



WOMEN IN TECH INITIATIVE  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

## Fall 2019 Leadership Round Table

Event Summary Report  
December 2019



Berkeley  
**ENGINEERING**

## Executive Summary

Friday, December 14, 2019, marked the ninth Women in Tech Leadership Round Table, when industry leaders and academics met with the shared purpose of discussing programs to address equitable participation by women in tech. This session focused on attrition and retention, the increasing use of AI platforms in hiring, and valuing essential skills in selection and advancement, guided by data and action-oriented best practices.

Hosted at UC Berkeley by WITI@UC co-founders Tsu-Jae King Liu, Dean of the College of Engineering; Camille Crittenden, Executive Director of CITRIS and the Banatao Institute; WITI Director Jill Finlayson.



Group photo of the WITI@UC Leadership Round Table, December 2019

## Next Steps

1. **SAVE THE DATE: June 5, 2020** is the next WITI@UC Leadership Round Table.
2. **Leverage playbook** by Aubrey Blanche: [Balanced Teams Diversity Assessment](#)
3. **Investigate** how your company uses **AI for HR** and how biases are mitigated.
4. [Complete the Corporate Survey](#) if applicable and encourage other companies.
5. **Watch** [Women in Tech Symposium on Reimagining Cybersecurity](#) videos.
6. [Complete the Feedback Survey](#) to inform next Round Table agenda.
7. Support [MovingForward](#) to help make the fundraising safe for all founders.
8. Contribute to [150 Years of Berkeley Women](#) celebration and history project; check out the collection of [women in engineering from Berkeley Engineering](#).

## Key Insights

### Summary of Attrition and Retention Practices

- **Address “unfairness”** (being passed over for promotion, favoritism), a significant predictor of employee attrition that disproportionately affects women, by considering intersectionality, placing a higher value on essential (soft) skills, providing unconscious bias training, and clearly defining and measuring diversity metrics.
- Have aggressive **equal pay programs** (including bonuses) and provide **sponsorship** programs for high-potential female engineers. Provide support to help women establish authority, negotiate, and **advocate for themselves**.
- **Help leadership** exhibit more curiosity, humility, and empathy; reduce [pattern matching](#) (tendency to replicate existing power structures); and increase clarity of purpose beyond the self and company profits.
- **Emphasize and value essential skills** (formerly called soft skills) especially during interviews and evaluations. Advancement and financial rewards need to be aligned with these skills versus “number of widgets sold.”
  - Note: The fact that certain traits are characterized as “feminine” or “masculine” make adoption of blended leadership skills challenging.
- **Offer WarmLines**, anonymous channels to connect at-risk employees with HR can help with retention, especially for those under-represented in tech.
- **Target systemic changes**, instead of reflecting diversity & inclusion (D&I) goals through marketing alone. [Atlassian’s Balanced Teams Diversity Tool and Playbook](#) addresses diversity fatigue and how, despite good intent, efforts may not be effective. We need to:
  - Refocus on **balance** over diversity to avoid normalizing demographics already present while “othering” those considered diverse.
  - Use **belonging** instead of inclusion - it is more powerful because it starts with collective empathy.
  - Focus on the **team level**, not the company level, which is much more actionable - empowering teams results in system-wide change.
  - **Tracking** is key: track hiring (monthly), promotional velocity and pay equity (annually), belonging (biannually), and attrition (monthly).
  - Implement **gender-equitable performance evaluations**. Value extra work and essential skills, separate rating by component, and use the language of “growth mindset” to avoid use of stereotypes and bias.
  - **Overhaul interview process** - implement structured interviews to decrease unconscious biases, replace “culture-fit interviews” with “values interviews,” and prioritize balanced interview panels and slates of candidates.

