

Issue 006: Diversity & Inclusion

Graham Lee

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Welcome to the sixth issue of *De Programmatica Ipsum*, dedicated to the subject of *Diversity & Inclusion*. In this 100% free edition, without a subscriber-only article, Graham and Adrian just shut up and listen:

- Sheree Atcheson¹, an award-winning Diversity and Inclusion leader, working for Deloitte UK² as the Tech Respect & Inclusion Manager, at Women Who Code³ as a Board-Appointed Global Ambassador, and as a Contributor at Forbes⁴, gives us an exclusive interview⁵.
- Julia Cacciapuoti⁶, hiring manager at Medallia⁷ in Argentina, talks about hiring diversity⁸ in a male-dominated industry.
- And Susanna Riccardi⁹ explains why some ideas to increase diversity in conferences can actually have detrimental effects¹⁰.

Enjoy this issue! Please let us know if you have any feedback¹¹ and get our free newsletter¹² to stay updated about new releases. If you want to support us, subscribe¹³ for a month or a year, and let us know if you would like to write with us¹⁴.

¹<https://twitter.com/nirushika>

²<https://deloitte.co.uk>

³<https://www.womenwhocode.com/>

⁴<https://www.forbes.com/sites/shereeatcheson/>

⁵<https://deprogrammaticaipsum.com/sheree-atcheson-on-diversity-and-inclusion/>

⁶<https://deprogrammaticaipsum.com/user/julinga/>

⁷<https://www.medallia.com/>

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⁹<https://deprogrammaticaipsum.com/user/susannariccardi/>

¹⁰<https://deprogrammaticaipsum.com/why-i-want-people-to-not-treat-me-differently/>

¹¹<https://deprogrammaticaipsum.com/feedback/>

¹²<https://deprogrammaticaipsum.com/newsletter/>

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¹⁴<https://deprogrammaticaipsum.com/write-with-us/>

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¹⁵https://unsplash.com/photos/Ariu17epnPk?utm_source=unsplash&utm_medium=referral&utm_content=creditCopyText

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Sheree Atcheson On Diversity And Inclusion

Adrian Kosmaczewski

March 4th, 2019



An exclusive interview with Sheree Atcheson¹, an award-winning Diversity and Inclusion leader. She spends her time helping organisations create inclusive environments which embrace people of all walks of life. She currently works at Deloitte UK² as the Tech Respect & Inclusion Manager, at Women Who Code³ as a Board-Appointed Global Ambassador, and as a Contributor at Forbes⁴.

What are the most pressing problems regarding Diversity & Inclusion in the tech industry right now?

We are not having teams which represent the societies we live in. Technology is innovative, fluid and creative, and to fully meet the needs of all, we must have teams which replicate the society which are using them. Our organisations should spend the time understanding what our people need and how we can provide that to them, allowing them to grow and flourish in their work and levels.

You have been very active in the promotion of D&I; based in your experience, what are the most successful concrete actions undertaken to solve the problem? (By yourself or by others)

Relatable role models – role models are crucial. It is a big ask to ask someone under-represented and/or marginalised to also have the emotional energy to push through and be the first. When we see people similar to us succeeding, it is empowering and clearly shows it is possible to succeed.

¹<https://twitter.com/nirushika>

²<https://deloitte.co.uk>

³<https://www.womenwhocode.com/>

⁴<https://www.forbes.com/sites/shereeatcheson/>

Sponsorship – sponsorship is incredibly powerful in the advancement of underrepresented people. Sponsoring someone means advocating for their career, providing constructive feedback to aid growth and lending visibility to their work. By doing this, allies are helping actively make a difference in someone’s career.

Engagement of allies – we must have the help of the majority in making the industry better for the minority. Diversity in technology is good for all and through allies realising their power in shaping a positive impact, we can create actionable changes to aid more inclusive environments.

Could the effectiveness of those measures be improved, or do we need a “paradigm shift” to tackle the problem?

