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# THE GENDER HIRING HACK: DEI ROUNDTABLE REPORT

Talent International x  
Techspace  
Berlin, March 2023

 techspace



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# Roundtable Introduction

## About the event

This roundtable took place in Berlin on March 16th, 2023, and was hosted by Talent and Techspace. 50+ experienced professionals, including Recruiters, HR Business Partners, Compensation & Benefits specialists, HR consultants, and minute takers and facilitators with experience in the DEI space, attended the event.

## Event Topic: Increasing Gender Diversity in tech roles

According to LinkedIn, 79% of people in tech roles in Germany identify as male. This compares to just 66% in the UK. Germany undoubtedly has one of the most underrepresented tech sectors on the [continent](#).

The [most recent tech layoffs](#) in Europe have created a further disparity in gender diversity for tech roles, where women are more likely to be laid off than men.

To remain competitive in technological growth and innovation, Europe must recruit and retain underrepresented genders across tech roles and leadership levels for the fastest-growing tech roles of the foreseeable future ([Mckinsey](#)).

We aimed to bring experienced professionals together to share expertise, discuss challenges, and establish possible solutions to increasing gender diversity in technology roles and careers (“tech roles”) across Germany.

## Event Setup

To guide our guests, experienced facilitators led three discussions that covered the following topics:

- **Inspire:** How can we bridge the gap between education and employment to help tech roles become more visible and inspiring for underrepresented genders?
- **Opportunity:** How can we attract & retain underrepresented genders in tech roles? Key areas of focus: sourcing, interviewing, onboarding, and company culture.
- **Support & Growth:** How can we better support underrepresented genders in tech roles through understanding the impact of “imposter syndrome”?

Guests were separated into three smaller groups, with the opportunity to discuss all three topics with a different facilitator, giving each topic dedicated time for an open discussion.

As a note, gender diversity includes all expressions of gender. While the discussions steered toward the under-representation of women in tech roles in Germany, event organizers, facilitators, and guests also discussed the need to consider and understand the unique non-binary and transgender recruiting and retention challenges.

## What's in the report?

You'll not only read about what our roundtable discussions uncovered, but you will also gain insight into the key takeaways and suggested actions you can take to increase gender diversity in your organization.

Many challenges raised by our discussion groups will be recognizable to all professionals in this space - meaning you'll have likely experienced something similar as part of your DEI journey.

You can use the conclusions detailed here to help develop your internal DEI strategies, working to create an inclusive company culture where diversity is prioritised.

For clarity and the purpose of this report, tech roles can be defined as:

**Role-based:** a technical role that develops and maintains software, hardware, and technical systems. These roles can be within a technology company that develops and sells technical products (software, hardware, systems) or in a company not related to technology but that uses technology to function.

**Product-based:** a role that collaborates with other technicians to build technology products even if the role is not technical. These can also be within a technology company or outside of a technology company.



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# Inspire

**Topic:** Bridging the gap between education and employment.

**Objective:** Uncovering ways to make tech roles more visible and inspiring for underrepresented genders.

## Takeaways:

- **Defining underrepresented genders** for an organization is vital to creating the proper focus for recruitment. Guests identified the most underrepresented genders within tech roles:
  - Women
  - Non-binary
  - Transgender
  - Guests discussed how, for both non-binary and transgender women and men, individual data within an organization could be limited, preventing analysis of career choice reasons, trajectory, and disparity.
- **You can't be what you can't see.** For many underrepresented genders, not seeing their gender represented across leadership levels is a continued barrier to increasing their belief that moving 'up' is possible.
- **Creating change at the leadership level is critical for recruitment.**
  - Guests clarified that change at leadership levels is not just about hiring underrepresented genders but increasing multiple dimensions of diversity and ensuring key leadership skills such as providing feedback, transparency, and empathy.

Ultimately, all agreed that a long-term multi-channel approach is needed.

