients on optimizing digital strategies that prioritize user experience and engagement. His research with the CFoW focuses on the human impact of decisions related to technology development and deployment. Desmond co-founded Cognizant's African American and Latino Affinity Group (AALG). This organization aspires to provide an opportunity to all Cognizant associates who have an active interest in creating networking connections that transcend ethnic and cultural origins, and invites members to take an active part in shaping the future of Cognizant. He has an MBA (data analytics) from Georgia Institute of Technology and an undergraduate degree in marketing from Georgia State University. Desmond can be reached at Desmond.Dickerson@cognizant.com.

The editors would like to thank all of our authors for their contributions and our Digitally Cognizant blog team for supporting the republication of those blogs originally featured on their site.

About the CFoW

Cognizant's Center for the Future of Work™ is chartered to examine how work is changing, and will change, in response to the emergence of new technologies, new business practices and new workers. The Center provides original research and analysis of work trends and dynamics, and collaborates with a wide range of business, technology and academic thinkers about what the future of work will look like as technology changes so many aspects of our working lives. For more information, visit [Cognizant.com/futureofwork](https://cognizant.com/futureofwork), or contact Ben Pring, Cognizant VP and Director of the Center for the Future of Work, at Benjamin.Pring@cognizant.com.

About Women Empowered

Cognizant Women Empowered (WE) elevates the experience of work for women and creates impact for the business. WE is committed to recruiting more women at all levels throughout Cognizant, providing career growth and leadership development opportunities, retaining top talent, and building a community of women focused on the technology industry. For more information, visit [Cognizant.com/women-empowered](https://cognizant.com/women-empowered), or contact Jennifer Green Godette, Global Marketing Leader, Cognizant Women Empowered, at Jennifer.GreenGodette@cognizant.com.



Cognizant (Nasdaq-100: CTSH) is one of the world's leading professional services companies, transforming clients' business, operating and technology models for the digital era. Our unique industry-based, consultative approach helps clients envision, build and run more innovative and efficient businesses. Headquartered in the U.S., Cognizant is ranked 195 on the Fortune 500 and is consistently listed among the most admired companies in the world. Learn how Cognizant helps clients lead with digital at www.cognizant.com or follow us @Cognizant.

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