Women: The Future of Tech

7 Skills and Initiatives Recruiters Need to Hire More Women

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Introduction

The labor market can change quickly and talent acquisition teams have to be ready to adjust their recruitment strategies at virtually a moment's notice. Similarly, the workplace elements that talent values are always evolving, such as work styles, DEI investments, commitments to philanthropy and more.

All of these factors can greatly affect how well a company and its hiring teams attract and retain employees. These factors also carry more weight and get more nuanced when looking at specific demographics, like women. And it's during moments of targeted recruiting that adaptation is vital.

Many talent leaders and recruitment teams may be well-versed in how to holistically build great teams and workplace experiences, but what about when the goal is to do so for women specifically? Is there infrastructure in place to ensure women are engaged and fulfilled after their first 90 days?

There are many ways companies can put greater investments toward how they hire women. For instance, they can celebrate women in branding efforts and clearly state policies on discrimination and sexual harassment where candidates can easily find them. Then, they can reinforce these policies so they're part of the company culture — one where women thrive from their first day. Following that initial onboarding, companies can get women involved in a mentorship program and track their engagement so as to make adjustments if employees aren't checked-in (once it's determined why.)

We're here to help with all the adaptations necessary to recruit more women. Below, we've outlined seven major areas that talent acquisition teams can invest time and resources into to make their workplaces more appealing to women. And the great news is that when you make these investments for women, your workplace improves for everyone too.

About This Guide

This guide is meant to give employers a number of back-of-house tactics to make their workplaces more appealing, inclusive, equitable and engaging for women in tech. Many of these tactics require time, resources and stakeholder buy-in to implement. They are also slightly less talent-facing in an immediate sense compared to initiatives like more inclusive job descriptions or starting a women-driven ERG.

However, these strategies have the potential to create impactful and long–lasting change in how women see and engage with your company from the inside and out. They address many serious challenges women in tech face today from the leadership level down, which is where much of the valuable change in any organization comes from.

The following insights were derived from our analysis of data sourced directly from employers as well as women and non-binary candidates nationwide via surveys and our network of websites. We also used third-party research to support our findings.

We hope this guide will help hiring and retention stakeholders build workplaces that women feel that they can excel in and are proud to support. These tactics may not be achievable or effective overnight, but any movement toward seeing them through will help hiring stakeholders develop an infrastructure that can attract and retain more women talent.

Build a Culture of Trust and Transparency

Company culture is one of the most important elements of hiring, retention and employee engagement. Many professionals can sense certain elements of a poor culture from a mile away during their job search, like a lack of diversity on the team or one that might exclude older employees. However other elements are more difficult for candidates to discover, like whether certain demographics feel a sense of belonging at the company or how easy it is for women to get promotions compared to men.

The combination of these aspects can mean the difference between a happy employee and one that's ready to submit a resignation letter. And because culture is made up of so many nuanced elements, companies should do everything they can to make their culture as safe, welcoming and engaging as possible on a holistic level.

"It comes down to having a culture of transparency and trust, which can be a really challenging recipe," said Kelly Keegan, VP of People at Built In. **"Ensuring there's an open-door policy so that people feel there's a sense of inclusion and belonging so that even if they have something difficult to share, they still feel comfortable doing so."**

A culture of trust and transparency means it's easier for women and other employees to speak up when they experience or witness discrimination or microaggressions in the workplace. Building this culture can also make it easier for employees to share their experiences and understand their coworkers' points of view to establish a greater foundation of trust among colleagues.

Unfortunately, many women in tech today don't feel fully supported by the culture of their employers. Findings from our State of DEI in Tech 2022 report uncovered some uncomfortable truths about the way many women feel today regarding their personal and professional positions at work. We highlighted some of the key findings below and what employers can do to counteract these statistics in their own businesses.

31 percent of women don't feel a sense of belonging at their employer.
How to help: Send an anonymous survey to women at the company to determine their sense of belonging and ask why they may not feel "part of the group." It may also be possible to employ the assistance of the women's ERG (if one exists) or to host one-on-one chats and focus groups to get these insights. Digest the findings and build a plan of action to address the challenges uncovered.

39 percent of women don't feel like their perspectives are valued in decision-making.
How to help: Open up more avenues for employees to voice their opinions. This could be done via company-wide surveys that ask about new perks or other initiatives at the company. It could also be on a team-by-team basis where women have opportunities to lend their voices to important projects. Encourage managers to think about their approach to welcoming perspectives of women on the team.