- **Understand HR and AI technologies and algorithms used in recruiting.**
  - Current HR systems value **quantity** of skills, which puts less self-promoting applicants at a disadvantage. Consulting company **Meytier** (<https://meytier.com/>) strives to make assessment more **holistic** and to remove features that may increase bias and have little impact on predicting competency. They recognize **lifetime** experience rather than just recent experience, since women are more likely to experience career breaks.
  - **Hired** (<https://hired.com/>) seeks to provide recruiters with **bias alerts** and provide candidates with **transparency**, such as actual salary data since women tend to ask for lower salaries. It provides a “bias reduction mode,” which masks candidate photos and names so recruiters can focus on evaluating skills, and alerts recruiters when making an offer if it is below other offers they’ve made for the same role.
  - **HireVue’s** team (<https://www.hirevue.com/>) seeks to **assess talent by simulating actual job performance** using products, such as scenarios, games, coding challenges, and candidate-fit ranking. Tools analyze vocabulary, speech patterns, facial expressions, and code quality. To ensure **fairness**, current EEOC guidelines maintain that if the passing rate of any group is less than four-fifths of the top-scoring group, this may be evidence of adverse impact.
  - Overall, AI needs to support and have strong **oversight by people**. Transparency, explainable AI, inclusive training sets, testing, feedback, and teams trained to understand the issues regarding mitigation of bias are critical to ensure fair processes and to audit outcomes.
- **Build Emotional Intelligence (EI) and emotional regulation competencies** which are needed to encourage more effective communication, trust, and efficiency, and could improve D&I initiatives on a long-term basis.
  - Better EI can help managers reduce “tone policing” and improve feedback. (Data shows women receive less feedback than their male counterparts and the feedback they receive is often vague, inaccurate or not helpful.)
  - EI should be used to promote diplomacy and allyship.
- **Support Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to be effective.** Leaders should:
  - Allow employees to work in ERGs **during company time**. (Since members must contribute their time, this disproportionately affects women and other under-represented communities.)
  - Foster male **allyship**, cross-group/majority population participation.
  - **Foster empathy** with games like WAGES or virtual reality training.

- **Lend authority** to ERGs by involving C-suite company executives, which also increases the effectiveness of ERG work.
- Include and **reward** ERG participation on performance evaluations.
- Practice **bystander empowerment** by ensuring support for employees who take action against aggression or biases they see in the workplace.

## Meeting Minutes

### Agenda Overview

#### Session I: Connecting Data and Programs to Attrition and Retention

[Rachel Marcuse](#), [Readyset](#); [Leyla D Seka](#), formerly [Salesforce](#); [Rebecca Sherer](#), [Google](#)

**Presentation:** [Aubrey Blanche](#), Atlassian, [Balanced Teams Diversity Assessment tool](#)

#### Updates

#### Session II: AI and HR (how can it help/hurt inclusion/retention)

[Rena Nigam](#), CEO and Founder, [Meytier](#); [Katrina Wong](#), VP of Marketing, [Hired](#); [Lindsey Zuloaga](#), Director of Data Science, [Hirevue](#)

**Trending topics:** Emotional Intelligence - [Lily Jampol](#), [Readyset](#)

Recruiting Allies and Empathy - [Amy Cross](#), [Gender Fair](#)

### Summary

#### Session I: Connecting Data and Programs to Attrition and Retention

A panel on approaches, programs, and leadership necessary for balanced teams

**Rachel Marcuse, COO of ReadySet**, presented on how lack of fairness can lead to women and minorities leaving tech jobs, and offered approaches and strategies to prevent this.

Why should companies be motivated to implement retention initiatives? On the surface, hiring and onboarding can easily be a 6-month process, which can be costly in both time and money. Therefore, paying attention to attrition factors should be a major concern, even if solely from a business standpoint.

Marcuse outlined 6 main categories for why people leave companies: 1) their relationship with their manager, 2) lack of recognition or feedback, 3) overwork, 4) cultural reasons (toxicity, ambiguity), 5) lack of professional development and career advancement, and 6) other.

Unfairness was a significant predictor of employees leaving a position in the tech sector, and experiences of bullying were correlated with shorter employment times. Unfairness can manifest itself in several ways, including favoritism, microaggressions, unfair promotion of peers, and lack of transparency regarding compensation.

