

Walking the talk on gender parity and empowerment in the tech sector

By [Adri Führi](#)

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The IT industry culture, in general, is still playing catch up when it comes to promoting women. Often, women need to work twice as hard to be taken seriously and are generally less likely to self-promote and speak up at meetings. Because of this, it's important for women to understand the differences between men and women, embrace these and move forward with the understanding that being a smart, passionate woman in the tech industry is an advantage.



Adri Führi, group CFO at e4.

Aside from some obvious cultural challenges, with fewer women in senior IT roles and executive leadership it can be difficult for young women to find and identify a mentor and this can limit their belief that women can succeed. Encouragingly, the landscape is changing, and internationally there are more women in leadership roles demonstrating that serious barriers are indeed falling away.

Sourcing and developing women with the appropriate competencies to thrive in IT is not only possible but necessary for organisational success. There are practical steps organisations can take to ensure more women have the opportunity to make an impact at every level of the business.

For organisations with limited female senior leadership, a first step is to create buy-in from the entire executive team so that all efforts to ensure diversity add value to the business. Then, to find and appoint women that have the necessary competencies to affect meaningful change - women that are assertive, passionate and resilient with a track record of succeeding in business.

At e4, it took an open minded executive that appointed a female CFO, who appointed a female HR executive, who facilitated the appointment and leadership development of many female leaders in the organisation.



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Walking the talk on gender parity “requires strategic leadership”

It's important for young women at the beginning of their IT careers to find a role they're truly passionate about and a mentor that inspires them. This makes the journey of learning and development much easier and far more rewarding.

For young women just starting out - do not apologise when you have done nothing wrong. Many women apologise when they are still learning, apologise when asking questions and worst of all, apologise for setting high standards.

We cannot expect the gender gap to close on its own. It is only through investment in girls' education in STEM, with a focus on technology, that we will create a sustainable pipeline of future IT qualified employees and leaders.

Creating gender parity also involves identifying women in tech with the necessary competencies to fulfil leadership roles through mentoring, coaching and identification of opportunities within an organisation. Ultimately, walking the talk on gender equality, diversity and empowerment in SA tech requires intentional action and strategic leadership.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adri Führi is the group CFO at e4.

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