WOMEN IN DATA

The field of data and analytics is becoming one of the biggest and most fastest growing industries, yet women are still not entering the data and analytics industry in great numbers, and little is known about why this is the case.

Corinium Digital

INTRODUCTION

Despite the field of data and analytics being one of the biggest booming ones in recent years, comparatively few women are still not entering it, and little is known about why this is the case. If they do enter the data and analytics industry, what challenges and obstacles are facing them? Are there any roadblocks to them advancing through the ranks and entering the data and analytics C-suite roles?

The data and analytics industry has been largely dominated by men to date, however, according to a recent Forbes article by Meta S. Brown, almost half of all data and analytics professionals are in fact women. Despite this, women have made an enormous impact in the data and analytics industries, and many more resources are now available today to help those interested in a career in data and analytics follow in the footsteps of their peers.

WOMEN IN DATA AND ANALYTICS: THE PAST

Four years ago the role of the "Data Scientist" was named as the "sexiest job of the 21st century" by The Harvard Business Review. While women have always been present in the field of data and analytics, bizarrely, their numbers may actually be decreasing not increasing. For example, women comprised 35% of computing and mathematical occupations in 1990, but only 26% in 2013.

This is a very significant change for women in the field of data and analytics, and it can only be concluded that there are various changes facing women along with limited opportunities to increase the number of women working in data and analytics.

CLOSING THE GENDER GAP

In terms of physical brain structure or differences in ability, studies show that both sexes are equal in these departments and little or no practical differences exist between them. However, there is a huge legacy of outdated attitudes towards the strengths of men and women, with many of the old-fashioned views and values still remaining, such as women are only suited to roles that allow them to also bring up children and that their place is in the home, not the boardroom or office.

Too few women today are not considering roles within Data and Analytics, even if they are qualified to do so and as many as 70% of women with Data and Analytics qualifications or degrees do not take up work in this field post-college and do not go on to work in relevant Data and Analytics roles. **Changes need to be made – and fast.**

Another old-fashioned view is that men are better suited to roles in Data and Analytics, and this long-held assumption is completely wrong.

CLOSING THE GENDER GAP

In the UK, Alison Whitney, the Deputy Director for Digital Government at GCHQ's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) recently released a post that not only promoted the National Cyber Skills Centre's gender equality programme, but she has also thrown down a challenge to those in all technology, data and analytics organisations to report the ways in which they encourage women to enter the field of technology, data and analytics online and turn all these ways into one large "best practice" statement to encourage more women

to join the industry, it will show that everyone is serious about this important and fundamental change. Alison is also determined to remove the long-established barriers that could prevent extremely talented individuals - regardless of gender, age, religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation – from being successful in the data and analytics industry. This drive from Alison has resulted in an above industry average of 35% women at the National Cyber Skills Centre's workforce.

Role models are crucial when you are a student and considering which career path to take.

ATTRACTING MORE WOMEN INTO DATA AND ANALYTICS

The National Cyber Skills Centre in the UK is not the only organisation leading the way in breaking down the stereotypes that are prevalent for women in Data and Analytics. BAE Systems, for example, believes everyone in the industry can make a huge difference and is currently undertaking work to tackle the problems of gender inequality and fight regressive attitudes. While workplace initiatives are important, BAE Systems believes that it is more logical to look at making a difference in education and it supports programmes that encourage more children to take an interest in Data, Analytics and Cyber Security. Indeed, schemes such as the National Cyber

Security Centre's "CyberFirst" bursary programme offers £4,000 to students studying subjects in data, analytics and cyber security.

Role models are crucial when you are a student and considering which career path to take, and BAE Systems recently held an Open Day for school age girls to meet women who have successful careers in Data and Analytics. 40 students and 20 teachers took part in the event, and BAE Systems also provide regular career information talks at schools, colleges and universities across the UK as part of their drive to attract more women into Data and Analytics.

THE CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN IN DATA AND ANALYTICS

The key challenges that face women who wish to pursue a career in data and analytics include perception, stereotyping and gender bias. Stereotypes and gender bias are both often born out of culture and can have a negative affect on women in data and analytics from 2 key angles – the woman herself, and the employer. The performance of women compared to men in data and analytics may be unconsciously underestimated by the employer, and in addition, there is always the "fear" from the employer that a woman will leave them at any point to embark on raising a family. Women, in turn, often allow their cultural perceptions to affect how they look at themselves in the workplace, their abilities and their potential for growth in the future.

This perception that women have of themselves in data and analytics can stop them from growth and advancement in their careers, and in turn they will be less likely to succeed than their male counterparts.

Two types of self-perception have been identified that can sabotage a woman's chances of success in Data and Analytics – the "because I am a woman" mentality and the "over-achiever" expectation. In addition, there is another lesser type of perception that has been identified called "Impostor Syndrome", meaning that women who have achieved everything they want to achieve in their careers often self-sabotage themselves because they feel as if they are an "impostor" and not worthy of the position they are in or of their significant achievements.

Women often feel as if they are "over achievers" if they hesitate to take on projects unless they are highly qualified to do so, even over qualified. It is said that men do not have this problem. These perceptions hold women back from taking risks and often fear will creep in. In order to be encouraged and motivated, women should learn to be self-aware, passionate and be able to share experiences with other women in the workplace.

THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR
WOMEN IN DATA AND ANALYTICS

Despite the challenges and barriers that women perceive are out there, plenty of opportunities exist for women in data and analytics to grow and thrive in their careers.

Organizations that can provide flexibility with career and family along with a welcoming and inclusive culture and environment and can support life choices will always be preferred and one

established, women can look towards exploring opportunities available to them in data and analytics. If the working environment recognises the great benefits of inclusion and diversity this can significantly increase a woman's ability to pursue a strong career in data and analytics which includes continual learning, training, networking and skills development.

THE BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY
FOR WOMEN IN DATA AND ANALYTICS

There are many benefits to diversity for women in data and analytics to help them grow and thrive in their careers. If you bring women on to a data and analytics team this widely increases the variety of perspectives, thought processes and voices you have which in turn will help to make the team smarter and more agile. The team's creativity will increase and a strong learning environment with the merging of skills, disciplines and backgrounds.

CONCLUSION:
THE PATH FOR CHANGE

Although employer bias and a lack of confidence contributes to the challenges many women face today in Data and Analytics, many other factors could also be significant, such as the educational path and pursuits of women in Data and Analytics. More women can be drawn into the fields of Data and Analytics by raising awareness and advertising the breadth of opportunities that are available to women in this field.

{C} Corinium Digital

About Corinium Digital:

Corinium Digital offers digital marketing solutions made possible by our global network of emerging CXO roles.

Our specialty is audience acquisition from cross- sector industries & a range of seniority from junior staff all the way to the decision-making C-suite (500,000+ global contacts)

We provide multiple platforms to build relationships all year with our truly digital CXO communities. We will improve your lead generation, branding & content/ thought leadership

Advising on industry insights with dedicated editorial staff, online content specialists, digital marketing advisors & UX/ CJM manager, we can help create an integrated, digital strategy to increase your online presence.

Find out more at: www.corinium-digital.com

Chamatkar Sandhu
Digital Sales Director
UK: +44 (0) 20 7193 8161
USA: + 1 (347) 983 5023
Skype: chamatkar1983
Email: c.sandhu@coriniumintel.com