## What you can do:

### Engage with Talent from various schools, programs, and networks:

- To captivate talent, educating and engaging with people during their academic careers is essential. Creating relationships with underrepresented genders through academic or company events, as they develop their knowledge, allows for a greater chance of them continuing their education and moving into tech careers after finishing their degree.
- Graduate & Junior Programmes developed by your organization can support recruitment efforts. Note these are only effective when looking at a diverse set of universities and schools.
- Remember to build relationships with non-academic programs that retrain talent for tech positions. Also, tap into developed networks of underrepresented talent as this can be a valuable way to increase the combined diversity dimensions such as gender, age, and ethnicity.

- [Check out FrauenLoop](#)
- [Check out ADAN](#)
- [Create clarity on the career path for tech roles in your organization.](#) For underrepresented genders, knowing where they are likely to develop on their journey with your company helps build confidence their skills will be developed and their contributions will be rewarded.
- [Practice what you preach.](#) Hiring underrepresented genders is one step. Internal policies are crucial to retaining talent and diversifying leadership levels. Promotions are one way to ensure talented employees are developed and rewarded, but stretch assignments, functional positions, and co-leading opportunities should be considered.

**By embracing the unique perspectives that underrepresented genders bring to the tech sector, we can create a more inclusive and inspiring workplace, driving productivity and performance.**

## Opportunity

**Topic:** Attracting and retaining underrepresented genders in tech roles.

**Objective:** To determine ways to enhance key touch points in the hiring process: sourcing, interviewing, onboarding, and company culture.

## Takeaways:

### Sourcing

Sourcing is a powerful tool for increasing candidates from underrepresented genders. Part of the discussion led to ideas on targeting specific gender groups, but it was agreed that this was not only difficult but, in some circumstances, unethical. The goal is to hire qualified people who can contribute to delivering important work and who can help innovate for the organization. Guests agreed that making organizations authentically inclusive and creating a wider net with sourcing can help appeal to and attract a more diverse candidate pool. Also, it is important to be open to alternative work backgrounds and experiences as nonlinear resumes have become more common.

During the discussion, job advertisements were seen as the starting point for hiring bias. Gendered language in job postings can send an unintended message to candidates and creates an automatic bias. There is also the concept of an 'ideal candidate,' which could create a biased profile, so there is a need to help hiring managers learn to focus on the specific skills and experience necessary for the job. Clarity on specific skills and experiences helps to develop a profile based on tangible and compensable factors (traits a company is willing to pay for) and helps to reduce hiring bias.

### The Interview

Reducing bias during the interview is key to a successful hiring process. Discussions steered toward how to reduce bias when interviewing underrepresented genders. It became clear that enhancing the interview process would support all candidates and ensure the experience is similar for everyone. Standardization and having a diverse interview panel were agreed to be straightforward ways to support the reduction of bias during interviews.

### Onboarding

Discussions revealed that onboarding is a personal experience and varies greatly from team to team. Inclusive onboarding is the goal, but it can be challenging since individuals have different needs, even in companies with guidance on onboarding employees. Where roles have been empty for many months, the workload can become more critical than integration into the team. Also, the length of onboarding varies by role based on responsibilities, new hire experience, and the availability of team members and the hiring manager. Guests agreed that focusing on creating strong standard onboarding for the company and flexible onboarding options for teams can balance the need to deliver similar and personalized onboarding experiences.

## Culture

Culture is one of the most critical aspects in retaining underrepresented genders. Culture affects everything within an organization, but unfortunately, work cultures are only sometimes deliberately developed. Guests discussed why culture is one of the most critical aspects in retaining underrepresented genders. Aspects of a work culture that creates negative experiences for underrepresented genders can be the lack of diversity in leadership teams, the lack of values and behavior alignment, and policies and practices that are created 'on the fly.' Especially with policies and practices, when diverse voices can't provide input, unintended outcomes are experienced (e.g., hiring negotiations leading to gender pay gaps).

## What you can do:

### Job Advertisements:

- **Avoid using overly masculine terms** such as competitive or dominate. Some guests suggested [Gender Decoder](#), a great online tool to help vet your job ads for gender bias.
- **Leave out responsibilities not core to the role, and remove any 'nice to have' lists of qualifications.** This helps to ensure when candidates complete an overall assessment of their qualifications, they can assess their skills and experience against what is needed for the role.
- **Consider placing [pay ranges on job postings](#)** to help candidates understand the value of the role before discussions start. This also supports a positive view of your company and allows candidates from underrepresented genders to have a more realistic starting point for pay negotiations, which is important for long-term fairness and retention.