Both. Yes, we can measure the number of visible leaders or increase on retention of underrepresented groups however, this will not shift overnight – this is going to take ongoing work to continue to change the ratios in relation to all aspects of diversity. Organisations embracing diversity and fostering environments of inclusion are having healthier bottom lines because they are listening to more inputs and voices, reducing risk in solutions and creating the solutions for the many.

Have you seen an improvement in the situation in the past few years, or has the situation simply changed without signs of improvements?

Yes, we can see differences because people are having these kinds of conversations and organisations are aware that changes need to be made. The more awareness we have, the better – however, we need actions post-listening.

Regarding those improvements, what are the “metrics” (if there are any) that can be used to gauge them?

The percentage of underrepresented people in industry, especially in leadership positions. Whilst we need representation at all levels, including junior roles, we need to ensure we are providing environments where underrepresented people can flourish and become leaders. Also, to spend the time in understanding your attraction, retention and exit data – to form strategies around that, instead of a blanket approach.

Cover photo by Sheree Atcheson.

Hiring Diversity (Beta Version)

Julia Cacciapuoti

March 4th, 2019



The only constant is change... *and the hiring process.*

The way companies design their hiring process has always kept my attention. But during the last couple of years, with the increasing discussions and researches about inclusion and diversity, this became even more special. We are walking through a new and super interesting paradigm, but still in beta version. Life habits changed, technology evolved and evolves every day, access to trainings and tools to develop our skills became more and more available, but there is something that believe it or not maintained its basics: the hiring processes.

The Unconscious Biases

It's incredible to meet colleagues, no matter located where, and hear about the same tips, tools and assumptions when it comes to source and screen talent.

The more common approach to analyze profiles is full of biases. Starting with a global perspective, the University you studied in and how long it took, says a lot about your capabilities. More than that, depending on where you studied, you will probably have more chances of being considered than other people that decided a different path.

Of course there is no room for people that didn't find their path in the the academic world.

It's not a good sign, so it's better to not waste time and move on to another profile.

If you jumped from job to job in a relatively short period of time, you are a job hopper and you don't deserve my time as recruiter even to ask you why or how you made these decisions.

But, it's not all negative. Some countries are more advanced with some aspects. Didn't look for photos in the resumes. Recruiters don't ask about age or personal life. These companies use to have Diversity and Inclusion practices that also apply to their hiring process, paying special attention to the gender neutral language in the job postings, the pics in their website, the training for interviewers; just to mention a couple of initiatives.

But the *best practices* about sourcing and selecting the *best talent*, remained the same.

Moving to a local view of this situation and double clicking in Argentina, the situation is even worst.

We still ask for personal data. If you are a female, not a minor number of companies still find super relevant to know about your personal and family plans. We pay attention to the photos in your resume. We analyze your date of birth and do judgments for free.

We have a decent but still small and understaffed IT market, so making assumptions about people trajectory becomes really easy. We, as recruiters and "employers" use one of our best attributes to predict who you are based on your profile. We use our arrogance to quickly arrive to conclusions. We strongly believe that our market has less than 10 respectful product companies, with a reputation earned about their products but also the high bar in the hiring process. We also assume that if you went to public universities, you have a plus. Although we are a bit more familiar with the idea of not necessarily finished your formal studies or take almost 10 years to get a bachelor degree, this keeps our attention anyway. If you are not studying, or if you withdrew, or if you are studying at an University that social trends say that it's not at the expected level, we assume to know a lot about who you are. So we automatically know how could you potentially perform in our hiring process and of course in the role, our culture and company.

And please don't tell me you are more than 40 years old and you still want to code. What happened in your career? Then it becomes an obsession to find out a problematic relationship with a former boss or any related typical problem.

If you are not considering become a Manager and you just want to code, we need to address it because this could tell a lot about your ambition, intrinsic motivation and willingness to grow.

Another interesting point about doing hiring in Argentina is related to the super mentioned and manipulated concept of Digital Transformation.

