

International Women's Day 2023

Viewpoints from the team



Teamspirit



International Women's Day marks a point in the year for us all to take stock and think not only about the progress that has been made, but also where we still need to go to achieve equity. And this year, amid a cost-of-living crisis that is disproportionately impacting women's finances (Living Wage Foundation) it's clear that there is still plenty more to do.

At Teamspirit, we are privileged to have so many role models and allies committed to ensuring we are a diverse and inclusive agency, and in this white paper we hear from seven voices from across the agency on what Embracing Equity means to them, in both their work and home lives. We hope that it proves thoughtful and inspiring reading!

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1. Women in Sport

Ellie Pocock Associate Director Teamspirit PR



Tell us a little about yourself:

I'm Ellie, an Associate Director here at Teamspirit in the PR team and tennis has been, and continues to be a huge part of my life. My Dad is a tennis coach and some of my earliest memories include charging around the tennis club, racket in hand, sitting up at the bar chatting to the members (explains a lot!), and watching my brother compete at tennis centres around the country.

Is there a woman who inspires you?

“Unless I was Number 1, I wouldn't be listened to”. These are the words of legend and social activist, Billie Jean King, who has long been a pioneer of change in the women's tennis game. Alongside her 39 Grand Slam titles, she has fought tirelessly for parity, from Title IX, equal pay at Grand Slams through her ongoing advocacy work on behalf of women and the LGBTQ community.

As a result of Billie Jean King's, and many others, work like Venus and Serena Williams, tennis is now seen as one of the most progressive sports in the world but there is still much work to be done.

I played throughout school, college and university, and some of my best friends are those I met on the side of the court. It wasn't always easy though. When I was at school and all my friends were going to dance class, I was going to play tennis (definitely not cool at the time!) and to play mainly against boys. And when I did play competitively in my teens, I'd end up playing the same four or five girls on repeat – regardless of where we travelled to.

How can we encourage equity in tennis?

It's what's happening at the local tennis club, or on the park courts down the road, to encourage more people to enjoy and compete that will be the biggest driver of equity in the game of tennis.

And encouragingly, change is happening. Last year Prime Video and the LTA, tennis' governing body, launched a programme to inspire thousands of girls to pick up a racket and play tennis. Coaches are undergoing training to deliver lessons and guidance specifically designed for girls and investment is significant.

Importantly, this is coming at a time when here in the UK, there is a real cultural shift and positive sentiment around women in sport. It's impossible not to mention the Lionesses and the incredible trailblazers they continue to be.

A recommendation?

There is nothing like seeing sport, and tennis, in real life. The world of tennis lands in the UK in the summer so have a look at the events that are taking place and go and watch.

And it doesn't have to be Wimbledon. There are plenty in June and July, such as WTA events at Nottingham, Birmingham and Eastbourne. You can see them [all here](#).

One thing to know?

Just give it a go. You can find out how to [here](#).



**“Unless I was Number 1,
I wouldn't be listened to”**

– Billie Jean King



Tell us a little about yourself:

I'm Sophie – an Integrated Copywriter here at Teamspirit. I've worked here for the past year and before that I was writing for Currys in-house. I haven't always been a copywriter though, I used to be in brand strategy.



We need more visible female role models at the top – 80% of young female creatives have never worked with a female Executive Creative Director or Creative Director.

2. Women in Creative

Sophie Mullen Integrated Copywriter

Is there a woman who inspires you?

As a literature nerd, obviously I've got to pay lip service to some amazing female writers – Zadie Smith, Virginia Woolf, Toni Morrison, Sally Rooney, even Jacqueline Wilson. I could go on and on. So much of the appeal of writing and reading for me is feeling seen, and these women express so beautifully what it is to live in this world as a girl/woman/person. They let us take up space in the narrative.

What does Embracing Equity mean to you?

Men and women are different. That's just a fact. And that's not something we should ever feel ashamed of or apologise for, as if 'different from' means 'less than'.

So embracing equity, for me, is about embracing those differences, making accommodations that even the playing field in a world that's historically been structured for and by men.

That also means the onus isn't just on women to fight for those changes, it's for men to proactively listen and adjust too.