## Sourcing

- **Help recruiters and hiring managers reimagine what makes a strong candidate** and look outside the regular pool for transferable skills and what skills can be trained. Be sure to look outside of your usual industry or function. For example, If you are looking for software sales or tech support roles, could you be looking at candidates working in retail or customer services and training them during onboarding?
- **Know your numbers.** Know where the most significant gender diversity gaps are in your tech teams and develop a plan for reducing this gap. This helps recruiters place sourcing efforts in various places throughout the year. Remember, it's a delicate balance when putting effort into one area over another. You don't want to reduce gaps in one team and see the gap increase in another.



# The Interview

Creating more standardized interview processes supports the reduction of bias when interviewing:

- **Prepare and plan.** Send candidates information before the interview, which provides a clear idea of who they will meet, the types of questions they will be asked, and information on the assessment process/criteria.
- **Set the same assessment criteria for all applicants and make sure all interviewers align and agree to stick to them.** The requirements should be based on what is relevant for the role. It is important to develop a relationship during the interview process, but this can also lead to unconscious bias in decision-making. Stick to assessing what skills and experiences are important for the candidate's success in the role.
- **Build a diverse interview panel.** Diversity dimensions are broad and intersectional. Diverse interviewers can help to reduce bias by bringing in different perspectives and interpretations of a candidate's responses to questions. Also, diverse interview panels offer an excellent opportunity for a more comprehensive understanding of a candidate's potential to thrive in a role or on a team.
- **Make a decision based on clear scoring criteria.** If you have set up an interview panel, ensure that everyone scores each candidate individually in private before coming back to discuss your scores and assessments as a group.



## Onboarding

- **Review your organization's onboarding process** and invite input from employees, especially from underrepresented genders. Commit to adjusting the onboarding process based on the input that aligns with company values. Also, ensure company onboarding includes a clear introduction to the company's code of ethics, values, behavior expectations, and how to get support.
- **Ask new hires what they need (before joining).** Trust that new hires know what they need to be successful. Get flexible in how you handle onboarding so the hiring manager can tailor each experience for a new employee. It requires more effort, but the benefits far outweigh the costs.
- **Onboarding is personal** and not only includes if a new team member is set up for success in the role but also how they feel in their role and on the team. Make sure to work together as a team to review team onboarding and make onboarding a priority within each team for each new hire.
- **A buddy system and support contacts help**, especially as it creates a safer space for people to share experiences and any challenges they face in their first weeks.
- **Allow for breaks.** Starting a new role can be stressful. Consider designing breaks in the onboarding and training process so new hires don't feel overloaded before they can begin work.
- **Check-in and review their onboarding experience.** This data will be critical for continuous improvement. Commit to taking action with the collected data.

## Culture

- **Develop an Employer Value Proposition (EVP).** EVPs are not just for large companies. You want to develop a robust approach to how employees, hiring managers, and recruiters answer the question for candidates 'Why should I work here?'
- **Behavior = culture.** Make sure your values are more than just words on a poster! Values are important, but they are not the end of the story. It is not what is said, but what is acted upon related to company values that will make up the culture and experience of employees. Aligned behaviour expectations and leadership development in coaching for value connection and behavior adjustment are the foundation of a strong culture that retains great talent.
- **Review diversity expectations and commitment with leaders.** Consider the below:
  - How diverse is the leadership team?
  - How invested are leaders in creating an inclusive culture that leads to increased diversity, and what are the motivations for doing so?

- **Create a steering team.** An example of this at Talent is the 'DEI Change Team' made up of different people from the company, both in terms of diversity and seniority in the business. They meet monthly to discuss actions to take and learn how to address challenges through a DEI lens. The ideas and outcomes are then presented to the leadership team for review and approval.
- **Return to work programs.** If you want to pull talent back into the workforce, you must have flexible leave policies and stay connected to leavers, building support for their return. Don't forget, when creating these programs, ask the target groups what they need.