So, in the future (?) all companies will become a technology company. We have been repeating this for a long time. However, we didn't change our assumptions. If you are working at a bank, or at a traditional telecommunications company, you will probably not match with our positions.

If you didn't work for at least one of the respected tech companies, something is wrong with you.

Why did you not try to take your career to the next level? But honestly, we don't have the answer because we actually do not ask. Contacting and considering these profiles, it's not worth it. We need to optimize and prioritize our time.

The Beta Version

Perhaps give a *beta version* is too much. Perhaps we are even at an earlier stage. Each time I hear someone saying that the profile was archived and rejected because there was not enough

evidence of being a good match with the role, my ears hurt. Each time I identify a bias around the educational and professional background, the idea of challenging the status quo and really invest in training, gain more and more strength.

Then we intend to work on the Impostor Syndrome¹, that curiously we are also responsible for generating. What are we trying to say when we are looking for the *top talent*? What does a top talent look like? Who did define those parameters? Once again, there are not answers to these questions.

But, hold on. One of the definitions of beta version is “*an early version of a program or application that contains most of the major features, but is not yet complete. Sometimes these versions are released only to a select group of people, or to the general public, for testing and feedback. This is the second major stage of development following the alpha version, and comes before the release candidate*”. So, perhaps beta version is a correct term to define the hiring processes these days. Absolutely aligned with the idea of “*not yet complete*” but still not aware that the *testing and feedback* stages started a long time ago and we are missing the mark.

If we still can't see that a human being is much more than a LinkedIn profile, we are in trouble. If the professional experience and the way people make decisions don't motivate us enough to reach out and stop assuming to start asking, we are in trouble.

If we are still waiting for people to say politically accepted answers, we are in trouble and we won't be doing any other thing than contributing to the Impostor Syndrome.

But more than that, we will be losing our so valuable and obsessive focus on hiring the *best talent*. The real one; that that we don't know.

To Alienate Or Not To Alienate, That Is The Question

Dear recruiters, dear colleagues: we have a lot to do with this. We are driving the processes. We are the proxy between people (or profiles, as you prefer to call them) and opportunities (or openings). We have a critical role and a great power; and great power comes with great responsibility. Define if we want to be aligned or alienated must be our first one job on a daily basis.

We can't allow us to keep on doing the same things anymore. We can't seat down and just see how the world changes, read about Inclusion and Diversity, feel pride about the Inclusion practices in our companies but not realize that we will be on the opposite sidewalk if we don't clean our lens. Please do not repeat what Digital Transformation means if you still dismiss people with +10 years of coding experience at companies whose core is not technology (yet).

While paying attention to the gender neutral language in our job postings is super important, it becomes cosmetic when we don't encourage each other to do a better job.

A responsible recruiting job can't be done without love and passion. An HR role can't be successful without challenging the business and thinking out of the box.

Let's move out of beta version and revisit every single day why we do what we do, how we do it and embrace the unique opportunity we have between hands to impact the industries, companies, markets and hundreds of people we are in touch with every day.

¹<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQUxL4Jm1Lo>

Moving Out Of Beta Version

Long paths start with a first step. We don't need to wait until the *perfect* moment. As long as you wait to have all in place to start, the later you will do it.

So what could you do starting today?

- **Network > LinkedIn: not everybody is in LinkedIn.**
- **What are you looking for?:** ask yourself this question every single day.
- **What really answer that question?:** which information included in the profile really gives you insights? If you are looking for an experienced Mobile Engineer with ability to mentor other people, does the University where she / he studied tell you something about that? I don't think so...
- **The summary:** if someone took some time to introduce her/himself in the summary, take your time to read it. Is there anything that caught your attention?
- **Too empty profile = become curious:** not everyone loves to include full and detailed experience in their profiles. This is not the preferred language; engineers write code so that's the best cover letter. I know! We don't read code. But that's not an excuse to only read LinkedIn profiles. I challenge you to give the next 10 "too empty" LinkedIn profiles a chance. Ask questions to the empty fields and then complete them from the candidate's answers.
- **The iceberg model:** we don't know what we don't know. I like to think in the IT industry as an iceberg. There are a lot of people showing what they do but in a language that we don't understand. There are a couple of things you can do about this, as for example build a strong partnership with the engineering teams to strategically work on sourcing, the pitching message and approach or reinforce the referral program, but the most important one is embrace a growth mindset. Don't tell yourself that you don't need to understand "technical aspects". I would like to share this article² from Stack Overflow, that provides useful techniques to expand your searches and be able to see more angles of the iceberg.
- **Reduce assumptions:** challenge yourself to not complete unknown information with your assumptions. Develop a genuine interest in knowing people and their stories. Always keep in mind that there is much more than a profile behind a profile.

