It’s a Man’s World

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The lack of women in engineering has been an ongoing issue for some time. In terms of progress, we have seen some marvelous improvements and change for the better. But according to the National Science Foundation’s most recent statistics [1], an astonishing gender disparity remains, with women making up a mere 11% of the workforce.

In an industry so long dominated by men, one would expect the difference to be significant, but the numbers are appalling, especially when compared to other industries.

Haven’t we overcome archaic attitudes towards women in the professional world? We certainly can’t blame the unbalance of gender to any sort of biological reasoning. After all, females are not any less scientific or mathematically capable than males.

A tremendous amount of implementations, organizations, and campaigns continue to offer more opportunities for women. In fact, one could actually argue that due to certain incentives, women may find even more opportunities than men, as supportive programs are eager to close the gender gap. Though there will always be anecdotal exceptions to the rule, I am inclined to believe that the real cause for the issue is attributed to a lack of general interest, rather than any broad discrimination towards females.

So why do women seem to find engineering so unappealing? Perhaps it can be simply explained by of a lack of awareness to the many opportunities in the industry. Or perhaps women hesitate to enter into a male-dominated field out of fear and intimidation, shying away from the highly competitive environment. Unfortunately, the root of the problem may be a much more complicated, societal

issue that begins early on in the development of a child’s mind through the interest and skill-building fostered by parents and teachers. Since women are not commonly introduced to engineering at a young age, there is little chance for inspiring future engineers. Without the necessary seeds of curiosity, a young woman may never even consider the possibility of entering into the exciting world that engineering can be.

Some notable organizations have sought to combat these issues by exposing young women to the field by encouraging and educating youth, offering scholarships and incentives, etc. Organizations like the SWE [2]and IEEE [3] have put forth some promising programs in recent years, but clearly we need more. Promotional measures are not enough when they are not combined with a change in society’s attitudes towards the female mind vs. male mind and all the stereotypes that go along with them.

The lack of female engineers is a critical problem that must be seriously addressed. After all, engineers have the power to literally change the world, so why wouldn’t we want a more balanced consortium? The female perspective and influence is greatly needed in the field, and we must figure out how to solve the issue. So the question remains: how do we inspire future generations of female engineers?

Do you have any thoughts or ideas? Comment below or email me: melissa.barnes@advantagemedia.com [4].

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