 **Creating an inclusive environment from the start is the foundation for success.**

## Support & Growth

**Topic:** Imposter Syndrome

**Objective:** To better understand impostor syndrome and learn how to support underrepresented genders through this phenomenon.

### Takeaways:

The discussion focused on understanding [imposter syndrome](#) and its impact on underrepresented genders in the workplace. Imposter syndrome is the feeling that we are frauds, that we are not equipped for the tasks we have been given, and that we will be 'caught' at some point. Essentially it plays into our fear that we don't belong. The facilitator helped guests consider their experiences with imposter syndrome and how that personal awareness can shape empathy and responses to employees. Positive reinforcement in the form of recognition and psychological safety is crucial in building a culture where people feel safe to make mistakes. This communicates desired behaviour, and being encouraged to voice opinions and make mistakes drives safety and trust.

A part of building a safe environment is ensuring employees understand that making mistakes is a part of the journey of learning, growth, change, and innovation. Similar to the 'Inspire' talking point, an individual's perception of their belongingness in the workplace can be significantly influenced by the presence or absence of familiar representation, thus exacerbating the effects of imposter syndrome and raising concerns about their sense of purpose within the organization. Leaders must encourage and participate in dialogue with

employees about their own experiences with mistakes, failures, and fears. Transparency and openness develop trust and deeper empathy while ensuring employees can overcome their mistakes and try something new. Vulnerability was discussed as vital to developing strong relationships between leaders and teams.

### What you can do:

- **Develop a culture of feedback.** Don't wait until the scheduled performance assessments to discuss work, development, and how employees feel. Don't be fooled into thinking feelings don't matter. Feelings impact behavior. "Leaders must either invest a reasonable amount of time attending to fears and feelings or squander an unreasonable amount of time trying to manage ineffective and unproductive behavior." Dr. Brené Brown.
- **Create safe spaces and practice vulnerability between leaders and teams. Take baby steps.** Leaders must be able to share their own experiences with teams to signal that everyone has the opportunity to try new things, make mistakes, and develop.
- **Create safe spaces and proactive vulnerability within teams. Take baby steps.** Discussions within the team about demanding projects, difficult interactions, or challenging collaborations with other teams help develop a space for expressing concerns and highlight much more about the humans you work with than just assessing their delivery. Clever ways to do both can be modeled on 'F\*ck up nights' to demystify and remove the tension around the fear of failure. Check out [this clever organization](#).



- **Address behaviors that are biased and discriminatory.** Imposter syndrome is not necessarily 'just a part of the human experience.' Underrepresented genders can be labeled and treated in ways that lead them to feel like frauds in their work environments, and that treatment can change through feedback for awareness and coaching for behavior change.

**Leaders need to create space for people to process the feelings of imposter syndrome but have the tools to provide support, feedback loops, and spot the behaviours, emotions, and language.**

## To conclude...

Our DEI Roundtable event was insightful and inspiring, bringing together guests and facilitators to discuss ways to decrease the gap in underrepresented genders for tech roles.

We discussed the need for leadership engagement and commitment to developing strategies for captivating a more diverse talent pool and the importance of tailoring practises accordingly to retain and support the talent. From the real-life challenges we discussed to potential solutions to common barriers, we hope our attendees gained knowledge and understanding that can be put into practice to create a more inclusive workplace.

We thank everyone who attended our event and look forward to hosting more DEI Roundtable events in 2023 and beyond. To stay in the loop and be the first to hear about future events like this, join our official Slack community [here](#) or become part of our designated [LinkedIn group](#).

## Want a deeper dive?

Discussions are a great way to exchange with experienced professionals on important topics, but time is always limited. If you want to dive deeper into the topics we discussed, below are links to studies and articles to develop your knowledge and help you create solutions or your company.