We have the unique opportunity of revalue the concept of candidate experience, trying each candidate as we like to be treated as customers. Details make a huge difference and challenging old and unprovable beliefs will generate the inflation point in the way that companies recruit people. All this is also about inclusion and diversity.

Let's move about of beta version. All we need is passion, love and conviction.

Cover photo by Raj Eiamworakul³ on Unsplash⁴.

²https://www.stackoverflowbusiness.com/blog/how-tech-recruiters-can-evaluate-developer-applications?utm_source=email-blog-subscriptions&utm_medium=email&utm_term=How%20Tech%20Recruiters%20Can%20Evaluate%20Developer%20Applications&utm_campaign=Blog+Subscriptions&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-9VcTy08QwduAL7zSwJB7wndcn86WUov7sCaBzFjK9En6KpYV1Eiaomljfn4DxSEEGeFhFbgikBKFP_zvOgOrwwBDMpOg&_hsmi=58425291

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Why I Want People To Not Treat Me Differently

Susanna Riccardi

March 4th, 2019



Before I start, I should give a little introduction about myself. I hope this helps you understand my point of view. I'm a 22 years old woman from Italy with a Bachelor's degree in Informatics who is currently working in Sweden as a Full Stack Developer. I started programming about four years ago when I enrolled in University.

An Attempt To Improve Diversity

Recently I was on Twitter and I read a tweet from UIKonf, a conference for iOS developers taking place in Berlin, announcing that for this year's edition they are going to have an all-female lineup of speakers. Here is what they say on their website:

We want to do our part in supporting women in our industry and showcase some of the great women speakers out there. This is our way of raising awareness for the diversity problem while at the same time a celebration of all the women who follow their passion, muster up the courage to go on stage, and hold great talks despite the headwind they're facing in our industry.

What the conference decided to do is to select speakers according to their gender, instead of basing their decision on meritocracy. Knowledge and experience are put in second place to help a cause. In the conference organiser's view, trying to bring more women into tech could potentially reduce the gap between men and women in the field.

The Reactions

Judging from the replies to that tweet, there were generally two kinds of reactions. Some people were supportive towards the conference decision, saying that this will help with in-

clusion and diversity of underrepresented groups. Others were criticising it, claiming it is now excluding everyone else.

There were a couple of replies that caught my attention, because they were expressing what I felt the moment I saw the conference announcement. Both of them were wondering if the conference decision didn't actually go against the aim of equality and inclusion, expressing that a lineup made up on skills or topics would have made more sense.

My Opinion

Here is why I disagree with this approach of having these targeted experiences for women. I personally find it diminishing to be invited to a conference, hired at a company, and generally being treated differently because of my gender. This is something I cannot control, unlike my education, my experience or my attitude towards other people. If what everybody is looking for is to be considered the same as anyone else, shouldn't we look at these values that any human being can actually influence? I don't want to be prioritised because I am a woman. I want to be selected based on my knowledge, what I am able to do, and what I can contribute to what I want to take part in.

My Personal Experience In The Field

What is the point of spending resources in inviting more women in tech, if the environment is not sustainable enough to retain them in the long run? I have read countless stories about women and people from other underrepresented groups having a hard time at their workplace. I have not been in the field for long, but in my short time therein I have had some bad encounters with men who wanted me to feel inferior because of my gender. I have had to prove myself many times to show people that I had the right to be where I was, whereas men at the same skill level didn't have to: everyone simply assumed that they knew what they were doing.