How do you think we can encourage equity within the creative industry?

I think as an industry we've already made huge strides and none of this is intended to diminish that, or the groundwork other amazing female creatives and allies have already laid. But I think we need:

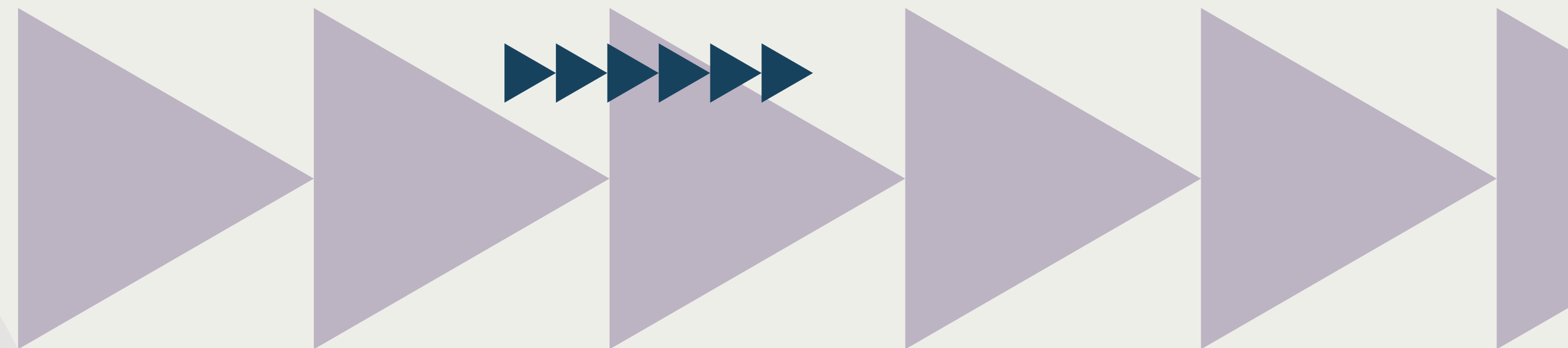
- More visible female role models at the top – **80% of young female creatives have never worked with a female CD or ECD.** That makes it much harder to imagine yourself in that role one day, and to get mentorship.
- More training in 'traditionally masculine' soft skills such as assertiveness or self-promotion – that's not to say women aren't good at these things. It's just that many of us haven't been socialised in those behaviours, which can leave us at a disadvantage in competitive industries like creative, either when applying for roles, freelance work, or when you have to 'fight' for your ideas.
- Space for different ways of doing things – lifting the awkward silence around **the menopause**, endometriosis or PMDD and making reasonable accommodations, or embracing flexible working. It's been sad to see so many agencies return to full office life again, when it can make such a difference to women who often (still, despite improvements) face a greater domestic load.

What's one thing you'd want people to know about within this area?

It goes back to what I said earlier – different from doesn't mean less than. I know I can feel uncomfortable advocating for myself as a woman, because acknowledging there's a gender barrier can seem like admitting my own limitations. But it's not that, it's that there are limitations in the system. So we need to keep talking, being visible and supporting one another.

Do you have a book/film/podcast/TV show/other media recommendation?

So it's not actually running any more, but I've recently gone back over old episodes of *The High Low* podcast with Dolly Alderton and Pandora Sykes. Two really lovely female writers who are smart, insightful, funny and talk about pretty much everything.





Tell us a little about yourself:

I'm Ida, Design partner of Teamspirit. In the last 12 years I've worked in five different countries, designing products and user experiences. I come from a family of doctors, which is possibly why I am so curious about and fascinated by healthcare problems, and the better use of design in solving them.



They tirelessly fought and still fight to bring about change... we still lack crucial knowledge about the impact of sex and gender on health

3. Women in Health

Ida Dilfer-Nasir UX Designer

Making Women Medically Visible

Until 1993, a significant number of researchers intentionally excluded women from clinical drug trials, causing a detrimental effect on their health and well-being. This practice left women invisible in medical data. Their symptoms couldn't be analysed, and thus, doctors were left ignorant of how new treatments would affect more than half of the population.