27 percent of women disagree with the statement "I can voice a contrary opinion without fear of negative consequences."

How to help: Set up a dedicated channel for employees to air these grievances — either via an online form or an open door policy (virtual and in-person) with a people team member — and remind employees that they are safe in voicing their concerns. If it's been discovered that employees faced negative consequences for voicing their concerns in the past, work to eradicate those destructive practices.

40 percent of women disagree that their company is transparent about what it takes to advance to higher positions and pay in the org and that they feel like they have as equal opportunities for career advancement as others in the company.

How to help: Career-pathing conversations should happen early and often with everyone at the company, especially with women. Managers and direct reports should be in full alignment on the metrics of success and advancement in a role. There should also be regular conversations around what a woman employee might need to see greater success in their role; perhaps it's mentorship, more autonomy, a skip-level meeting or a new certification.

It's also important for talent leaders and people teams to assess the demographics of who gets promoted. Then, work should begin on making that process as equitable as possible across the entire organization so women truly have equal opportunities for advancement.

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The culture of a workplace — an organization's values, norms and practices — has a huge impact on our happiness and success....The more defining parts of a culture are its values. Values are the principles people say are important and, more crucially, the principles people show are important through their actions."

— **ADAM GRANT**
AUTHOR AND PROFESSOR AT THE WHARTON SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Implement Training and Policies That Create Equality

Close to nine out of 10 women (89 percent) say clear anti-sexual harassment and anti-discrimination policies are <u>at least somewhat important to them when considering a role</u>. Additionally, 26 percent of women say inclusion tactics, like unconscious bias training, are part of what they prioritize most during their job search.

Companies that already offer training around these two topics are headed in the right direction in appealing to more women talent. However, making that training effective is about more than simply noting their existence in job descriptions and hosting a lunch and learn. **Training should be company-wide, digestible and engaging. Scenarios in the training, or the training as a whole, should be as true-to-life and industry-specific as possible.** The session should also be broken up into episode-like chunks rather than a singular long-form piece of content.

There should be <u>direct involvement from leadership</u> as well, like the CEO offering a message on the importance of such training. Lastly, a post-learning discussion around some key elements from the session should be initiated.

Women That Prioritize The Presence of Inclusion Tactics at Companies During Their Job Search

26%

Build and Monitor Diversity Hiring Goals

In 2021, 80 percent of tech companies successfully welcomed more women to their teams. That's great news! But what's concerning about this metric is that 58 percent of these companies did not have leadership-approved goals for diversity hiring.

Goals hold organizations accountable to themselves, if no one else. Having a bar to reach toward means an organization can make adjustments if efforts are falling short, or they can double down if things are going well. But without goals, a company can coast by doing the bare minimum without assessing whether it can do better (which it always can.)

But the work cannot stop once goals are set — progress toward them must also be monitored closely. **Of the 42 percent of companies that did set diversity hiring goals, 52 percent don't know how close they got to hitting them.** And of the companies that failed to reach their goals, 39 percent said they were unsure why.

Talent teams must check in on their progress toward their diversity goals periodically throughout the year so they can refine their strategies along the way. Being able to answer questions like, "How close did we get to our goal?" and, "Why exactly did we fall short this year?" can help give talent acquisition teams the insight they need to adapt to see greater success in the future. Without those answers, these teams are essentially fumbling in the dark.

"It's not just running a training that employees are forced to take and sign off on," said Keegan, in relation to both anti-sexual harassment/anti-discrimination training and unconscious bias training. **"Having a conversation afterward and facilitating it with specific questions helps heighten everyone's awareness of these issues because it's most often the stuff that you're not aware of that has the greatest impact on a woman's ability to thrive."**

These post-training conversations create opportunities for greater engagement and knowledge-sharing across attendees. This can increase learning across the organization, which will ultimately create more peace of mind for women in the businesses.

"When you're aware of small factors like how men are more likely to participate in a meeting than women, leaders are able to facilitate meetings so everyone participates," said Keegan.

At Built In, goal assessment around diversity hiring is a collaborative effort.