During my time in university, I experienced classmates pointing out that I was getting good grades because of my appearance. Others told me I was passing my courses because my boyfriend, who was attending the same program, was helping me. On the starting day of my first tech internship, the CEO told everybody that he was happy to see a woman join the team. I questioned myself all the time when I was there – did they merely hire me because I am a woman?

The Environment

What happened to me is nothing compared to what other women have to go through. Various researches have been done regarding the differences between men and women in tech: how much they earn, how much their opinions are valued, and how long it takes to progress in their careers. The work environment is not optimal and welcoming, and we have data to prove it. Women are leaving the field more than men do. So what do we want to achieve by just inviting minorities to work in tech if they will end up leaving because of the hostile environment?

Let's imagine for a moment that I am working at a company where I experience harassment by my colleagues because of my gender. In order to help improve the situation, the company prioritises their hirings based on gender. Why would the men that are harassing me stop doing it, just because they are surrounded by women? Wouldn't they think that those women got their job without having to prove themselves? Wouldn't they think that the newly hired

women don't deserve to be where they are because of this? I know I am just assuming their behaviour, but I find it hard to believe that such men will magically become nicer people because they are surrounded by more women.

Equality

This is why I don't feel like supporting this movement. I think it is going against what we are fighting for. I hope you don't misunderstand me: there is so much we can do to make it better for everybody, and we have to try different approaches. But we need to be careful with what we are doing: some actions can do more harm than good. My wish is that everybody, regardless of gender, colour of the skin, sexuality, and any other characteristics, can feel at home in the tech field, without having to feel excluded because of something they cannot control, but also without feeling merely included for the same reason.

Being a developer is one of the best jobs in the world, and there is space for everyone. We need people with different backgrounds, experiences and ideas. They can bring so much more than just improving the diversity statistics of a company. I don't want us to mainly focus on bringing minorities into the field, but on making the environment so good that they will never want to leave. I don't want us to focus on diversity either. That is not the primary goal. I want us to focus on equality. If we can reach equality, diversity will come by itself.

A Suggestion

I have had huge discussions with many people, and some of them told me that this is a longterm goal. We will not be able to see any concrete improvements soon, but our grand-kids will. If this is really the case, why are we not focusing on fixing the problem at the root? I believe shifting our focus to promoting engineering to kids in schools could give amazing results, much faster and much more effectively than simply targeting minorities. We need to show our children and teenagers that tech is not only for men. Everybody has the same chances of becoming a software engineer as anybody else, and nobody is privileged.

I didn't get into tech until I enrolled in university because I was always told that this field is only for men. When I was in middle school, my parents begged me to not join the high school I wanted because I would have been the only girl there. They were scared I could feel alone and discriminated. That's why I was reluctant to join my university. But I am so glad I did, because I have met awesome people, of any gender, and I have worked with them in a field that has a lot to offer.

If girls grew up learning computer science, they would see its beauty, and would consider it when making their decision when thinking about their future. If boys grew up studying engineering alongside women, they would finally see their potential and would treat them as equals. I strongly believe in this solution: we could achieve our goal, diversity in tech. And for once, we could stop begging women to join the field because we just want to improve the ratio.

Conclusion

There are numerous things we can do to improve the situation for everybody. We need to dare trying different strategies, but also be critical of the current ones. Everything has pros and cons. I believe having opportunities targeted for underrepresented groups that exclude other ones does more harm than good. We should make it so who people that are working

in tech want to stay. Let's concentrate on shaping young minds, on showing that this field is not just for men. It's for everybody.

Sources

The Systems Holding Back Women In Tech, Tracey Welson-Rossman, May 10, 2018, Forbes¹

Women in Tech: What's the Real Status?, Laura Garnett, Mar 21, 2016, Inc.²

Cover photo by Annie Spratt³ on Unsplash⁴.

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