This is a blog post about the causes behind this injustice, the heroic women who tirelessly fought and still fight to bring about change, and the alarming reality that we still lack crucial knowledge about the impact of sex and gender on health.

A few months ago, a 37-year-old woman went to the ER in a hospital in Atlanta (US), experiencing shortness of breath and chest discomfort. She had recently had her third child, so her symptoms were thought to be related to stress and fatigue. She was dismissed on the day and asked to rest. A few days later, she came back with the same symptoms. This time, a female doctor, Dr. Alana Smith, a heart specialist, was called in. But it was too late; the delay in diagnosing caused the patient to lose a lot of function, ending in her needing a heart transplant.

When Dr. Alana was in medical school about 20 years ago, heart disease had a very different representation. In her medical books, there was a photo of a white male in

his 50s with a clenched fist, looking like he was in a lot of pain. You know this image.

You've probably seen this representation of a heart attack in films. During Alana's training, chest and arm pain were taught as the main symptoms of a heart attack. Today, we know that some people experience heart attacks differently. Women often have different symptoms like nausea, shortness of breath, or indigestion.

Women die from heart attacks as often as men do, mostly because they are misdiagnosed when they first seek medical help.

Let's look at the reasons why women became medically invisible until only 30 years ago.

After WW2, the modern era of medical bio-research began. In the US, the National Institutes of Health founded the largest biomedical centre in the world for clinical research. At first, women were included in NIH clinical research. However, this changed in the 1960s following many reproductive tragedies after the use of Thalidomide. Thalidomide is a sedative that was prescribed to women for morning sickness. In the early 1960s, the use of thalidomide in 46 countries by women who were pregnant or who subsequently became pregnant resulted in the "biggest man-made medical disaster ever," with more than 10,000 children born with a range of severe

deformities, such as phocomelia, as well as thousands of miscarriages...

Ten years later, scientists discovered that another drug, Diethylstilbestrol (DES), a synthetic form of the female hormone estrogen, which was prescribed to pregnant women between 1940 and 1971 to prevent miscarriage, premature labour, and related complications in pregnancy, caused premature labor and cancer.

These incidents made the idea of doing research with new drugs and giving them to women who might later become pregnant, scary. Researchers of the era – most of whom were men – decided to exclude women for this reason. Today we know that there was also a second reason. Researchers thought female bodies were too complicated because of the way hormones change throughout the month. This made designing research more difficult. Forming male study groups avoided complications, they thought, even in animal sample groups. Most rats, rabbits and humans in clinical research were male; they just assumed they would get the same response in females.

This started to change after the second wave of feminism in the 1980s. In many countries when women started to appear more in politics, media and on scientific boards, they wanted to create more awareness for female health, and asked for more investigations in the way past clinical

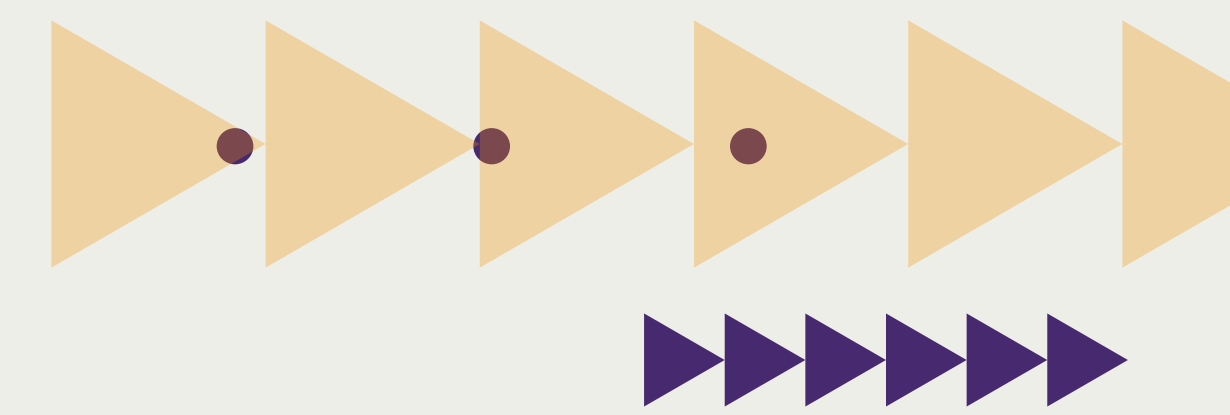
studies were designed. Dr. Florence Pat Haseltine, a reproductive endocrinologist noticed the need for female representation in NIH and asked her boss to hire more female doctors. While they agreed about the need, the request never progressed. So Florence decided to go rogue.