"We work with our HR team, our hiring managers, and our leadership teams to set our goals," said Alexa Murtagh, Built In's talent acquisition manager. **"We also rely heavily on our internal diversity and inclusion leader to better inform our strategy around the market state and industry standards so that we can continue to improve."**

Why Employers Missed Their 2021 Diversity Hiring Goals

Lack of resources/partnerships ——————————— **24%**

Lack of employer branding ——————————— **18%**

Lack of time ——————— **16%**

Lack of dedicated DEI staff ————— **14%**

Track Engagement

A foundational aspect of retention is employee engagement and overall happiness. It's important for people teams to monitor and assess engagement, especially across demographic lines like gender, sexuality, race and more. Engagement can vary — significantly — depending on an employee's background. Knowing that certain employee demographics may not be fully engaged is a sign that something within the business needs to change, fast. Leah Haunz Johnson, VP of Advisory at Gartner, said during a webinar that tracking engagement is the second biggest problem HR teams have this year behind knowing what engagement strategies to invest in.

"They [employees] want to know that we're listening to what they have to say and how they feel," said Johnson. **"In a world where things have felt out of control, they want to know that they're being heard. And they want to know that we are still using the information to improve the employee experience. In terms of a measurement strategy, we want to make sure we're collecting enough of the right data to truly understand how employees feel."**

Monitoring engagement levels for women in the workplace — among other demographics simultaneously — helps everyone from the people team as a whole to individual managers make adjustments on the fly that can improve engagement when it starts to slip.

Below, we outline a number of strategies that companies can use to make their employee engagement tracking more effective.

Set clear employee engagement goals.
Goals, both qualitative and quantitative, set benchmarks for how an engaged employee feels. When findings come in below the benchmark, you know it's time to find out why before making a course correction. Examples of some benchmarks are: "employees feel that their opinions matter at work"; "absenteeism is low"; and "employees see opportunities for career growth at the company."

Use pulse surveys.
Pulse surveys, which derive their name from "pulse checks," are fast ways to gauge engagement. They're short, focused on a specific topic and designed to offer actionable insights. And because of their length, more employees are inclined to take them over longer surveys.

Ask important questions in one-on-ones.
These meetings are great opportunities to get candid feedback from women on their engagement, especially when there's trust established between the two individuals. Examples of questions for this method are: "What's one positive aspect of your workplace engagement? What is a negative aspect?" or "What would make you more engaged as an employee?"

☑ **Run a focus group.**
This method can gather multiple women in the same space to get a number of opinions at the same time. It can offer a representative sample of how women across the company might also be feeling. You can build a focus group based on department, seniority or other criteria and ask qualitative questions about both wins and challenges related to engagement.

☑ **Employ an exit survey.**
Turnover is a part of any business but an exit survey can help people teams identify whether a lack of employee engagement in one or more areas contributed to the personnel loss. These surveys also open the door to candid responses that talent may not have otherwise given due to fear of negative consequences.

Tap Into Women-Driven Employer Branding

Employer branding efforts that put employees in the spotlight can be instrumental tools during recruitment. Publishing, then sharing a few key content assets on social media or in job postings can do a lot of silent background work toward your hiring strategies. These pieces can detail life at your company by having an employee share their thoughts on any number of topics: company culture, career pathing inside and outside the organization, team structure, mentorship, collaboration and more.

"Look for people who have awesome stories to tell," said Murtagh. **"Those individuals who have been recently promoted, leaders with diverse, professional backgrounds or employees who changed careers paths and are now top performers on your team."**

When people and talent teams tap women specifically to share their thoughts on elements that other women in the industry care about, it maximizes the chances of getting interest from talent in that demographic.

On the following three pages, we included examples of branded content where companies asked women in their organizations to share their experiences. Use the examples below to help your employer branding strategies.

Example:
What Real Change for Women in Tech Looks Like at 4 Colorado Companies

What better way to show candidates that your business looks out for women than by detailing how the company is working to solve major challenges women face in the workplace? In this story, women leaders from four Colorado tech companies discuss the initiatives their employers invest in to make their workplaces more equitable and engaging for women. Some of these initiatives include: women-focused recruiting, employee resource groups that support mentorship, flexible work schedules, a dedicated career navigator and more. Displaying these strategies gives women across tech clear insight into what these businesses have to offer to make their professional lives better.

What are some examples of issues facing women in tech that your company is addressing?

