

A *movement*, not a **moment**

Capacity



Less than a month away from the 2020 Global Women in Telco & Tech Awards and Summit, *Capacity's* Natalie Bannerman takes a closer look at the significance behind this growing project and why it's so important for our industry. Hear from some prominent female CEOs and members of the GWTT team on why they choose to support the initiative, and the plans for its expansion.

We've all heard, read or seen the statistics that prove why gender diversity is a must-have. Beyond our desire for an equal and fair society, we know that it bolsters innovation, supports an aging workforce and results in financial gains, if done properly.

Well-known projects include Girls Who Code, WomenTech Network, European Women in Tech, Women4Tech, the GLF's Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging working group, Vodafone's #ChangeTheFace, Girls4Tech, Tech She Can, WTF, Girls Talk London, WiTT and Women in AI, to name a few.

If you're a friend of *Capacity*, BroadGroup, Layer123 or *TowerXchange* either through Twitter, LinkedIn or part of our mailing list, then you will know that 2019 saw the launch of the Global Women in Telco & Tech (GWTT) Awards and Summit. What you may not know is that this annual event — going virtual this September — actually forms part of our wider global initiative of the same name.

But what does this actually mean? Simply put, through our events and content, across wholesale telecoms, data centres, network orchestration and towers, we're putting diversity, specifically gender parity, at the heart of it.

According to PwC data which surveyed 2,000 A-Level and university students, only 22% could name a famous female working in technology. Further, Only 27% of female students would consider a career in technology, compared to 61% of males, with a rather bleak 3% of female students saying that it's their first choice — demonstrating a need not just for more recruitment, but more education and awareness.

"Initiatives like Capacity Media's Global Women in Telco and Tech are a powerful way to recognise the contribution of women to this industry," shared Belle Lajoie, CEO, Cloudscene.

"It's critical for organisations to keep the conversation on diversity going, which means embracing a strategy of equality in all areas. I think the more power we give to initiatives that encourage greater diversity across the board, the more we can truly help to drive positive change to the benefit of all."

Work officially began on this programme in 2018, with the first ever Empowering Women in Telco panel held during the 2018 Capacity Europe event in London. Featuring Kristine Olson-Chapman, managing director at TalkTalk Business; Tansy McCluskie, sourcing manager EMEA at Facebook; Gagun Gahir, regional voice manager EMEA at Telstra; the late Brynn Fowler; and Annette Murphy, managing director of Europe and SVP of fibre solutions at Zayo Group.

Since then this has expanded this into a dedicated special report in every August/September issue of *Capacity* magazine, featuring exclusive interviews, feature and opinion pieces on some of the biggest topics facing the industry in the words of prominent women in the sector.

"Global initiatives like this are important because they allow a selection of the few women in tech across the globe to come together to network, celebrate successes, share ideas and make their voices heard which will encourage more women to pursue careers in tech," shares MainOne CEO, Funke Opeke.

In addition, we have pledged to actively increase the number of female speakers at all our events and in attendance, across our ecosystem and of course the dedicated awards and summit, now in its second year.

Speaking to Georgia Ermilios, senior product developer at Capacity Media and head of GWTT, on the importance of this work she shared that it's more than just the nice thing to do, but a responsibility we have.

"Through our content and events, we aim to drive business in our industry forward,

and there is no excuse anymore for that to be happening without diversity and inclusion being part of the conversation," explains Ermilios.

"The business case has been proven time and time again and we need to get on board. We have a responsibility to be showcasing the range of voices that we know globally and to give these voices a platform."

As conversation turns to the summit and awards, Ermilios says to think of it as more of a yearly touchpoint, rather than a single point in the year to recognise women in our industry.

"It's our moment to sit and assess what we've done over the past year and also to celebrate the achievements we've made and the people who make our industry great and help move inclusion forward."

"It's a time to critically assess what worked, what didn't and what had the biggest impact," she says.

But we aren't the only ones taking the subject seriously. Over at Sparkle, TIM's international division, it just welcomed Elisabetta Romano, former EVP of chief innovation and partnership, as its new CEO.

Speaking to her about what the company is doing to further push its gender diversity agenda she shared that on International Women's Day 2020, the company launched the *Women project: an inclusion initiative for all*.

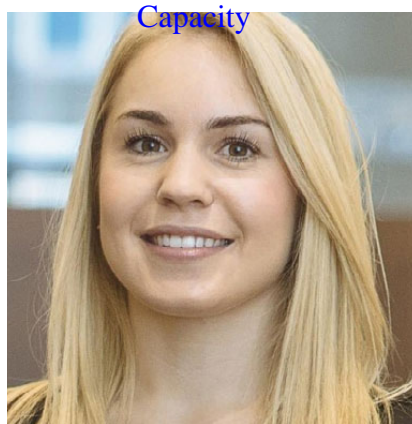
With it came a manifesto detailing the company's commitments and a plan for improvement, the result of a hearing process that raised the most important areas for action across two specific macro-areas.