Specifically in tech, Marcuse summarized the experiences of 2,000 people surveyed in the randomized [2017 Tech Leavers Study](#) by the Kapor Center/The Harris Poll:

- 78% of employees experienced some form of unfair treatment
- Women of all backgrounds experienced or observed significantly more unfairness than men, with unfairness often being more pronounced in tech companies than non-tech companies
- 40% of employees indicated that unfairness influenced their decision, and men from under-represented communities were most likely to leave due to unfairness
- 1 out of 10 women were likely to receive unwanted sexual attention
- 1 out of 10 LGBTQ employees experienced bullying or public humiliation
- Under-represented people of color experienced stereotyping at twice the rate of white and Asian men and women
- 30% of unrepresented women of color were passed over for a promotion

An important question that Readysat considers is: How do fairness issues compound with the other major issues we see associated with attrition? What can be done to prevent this?

Marcuse recommends:

- Companies take an **intersectional approach**, taking into account multiple identities, which often go unmeasured in employment engagement surveys. How do we address social identities in this context? Currently the data generated from these surveys do not investigate the effects and relationships between these overlapping factors.
- More value should be placed on **essential skills** (formerly soft skills), which are often deprioritized in favor of technical skills. Anti-bias training should be implemented, especially at the managerial level.
- All metrics should be **defined and measured** in a non-ambiguous way. How exactly is diversity defined? What do we mean by equity? How do we tangibly measure these quantitatively and qualitatively?



**Leyla Seka, a former EVP at Salesforce**, shared her experiences on her journey to the boardroom, including insights regarding women in the tech workplace gained during her time leading D&I initiatives.

In March 2015, Seka identified a \$3 million gender-inclusion gap in the company. Women accepted their year-end bonuses with gratitude, while the men took the opportunity to negotiate a higher bonus. She noticed that meetings were often male-dominated and most women were talked over when they attempted to speak. She credits her own deep voice as a factor that enabled her to **establish authority** and **respect** in such spaces.

Seka also discussed the alienating experience of “only-ness” (being the only member from an ethnic or social identity in a team). This is far too often experienced by minority employees in the tech space due to the lack of integration of their culture in the company. Specifically, she acknowledged the psychological and social toll that burdens black women in the tech space as they serve as an ambassador for their community and are held to a higher standard.

Seka suggested developing basic training for women, especially those early in their career, to guide them in building “spiky backs” and being comfortable fighting for what they need. Other interventions Seka recommended include equal pay programs and mentorship programs for high potential female engineers, especially for those vying for senior positions.

Skills that Seka recommends women seek to master include:

- Establishing authority among peers and managers
- Negotiating without compromising
- Strengthening comfort with financial discussions, especially regarding compensation

**Rebecca Sherer, Google**, explored the evolving role of leadership and problem-solving in the 2020s and questions why little progress seems to be made on the topic of gender equity. She set the scene by stating that problems today are more complex than ever before and leadership must exhibit **more curiosity, humility, empathy**, and **clarity of purpose** beyond the self and company profits.

Sherer interviewed 30 executives from corporate boards to smaller companies and found that leadership training still emphasized traditional skills such as decisiveness, drive, and analytical thinking. Twenty-eight of 30 executives said that

even though they recognize the need for stronger “soft” skills, it is difficult to measure traits and their impacts, and subsequently **change cultural behavior**. The interviewees recounted stories when they felt compelled to exaggerate traditional leadership qualities to higher-ups in order to promote an individual, rather than sharing moments that demonstrated collaboration and empathy which the interviewee actually felt was the justification for promotion. Companies are not rewarding strong leaders and instead are promoting individuals who are not equipped with the skills necessary for solving the problems of today’s tech era. This frustrates forward-thinking leaders who then leave larger corporations to start their own companies.