A key issue for women in tech is underrepresentation at all levels of the organization. Zayo is addressing this issue through a purposeful focus on recruiting, promotion and retention of women. Currently, our Colorado workforce of 1,100 is approximately 40 percent women. We recruit strategically, reaching out to women and diverse candidates at Colorado universities and sponsoring programs geared to women and underrepresented minorities. Our community engagement efforts are focused on cultivating a pipeline of diverse candidates interested in STEM classes and careers, with the goal of helping girls and boys visualize what a career in tech might be like.

Zayo has also taken significant steps to achieve pay equity, using best practices established in our customer service and IT organization, which has nearly 50 percent women and has already achieved pay parity. Our efforts have involved analyzing compensation across all of our job titles and where gender-based discrepancies exist, resolving those discrepancies. Because of this effort and others, the majority of promotions over the past eight quarters have been women. We also work hard to retain women by creating an inclusive workplace, which provides opportunities to make meaningful contributions at every level, from student intern to Zayo director. Employees also cite our leadership and development initiatives and benefits, including paid maternity and paternity leave, as important contributors to job satisfaction and intent to stay.

How You Can Recreate It:

Outline all the existing initiatives that are in place to welcome and support women at the company. If new initiatives are in the works, ensure that they're ready share before including them in the piece. Then get a stakeholder who's heavily involved in those strategies (preferably a woman) to explain not only what the initiatives are, but why they're important and the impact they will have for women at the company.

READ THE STORY HERE

Example:
9 Women in Tech Share Their Best Advice for Managing a Team

Mentorship is something many women in tech value. The nine women in this story offer short narratives that readers can easily pull insights from to apply to their own roles — or roles they aspire to have. This piece positions speakers as candid thought leaders, all while they represent their employers in a positive light. It also shows women candidates that they would have ample opportunities to learn and grow under the tutelage of experienced women leaders like these if they joined these companies.

What's one important lesson you've learned as a people manager?

Being a people manager means being able to set the direction for a team, then orchestrating how they execute against a goal. I've learned that people want to be led, but with empathy and partnership. Every individual on a team has a story and a life that made them who they are. Understanding that and getting to know employees as people is the secret to knowing how to motivate them to be the best version of themselves. This idea has greatly helped me in forging trust and transparency with my team, which has resulted in highly motivated people that feel understood.

What advice do you have for other women who manage teams, or aspire to?

When you move from an individual contributor to a management role, the narrative is no longer about you; it's about your whole team. Learning to be introspective goes a long way. Seeing how things work best for your entire team is a challenging but necessary thing to learn early on.

Creating space for your team to have personal lives is extremely important. If you have team members happy in their personal lives that will automatically translate into a better work environment.

Finally, trust your instincts. When your gut and experience are leading you in one direction, trust that, even if you have opposition. You will

How You Can Recreate It:

Pick a topic that might be of interest to readers like managing a team, navigating conflict, self-advocacy or overcoming imposter syndrome. Then ask women at the company to share mentorship-driven advice on how they approach that topic (the more experienced the interviewee is, the more impactful the insights will be.) You can feature multiple women in the piece or a single individual. You can also repeat articles of this nature around different topics.

READ THE STORY HERE

Example:
AlphaSights' Product Lead Brings Passion for the Craft to Her Leadership Role

This piece puts the spotlight on an individual, a seasoned product leader at AlphaSights, and dives into a number of elements across her past and present. From how she found her career calling to how she leads her team to her advice for aspiring product professionals — this piece covers a lot of ground. But each element can carry weight depending on who's reading: a woman in tech interested in life at AlphaSights, a woman interested in working in product and/or a woman that's a leader on any team. No matter the end result or reader, a story like this will improve a company's credibility with women talent.

Tell us about your leadership style. What are some key aspects of how you manage your teams?

I've never associated myself with a particular leadership style; I believe more in situational leadership. It's probably my natural tendency to be authentic and democratic, but there are times when I need to be more transformational, however challenging that may be. I want to empower people to build impactful products by creating an environment where they can thrive through autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Success for me means having an unequivocally driven, user-centric, accountable team whom I can learn from and vice versa, but who are also a key resource and support system to each other.

What do you do to stay involved in the broader product community?

I try to share my experiences as much as possible by attending or presenting at conferences and events, hosting meetups or writing. Although it's generally harder to produce than consume content, it's important to give back to the community and reflect independently on what you've learned every so often. Especially in tech, we need a diversity of skill sets, backgrounds, and perspectives to be shared to ensure we're building broadly representative products.

