More women get tech jobs, but men still outpace them 3-to-1

October 9 2019, by Marco Santana, Orlando

When Naomie Baptiste was a second-grader in Miami, her uncle, a retired Coca-Cola electrical engineer, played a mathematics game with her at the store.

If she wanted M&Ms, he made her earn the candy by figuring out the sales tax that would be added to the price of the package at the register. That calculation was one of the things that helped her build an interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

"He was the first person who inspired me to be an engineer," said Baptiste, now a sustainment engineer with the Orlando office of Lockheed Martin's Missiles and Fire Control division. "Those are lessons I carry into Lockheed Martin whenever we taste the sweet victory of winning a contract."

Baptiste is part of a growing number of women with careers in technology-related fields, according to a new survey conducted by the women in STEM advocate AnitaB.org.

The study found that women make up 25.12% of the workforce, far short of the organization's stated goal of reaching a 50-50 split by 2025, but a jump from 21.74% in 2016.

The group each year hosts the Grace Hopper Celebration, a high-tech gathering that this week drew more than 25,000 attendees, most of them women, to the Orange County Convention Center.

"If women are not at the table and don't have a community, they will feel isolated and might feel like they don't have a voice," said Michelle Flatt, vice president of programs for AnitaB.org. "We are trying to amplify that voice. We have the conference so women see each other and don't feel isolated at work."

A career fair at the Grace Hopper Celebration drew recruiters from some of the world's largest tech companies: Facebook, Sony, Google, Snapchat, Microsoft.

Thousands of women walked among virtual reality installations, inspirational quotes and recruiters with resumes in hand, hoping to land a job or internship.

The process was familiar to 20-year-old Florida International University junior Catherine Angelini, who was at the convention and worked an internship with Microsoft this summer.

Tech companies should strive to hire more women because it ensures a variety of voices solving problems with technology, she said.

"The world is made up of many different kinds of people," she said. "Being able to understand the perspective of women is important because we are part of society and helping raise the next generation."

In Orlando, the effort to increase the number of women in technology has been inconsistent.

While locally run groups like Girls Who Code and Orlando Lady Devs have seen growth, outside support has been slow to emerge, said Suneera Madhani, an Orlando entrepreneur whose company Fattmerchant recently surpassed 100 employees.

"We have seen a lot of growth and momentum in the last five years, so that has been exciting," she said. "But I don't think we specialize particularly in trying to encourage more women entrepreneurs."

Madhani said the bulk of locally led conferences and gatherings tend to be about general business, with few groups specifically featuring women in technology.

Orlando had been home to a local chapter of the women's entrepreneurial group WeVenture until it shut down in 2016.

Madhani said the city of Orlando should help fund an initiative that encourages more women to pursue tech businesses.

"They should carve out the dollars needed to fund an organization that can act as a parent organization that represents all of the many chapters that are here now," said Madhani, who also pointed out that Orlando does have a responsive business community readily available for her if she needs feedback. "We need one place that can be the voice for women in tech here. It has to be a group effort for this to succeed."

©2019 Orlando Sentinel
Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: More women get tech jobs, but men still outpace them 3-to-1 (2019, October 9) retrieved 7 May 2024 from
https://techxplore.com/news/2019-10-women-tech-jobs-men-outpace.html