Culture change around leadership is further hindered by the difficulty of admitting fault or accepting blame for perpetuating potentially harmful company practices. Individuals can be uncomfortable with acknowledging that their position may not actually have been a result of a meritocracy but rather due, in part, to existing privilege and bias.

Sherer noted that leadership styles have been gendered, with traditional leadership qualities such as decisiveness seen as masculine while essential (soft) skills like collaboration, communication, and less traditional, non-technical abilities are commonly associated with femininity. These skills are often not emphasized as highly as they should be during job recruitment and evaluation.

## Gender and gendering: a few caveats

### Gender vs gendering

- Gender = identity, personal  
(*man, woman, non-binary, etc*)
- Gendering = collective and unconscious act of assigning gender to anything, animate or inanimate  
(*colors, jobs, shapes, toys, behaviors, names, etc*)

### We are NOT

- Describing reality or attributing skills  
(*e.g. “Only women have these; and only men those”*)
- Declaring or prescribing a preferred way of being  
(*e.g. “Women should be this; men that”*)

### We ARE saying

- Set of traits we need to lead in complexity have been gendered as FEMININE
- Leadership has been gendered as MASCULINE
- This makes it difficult to integrate “new” traits we need into leadership

Figure 1: Gender and gendering (Rebecca Sherer, Google 2019)



Finally, Sherer suggests the following to support leaders of tomorrow in managing risk and uncertainty:

- Adapt a complex leadership palette, and **encourage cognitive diversity**
- Exhibit and encourage less typical leadership qualities
- Establish means of rewarding and recognizing such qualities

**Reuben Miller, Intel**, discussed Intel's successful attrition prevention initiative called Warmline. The Intel WarmLine is an anonymous, confidential phone service that allows employees who are considering leaving the company to request resources or report any issues they are experiencing to a representative from the human resources department, who then suggests solutions or takes actions to solve the problem internally. Over 60% of WarmLine callers are employees of color and the initiative has an **86% retention rate** among the 10,000 cases they handled last year.

### Session I Q&A

During a Q&A panel with Rachel Marcuse, Leyla Seka, Rebecca Sherer, and Reuben Miller, moderated by Jill Finlayson, the audience asked about the effectiveness of exit surveys, the role of the Human Resources department in attrition, and retention initiatives that secure effective leaders.

### Key Takeaways:

- Exit surveys are administered too late to provide actionable, relevant insights; take employee satisfaction surveys regularly instead.
- Create multiple channels for **feedback** and set **clear expectations** for anonymity and expectations of confidentiality for each.
- Managers who are unaware of their employee's desire to leave the company should be evaluated for **leadership effectiveness**.
- There is a disconnect between intrinsic acceptance of the business case for diversity and actually building D&I alignment and **accountability practices**.
- Company executives should be **trained to make fair hiring decisions**.
- **Maintain a diverse set of candidates** from the initial pool to the final slate. (*"I am not interviewing anyone until there is a diverse pool."*)
- Employees and students should be taught effective **self advocacy**.

**Aubrey Blanche (aubreyblanche.com)**, **Atlassian**, shared [Atlassian's Balanced Teams Diversity Tool and Playbook](#). Atlassian is an international company that creates software development and collaboration tools, and as a result, is in a unique position to study workplaces and teams.

According to Blanche, who uses a systems-first approach, “inequity is a design choice.” Intention is rendered useless without behavior and action. To back up their stated value for diversity, executives need to take ownership of their businesses. Instead of using D&I budget toward marketing, companies should target structural change. D&I efforts in communications and branding have been important in the past, but people with operational capacity are needed more for this next stage.