How You Can Recreate It:

Ask a woman leader at the company to share her story. Provide questions that allow them to share their perspective on a range of topics about their professional journey and what they've learned along the way. Be transparent about the fact that the piece will be used to help drive engagement from more women candidates and encourage the interviewee to discuss how your company has helped them along their career path.

READ THE STORY HERE

Create a System of Mentorship

Mentorship can be a great way to empower women to see greater success in their careers by giving them opportunities to learn from other successful women. **Almost three-quarters (70 percent) of Fortune 500 companies have formal mentorship programs and they've been proven to improve employee engagement, retention, promotion cadence for those that participate, and more.**

However, the reality for most women is that mentorship is still something they don't feel they have access to. In fact, 63 percent of women working today have never had a mentor. Men offer their time as mentors and seek mentorship out more often than women. Building a culture of mentorship can level the playing field for women seeking the career help of an experienced colleague.

Mentorship at a company can be formal or informal. Depending on the business, sometimes a dedicated company-wide mentorship program is best. In other cases, a more organic approach to mentorship may be best.

Companies on Fortune 500 List With Formal Mentorship Programs **70%**

"I have found that the very best mentorship relationships develop organically," said Andie Kramer, co-founder of the women's advocacy group Andie & Al, in a Forbes piece. "You don't need to go out and ask people directly to serve as your mentor but you can watch the relationship grow with proper care and feeding."

Conversely, when building a more dedicated program, try to pair mentees with mentors who have the skills they want to develop — even if they work in a different field; for example, an engineer that wants to work on their people skills could get paired with a sales manager as a mentor.

No matter the specifics of a mentorship strategy, tech companies should make their workplaces feel like communities where women are supported and empowered to succeed by allies across the business.

"Advancement of women in the workplace is a journey that hinges on the contributions from everyone," said Vidya Srinivasan, Senior PM of product and growth at Microsoft Teams. **"There are many women and allies who go above and beyond their day-job to contribute to this journey — be it by challenging stereotypes, building a community, mentoring others, etc. Each of these efforts take time, effort and energy, and have proved to be quite impactful."**

Regular Pay Equity Analyses

Just over 2 out of 3 (68 percent) women prioritize wage transparency and equitable pay above all else in their job search, so it's very important that tech companies today perform regular pay equity analysis.

These audits compare the pay rates for similar roles and responsibilities both inside and outside of a specific business. They account for differences in pay based on job duties, experience, gender, race, age, location and other factors. **Performing these analyses regularly allows companies to do their part to shrink the wage gap by ensuring women in their organization are paid equitably to men.**

"You have to do the analysis every year with a focus on every country, every job, and it is perpetual," said Carol Surface, Medtronic's chief HR officer, to CNBC. "It is not a 'one and done' exercise."

This important analysis can put tech companies on the right side of progress. It will also send a message to women in the organization that their equitable treatment matters to leadership and action is being taken to fight for it.

"Creating more equitable and inclusive workplaces has really become a key employer brand issue, especially for those looking to hire and retain top talent," said Ruth Thomas, pay equity strategist at Paysale, to CNBC. **"The good practice we're seeing is where employers are saying, 'Okay, I'm bringing someone in, let me understand what the fair range is for this job.'"**

68%

Percent of Women Who Prioritize Wage Transparency and Equitable Pay Above All Else in Their Job Search

Conclusion

The workplace elements that employees value most can differ based on their background, especially when comparing professionals from historically marginalized communities to those that are part of the "majority." Women are one such demographic that's been marginalized in the workforce, and tech is no exception to that painful history. So what's important to women will differ from what the tech talent market as a whole needs, therefore the approach to hiring more women in tech requires thought and refinement.

Talent teams, people teams and anyone else involved in the hiring and retention lifecycle have a responsibility to not only be aware of what women in tech value, but to adapt to it as best they can. This can mean anything from responding to a lack of engagement from women in the business to evolving what anti-harassment training looks like year over year.

Every company will need to respond to different areas of concern in their own way. But no matter the approach, hiring and retention stakeholders have to be on their toes, ready to learn and invest in strategies that make their workplaces fulfilling for women in the industry. It's the only way they can secure talent from this demographic and make life in tech more equitable not only for women, but for everyone.

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