She teamed up with a PR group to strategise and create a women's group to address these issues. This group teamed up with a politician named Patricia Schroeder. They started digging into clinical studies of the past 50 years.

They found that most researchers were excluding women systematically even though the research guidelines dictated the opposite. Dr. Florence and Patricia Schroeder helped to reduce the barriers to the inclusion of women in clinical studies and, when necessary, redesigned past studies.

Thanks to the brave steps taken by these women, women are becoming visible in medical data.

Today we are learning about how women have been misdiagnosed often not only in cardiovascular cases but also in autism, autoimmune diseases, bipolar disorders, ovarian cancer and endometriosis. While more can still be done, with more female representation in medicine, steps are being taken.



4. Women Forging Change

Kirsty Maxey CEO



Tell us a little about yourself:

My name's Kirsty Maxey, I grew up in the 60s when women seemed to have such limited options with only Florence Nightingale as a role model. At that time, I remember being so disappointed to have been born a girl, and I was determined to challenge the stereotypes. My Mum was my cheerleader. She encouraged me and made me feel that I could break the rules and do anything I chose.

Is there a woman who inspires you?

I have always been instinctively drawn to women who have broken the rules, whether it's Aretha Franklin in music, Anita Roddick in business or Vivienne Westwood in fashion. They made it seem possible for women to achieve their ambitions, and do it their way.



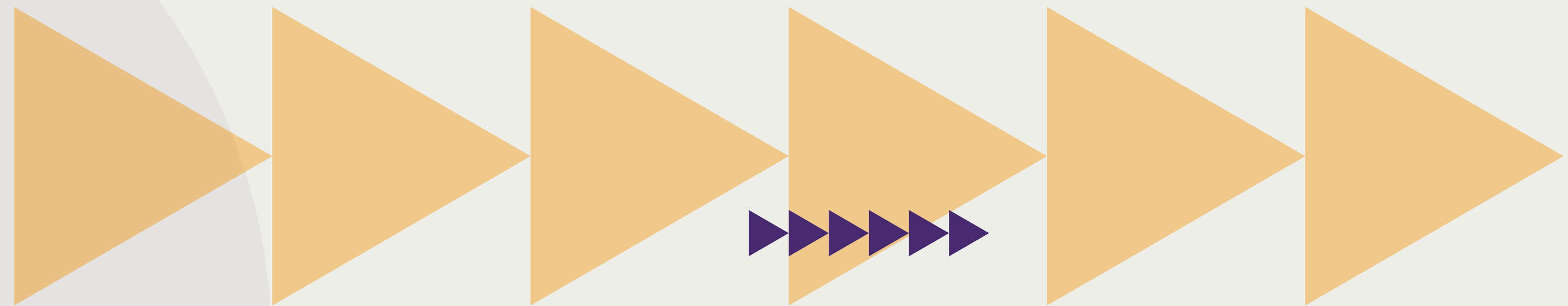
For me, embracing equity is the only way that we will create equality of opportunity

How do you think we can encourage equity within the creative/financial services industry?

When it comes to the world of financial services, we were in a minority. Teamspirit was the only female-led agency in financial services. We believed passionately that we needed to democratise finance and make it more accessible to all parts of society. Whether that is through education, breaking down barriers, through language or simply communicating to those parts of society that feel excluded.

What does Embracing Equity mean to you?

For me embracing equity is the only way that we will create equality of opportunity. To do that we need to continue the challenge and break down barriers. That's why I'm so proud of the work we have done with Fidelity and women and money, and the ABI and PLSA on access to pensions – [watch the video here](#) – and I hope we inspire the next generation.