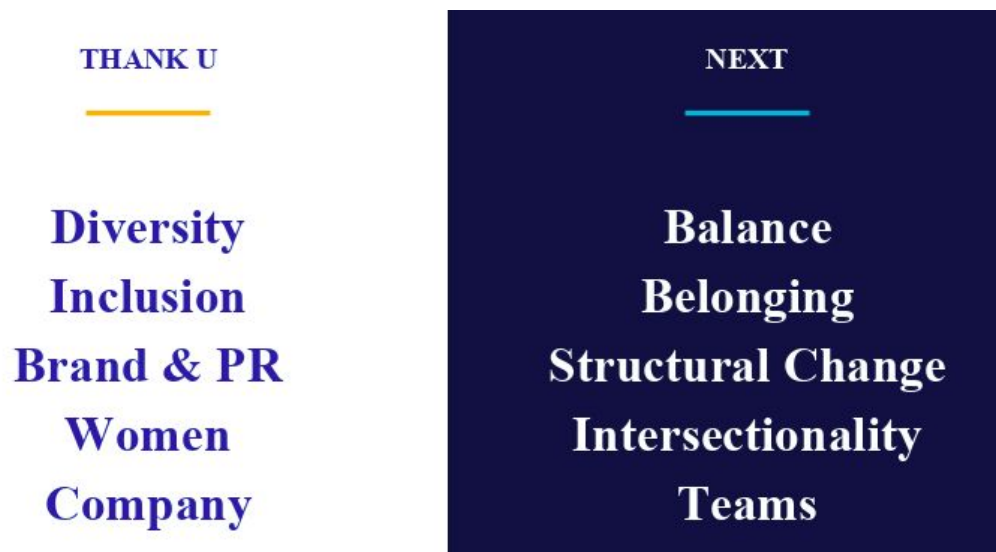


Figure 2: thank u, next. (Aubrey Blanche, Atlassian 2019)

Per [Atlassian's 2018 State of Diversity Report](#), from 2017 to 2018, there has been:

- An increase in companies and executives saying they care about D&I
- A 10% decrease in companies with a formal D&I program
- A 50% decrease in individuals engaging in behaviors or activities related to D&I

**“Diversity fatigue” is real.** “I have been trying, but it’s not working,” can be a common refrain within companies, but one reason may simply be that companies are not focusing on the right ideas or implementing them in the right order. Another reason is that the whole D&I field needs an update:

**“Diversity” to “Balance”:** Even globally, “diversity” is commonly associated with two groups: white women and African Americans, which enables corporate white feminism (in which “diverse gender” only refers to cisgender economically privileged women), and normalizes the demographics already present while “othering” the subsequently “diverse” candidates.

**“Inclusion” to “Belonging”:** “Inclusion” is also linguistically problematic because it is an assimilationist concept. Instead, people want to be part of systems with designs that consider them – systems where they belong. Belonging is more powerful because it starts with collective empathy.

**“Company” to “Teams”:** Striving for belonging forces us to go back to the design phase of our approach and understand the experience we are trying to create. Part of this is focusing on building “balanced teams,” where instead of using the standard of gender, we use an operational framework for intersectionality.

Focusing on balance and belonging at the team level is much more actionable in a variety of ways. For example, as a middle manager, **you may not be able to “solve sexism,” but you can implement a “no interruptions” rule.** Additionally, teams are a “standard unit of analysis.” You cannot compare Google and Atlassian as companies, but you can compare their individual software engineering teams. And eventually, empowering teams results in system-wide change.

**Actionable insight requires measurement.** At a high level, track hiring (monthly), promotional velocity and pay equity (annually by program), inclusion (biannually), and attrition (monthly). Take note of trends (e.g. belonging (or lack thereof) is the most predictive variable for attrition).

## Gender-Equitable Performance Assessment



Figure 3: Gender-Equitable Performance Assessment (Aubrey Blanche, Atlassian 2019)

Atlassian has also fundamentally overhauled the way the company recruits. Instead of concluding that not enough underrepresented candidates could be found, they instead revised the boolean strings used on job platforms to be more robust. They

utilized sourcing libraries and researched statistically common Black last names. They searched the Census, SSNs, sororities, and hashtags. They implemented structured interviews to decrease unconscious biases, replaced “culture fit interviews” with “values interviews,” and prioritized balanced panels and slates.