- [Women in Tech: the best bet to solve Europe's talent shortage](#)
- [Cultivating diversity, equity, and inclusion: How CIOs recruit and retain experienced women in tech](#)
- [Stop telling women they have imposter syndrome](#)



## Our hosts

### Talent

[Talent](#) is a global technology and digital recruitment specialist committed to creating a better world of work for all. From simple beginnings in 1995, Talent now connects thousands of tech and digital professionals with a diverse range of organizations through its offices across Germany, the UK, Australia, New Zealand and the US.

From our city centre office in Berlin we are helping scaleups and SMEs across Germany implement more inclusive hiring practices. We are committed to widening the net without lowering the bar when it comes to scaling digital teams.

As an organisation we are incredibly proud to be powering the DEI Roundtable community and if you are interested in finding out more about how we can help you increase your resourcing capability whilst also building more diverse teams get in touch with Lisa Bartlett: +493031197991

**9000**

Clients worldwide trust Talent to build digital teams.

**4500**

Contractors on assignment every day.

**1000+**

Permanent placements every year.

**500k**

Digital candidates on our database.

## Techspace

[Techspace](#) is a place for change-makers with tech at the heart of what they do. With space, expertise and community to amplify and inspire impact.

With over 10 years serving the tech sector, we know what ambitious businesses are looking for. From space that flexes with you, to learning & development programs designed to develop and inspire your team, you'll find we have the perfect place to attract top talent and drive your business forward.

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## Our facilitators

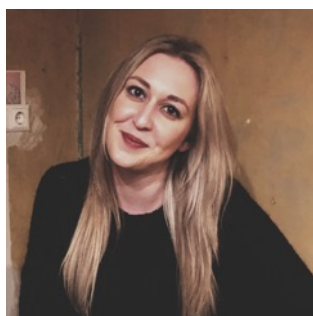


### Halley Claire Bass (she/her)

#### Future Females

Halley's greatest passion is to creatively empower paradigm shifters and changemakers to build sustainable, values-driven businesses. Her slogan is "be the brand you wish to see in the world." She has led multiple workshops on facing fears, social entrepreneurship, chakra-meditations, empowerment, and expressive arts therapy. She has also coached entrepreneurs on creating their brand, business strategy, social media marketing, and personal development.

Currently, she is also an ambassador for Future Females Berlin, co-creating engaging and fun networking events that empower female-identified folks in career and personal growth. Connect with Halley on [LinkedIn](#).



### Lisa Bartlett (she/her)

#### Talent, Germany Director

Lisa combines recruitment with passion and purpose. She is the proud leader of a diverse and experienced team of recruitment consultants who help great brands across Europe scale and grow their digital teams. With a focus on widening the net and not

lowering the bar we are able to connect diverse and technically brilliant individuals with some of Europe's most innovative digital brands and projects.

Lisa is passionate about supporting strong female leadership and campaigning for greater representation of women within tech. When not recruiting, Lisa helps to organise and support the DEI Roundtable, a European community of like-minded digital professionals working to positively impact DEI barriers and mindsets through collective action. Connect with Lisa on [LinkedIn](#).



### Lauren Collins (she/her) Techspace, Community Lead

Lauren Collins is a Founder of Faces for Equality, a podcast and news source featuring interviews with benevolent individuals involved in global charitable organizations, and those with impactful humanitarian pursuits

She has a MSc in International Development from the University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies. She has worked for the U.N in Jordan, as a program coordinator in Education in Emergencies for Palestine refugee women and children, and for women with disabilities. She has also worked in Lebanon, focusing on women and girls in education. and in aid and delivery.

She is a proud feminist and this informs much of her work, often based around humanitarian crises that affect women and young girls. She has years of experience working amongst INGO's in the US, UK, and the Middle East. She currently works at Techspace as a Community Lead in Berlin, Germany. Connect with Lauren on [LinkedIn](#).



## Collaborators



Nichelle Appleby (she/her)

Independent Advisor, Work Imagined

As a career compensation professional and Dignity Advocate, Nichelle's mission is to reimagine work by helping to create accessible, transparent, and value-driven programs while supporting the development of healthy, high-performing teams. Nichelle supported the delivery of this report.