5. Women's Empowerment

Crispin Heath Digital Director



Tell us a little about yourself:

I was 17 when the 90s started, a brilliant decade to be at university and in the early stages of my career. The dotcom bubble was fuelling a vibrant comms industry, I was building my first apps and web pages. It was long, challenging but rewarding work but, I was partying all over the UK and London really felt like the centre of it all. Britpop and rave culture were feeding popular culture and that came through in work and play which felt like one and the same thing. It was a time when it felt like anything was possible.

I met my wife, Nicky, in 1992 and she experienced the 90s very differently. She was having a lot of fun but the ladette construct that emerged through the decade, suggesting women could have it just as good as men – as long as they acted like men – which on the face of it badged as empowering, felt intimidating, alien and simply unachievable to her and it meant she experienced that decade very differently.

The toxic nature of this late 90s' female 'empowerment' trope has long been exposed in countless columns and podcasts written and produced by women, such as Caitlin Moran, Lauren Laverne and Elizabeth Day, now in their 40s, they're all admitting, that while they were part of it, it was never part of who they were. I know Nicky felt it massively, she always experienced it as a power play. She also worked in the agency world and felt it keenly at work, when she was out and simply through the audio and visual that was starting to go through the first stages of massive fractionalisation. It's something we talk about now. but I'll admit I just didn't see it until I had the benefit of time, to reflect on how it was.

Today, Nicky and I have three teenage children. My eldest son is now the same age as I was when Nicky and I met, 19. My middle son is 17 and my daughter 13. My greatest observation of the three of them navigating their teenage years is the different ways in which they interact with other children, both female and male. The separation and otherness that we experienced growing up just doesn't manifest itself in the same way. They have a different set of pressures, most keenly felt through the conformism of social media and the way their emotional growth has been so heavily impacted by the pandemic, however the way they experience friendships and broader relationships is fundamentally different, it's more networked, it's more diffuse, it's more accepting and doesn't have the sense of difference that Nicky and I felt when I was growing up.

The way I see this for my daughter in particular, is that she experiences empowerment through equity and allyship, a support network that is as much with the boys she hangs out with as with the girls.

You can argue this is simply the way the male experience has been for years so where's the empowerment but there is real strength in simply being open and unencumbered by an automatic negative position in your peer group, a feeling that she simply isn't being held back by boys' or her teachers' and coaches' expectations of what she might be. She's able to be anything but not saddled by having to do it like a boy or a ladette, but as herself whatever that turns out to be.

Empowerment hasn't got a singular hero at the moment. Teenagers are taking it upon themselves to build an equitable world that works for them and we need to start giving them the credit they deserve.



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6. Women in Work

Katie Lee Head of People



Tell us a little about yourself:

I'm Katie, Head of People for VCCP Business. I've worked in HR for over 20 years, predominantly in the Media and Communications space. I have two young daughters aged 4 and 8.

Is there a woman who inspires you?

I think I would have to say Brené Brown. Her work on courage and vulnerability is ground-breaking and she is really making changes in the leadership space.

In her words, "We desperately need more leaders who are committed to courageous, wholehearted leadership and who are self-aware enough to lead from their hearts, rather than unevolved leaders who lead from hurt and fear." I feel like it's this type of awareness that will enable change and growth for all women in work.

I've also worked with some incredible female leaders over the years, and those who have been the biggest inspiration are those who have led with strength, compassion, inclusivity, and integrity, who have noticed potential and believed in their team and their capabilities.

What does Embracing Equity mean to you?

Embracing Equity is an absolute non-negotiable, it's not just a nice idea – it's fundamental to enabling inclusion and diversity. To me it's not just about offering the same opportunities to all; it's the recognition that we all start from a different place, have had different lived experiences and different barriers and challenges because of our gender that will need focus, support and understanding to help us to rise.

How do you think we can encourage equity within the creative industry?

I think there is a lot of work that can be done, it all starts with a recognition of all barriers to those who identify as women and a clear focus on what we need to do to create a level playing field. Some of the tangible steps to help with representation and retention are around increased financial equity for family leave, female leadership programmes and mentoring, and coaching. Also, it starts with businesses going over and above on issues such as menopause leave and flexibility.