The first being **climate and culture** and the second being **career**. Under the strategy for climate and culture plans include spreading a company culture of equal opportunities for the sexes, one that works to get rid of prejudices and create processes for an ethical, respectful working environment in line with equal opportunities for the sexes.

While under career, this involves things such as balancing the representation of women through recruitment and career development, strengthening managerial skills and providing role models for female leadership.

Other ideas in the pipeline include education on prejudices, language and behaviour; a policy on sexual harassment, verbal abuse and bullying; methods of empowering women, such as coaching, mentoring, role models, and measures to get women present at every step of an employee's journey.

Questioning Romano on the significance of such global diversity initiatives she says that "Initiatives such as *Capacity's* Global Women in Telco & Tech, like other international global initiatives, are an



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Adding women are participating “more and more in civil, social and working life, thanks to their own demands for equal opportunities. Women have won more ground in the world of work but there’s still a long road ahead of us,” Romano says.

Following in these footsteps, Colt Technology Services named former chief commercial officer Keri Gilder as the company’s new CEO.

Ever an advocate for D&I, Gilder has been instrumental in the implementation of a five-pillar strategy that was put into motion by previous CEO Carl Grivner. The strategy is supported by specific initiatives focused on confidence building, armed forces career transition, graduate training, mentoring and supporting transgender employees, among other areas.

Speaking to *Capacity* in an earlier interview, she said: “It’s one thing to have the capability but it’s another thing to be considered.”

This has been supported by a number of events, one of the most recent being a virtual session hosted by Colt’s women’s network entitled ‘A working father’s guide to raising confident young women’, where four Colt dads shared personal stories and offered support and guidance to its attendees. In fact, we caught up with Raymond Aboagye about this very topic in our *Day in the Life* feature on page 63.

Then in June, Colt’s Melanie Halsey, executive vice president of HR, shared that “over the last few years we’ve had a dedicated and pretty comprehensive strategy around inclusion and diversity. Gender balance is of course an important aspect of that, but it sits alongside a number of other aspects of diversity as well including whether that’s cultural awareness, pride matters, enablement etc.”

Some of this work includes the appointment of Louisa Gregory as Colt’s vice president of diversity.

Additionally, the telco has established a D&I council chaired by CEO Keri Gilder, implemented gender balance targets with a remuneration committee that reviews overall representation as well as representation at senior levels.

But where do global initiatives like GWTT fall short? Often it is in transitioning great conversations, ideas and discussions into tangible, actionable results. Nevertheless, though the results may be subtle and slow, according to Romano it’s still worth it.

Initiatives like this are important to continue paying attention to the effective adoption of models to reduce the gender gap in an industry like telecoms that is traditionally “male” led as per the traditional male technical education — even if also in this respect women are considerably reducing the gap. In Italy for example women with a STEM degree are 36% of the total, while the OCSE average is 32%,” she explains.

“Therefore, in my opinion these kinds of initiatives may not have a direct and immediate outcome but are absolutely important to stimulate and spread a much-needed cultural change.”

This is further cohobated by Opeke who says that its sometimes “all talk and glam”, nevertheless she mains hopeful adding, “it only takes witnessing how other women have broken through the glass ceiling to encourage other women to follow”.


“Women have to take the action to propel ourselves, no one is going to hand it to us on a platter,” she adds.

Looking ahead there is much in the works for GWTT and we have only scratched the surface. “We have so many very exciting things which are still in the research phase of development so I don’t want to say too much about but definitely watch this space,” exclaims Ermilios.

The biggest plan to keep an eye out for however, is increasing collaboration across *Capacity’s* sister organisations, so that the message is uniform and consistent in all that we do.

“In 2019 to 2020, so far we have established a presence at several events around the world including Capacity Europe and ITW and we hope to grow this further in the year ahead in order to give regional touch points as well as the global one at the summit,” Ermilios says.

But that doesn’t mean you can’t get involved as it will take all us to ensure that diversity is embedded in the workflow and Ermilios confirmed that “we’re always open to new ideas as, ultimately, the industry drives our direction. Anyone wanting to get in touch and contribute has an open invitation.”

As all eyes are on the awards and summit, the idea is to not just come together this September, but to ensure D&I is a part of our daily conversations. 



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IAN BAKER