What's one thing you'd want people to know about within this area?

That despite the barriers that we continue to face, we are constantly inspiring, pushing boundaries and achieving incredible things.

I also think it's hugely important to recognise the intersectionality within gender equity. I'm fully aware of my privilege as a cisgender, straight, white, able-bodied woman and I think each of us has a responsibility to keep questioning and considering others' perspectives. It's important that we understand and appreciate all barriers and biases if we are to be progressive and truly champion equity for all!

Do you have a book/film/podcast/TV show/other media recommendation?

These are some of my favourite motivational picks, not just about women in work, but more generally about feminism, leadership and inclusivity.

Read

Jessica Huie *Purpose*

Florence Given *Women Don't Owe You Pretty*

Glennon Doyle *Untamed*

Layla Saad *Me and White Supremacy*

Watch

Brené Brown *The Call to Courage*, Netflix

Listen

Glennon Doyle *We Can Do Hard Things*, podcast

Jameela Jamil *I Weigh*, podcast



Equity in the workplace starts with businesses going over and above on issues such as menopause leave and flexibility.

7. Women in Tech

Natalie Willoughby Head of Digital Experience



Tell us a little about yourself:

I'm Natalie – I head up the digital experience side of things at Teamspirit. I've been here for almost five years and am responsible for the day-to-day management of our project management, digital design, and development teams.

Our varied skillsets across the team work together to deliver a multitude of different digital deliverables for clients – from websites and apps to games and interactive tools. No two days are the same and we thrive in a varied, fast-paced environment, constantly stretching ourselves and learning from each other.

Is there a woman who inspires you?

There have been so many amazing women that I've had the pleasure of working with throughout my career, so I think rather than a particular individual it would be all of them.

To the designers who didn't get tired of my persistent questions to better understand the why.

To the project managers who helped me understand how to translate what I needed into something our developers would understand.

And all the developers who are both fascinating and crazy clever, and as females few and far between (5% of the world's professional programmers are women).

What does Embracing Equity mean to you?

However a person identifies, all individuals are different and unique. We learn, think, communicate, and approach things in different ways, so it's impossible to expect equality without making reasonable adjustments to even the playing field. Enabling diversity is particularly important in the digital space. With so much of our focus on accessibility and user centricity, if there are no representatives of different customer or user types within the companies building those online experiences, how can we truly understand and meet everyone's needs?

How do you think we can encourage equity within the area of tech?

Education and better profiling of the various roles there are to play in the industry is vital. There's no question that there is a diversity issue in tech, at all levels. It's hard to be what you don't see. Sharing stories can lead to greater understanding, can inspire the right kind of conversations, and help drive real change in the sector.

It doesn't have to be about equal opportunities, instead for me, it's about finding the right niche for you, which allows the way that you think and approach your work to be an asset. There are very few big tech innovations that have come to life from a single pair of hands, successful delivery in the tech industry requires people of all skills and backgrounds. Everyone has a part to play.

What's one thing you'd want people to know about within this area?

There are too many misconceptions about what "having a job in tech" actually means. For example, to excel in the industry you don't need to be able to make sense of code, though many may assume you would need to. Languages have never come naturally to me, French or code, but that's fine, because I have a part to play in spite of that.

Instead, you need an appreciation for how the tech we live and breathe is a result of powerful collaboration from a variety of different skill sets and individuals. Whether you're a data analyst, a creative, a strategist, a project manager or a coder, an introvert or an extrovert, an idealist, or a realist, you are needed.

Do you have a book/film/podcast/TV show/other media recommendation?

There are some amazing resources out there for women looking to make a move into the digital space, be that career-wise or as more of an inquisitive passion project.

I've listed some of my favourites below:

Awesome blogs, inspiring stories, and empowering messaging from some kick-ass women: [Girls In Tech](#) and [Women In Tech](#)

While I'm trying to make it clear it's not all about being able to code, this site offers some pretty great courses to get more women into that side of tech: [She Codes](#)

A fab podcast that focuses on what these women are doing, not what it feels like to be a woman in tech. Shifting the conversation onto the amazing work and showcase what we are all capable of: [The Women in Tech Show Podcast](#).



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