Atlassian’s tool also facilitates creating gender-equitable performance assessment, which measures interpersonal behavior (which often includes the “extra work” that goes unrewarded), weighs each component separately (reducing the “brilliant jerk” bonus), and monitors language used to be less gendered and more aligned with a growth mindset (excellent, great, or off year). It turns out that people trust algorithms when they think they can influence the output.

For Atlassian, this has resulted in:

- 20.1% women within technical roles
- 30.0% women within Atlassian overall
- 30.1% women within senior leadership

When companies design for structural equity, they can account for equity in multiple groups at the same time.

The link to Blanche’s slide deck can be found [here](#).

### **Lunch Session - Updates**

**Dean Tsu-Jae King Liu** introduced a [new corporate survey](#) to encourage companies to track and share metrics regarding diversity and inclusion initiatives within their organization. While she notes that many companies are reluctant to share this information, the survey is intended to encourage engineering students to consider D&I benefits when evaluating potential employers. Dean Liu hopes to make the survey mandatory for all companies recruiting students on the Berkeley campus.

➡ [Fill out the survey for your company](#) and encourage others to fill out the survey.

**CITRIS Executive Director Camille Crittenden** shared information on the fourth annual Women in Tech Symposium: Reimagining Cybersecurity for All on March 6th, 2020 at Sibley Auditorium, UC Berkeley. Cyber attacks may cost the global economy up to \$2.1 trillion by 2019. Jobs in information security are projected to grow 37 percent between 2012 and 2022. Despite these opportunities, women are vastly underrepresented in the field, holding only 18 percent of cybersecurity positions. At the same time, women face greater risks and threats of bullying and harassment on social media platforms. The panels discuss some of these growing challenges as well

as how we can engage the most inclusive talent pool, confident that we are mitigating risk, encouraging safe practices, and developing the next generation of cybersecurity professionals.

➡ [Watch the sessions here](#) or learn more about this event on the [WITI website](#).

**Cheryl Sew Hoy of #MovingForward**, shares her personal experience with sexual harassment while seeking funding for her organization, Magic, which revealed to her the lack of protection against harassment and discrimination from venture capitalists faced by entrepreneurs. Subsequently, she created MovingForward to urge VC firms to establish anti-harassment policies that protect entrepreneurs against such power imbalances on their journeys. After 1.5 years, Moving Forward also offers workshops for best practices in establishing new policies and 1 in 4 venture capitalists in the United States have participated in this initiative.

➡ Learn more about [MovingForward](#).

**Sheila Humphreys, EECS Director Emerita of Diversity, representing the 150 Years of Berkeley Women project**, introduced the celebration and history project to mark the 150th anniversary of UC Berkeley admitting female students to the university. Specifically, Humphreys introduced the 150W History Archive, a crowdsourced database for recognizing notable female Berkeley graduates and their contributions.

➡ Submit women representatives of the Berkeley legacy [here](#) and visit the 150W [website](#).

## **Session II: AI Platforms in Hiring**

### **Startups confronting the issues of fairness, bias, and diversity in hiring data**

**Rena Nigam is the Founder/CEO of Meytier**, an AI-based startup focused on helping firms find qualified women candidates using analytics engines, job board platforms, and candidate engagement models.

Diverse firms make strong companies, but many firms struggle to hire and retain women. Several factors contribute to this issue, but one is the reality that women do not look for jobs the same way that men do. Women typically do not exaggerate their skills and tend to [underplay their accomplishments compared to men](#). They do not [waste time applying for a job they are not qualified for](#) and as a result, they will not apply for a job unless they check every box in the list of requirements, while men will apply if they meet just 60% of requirements. Additionally, many [job descriptions are gendered](#) which can discourage women from applying and amplify inequity.

# UNIQUE AI & ANALYTICS BASED INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Engine to normalize women's understatement of skills, linguistic "underplay", career breaks, etc. – i.e. *"Discover more candidates that might fit"*

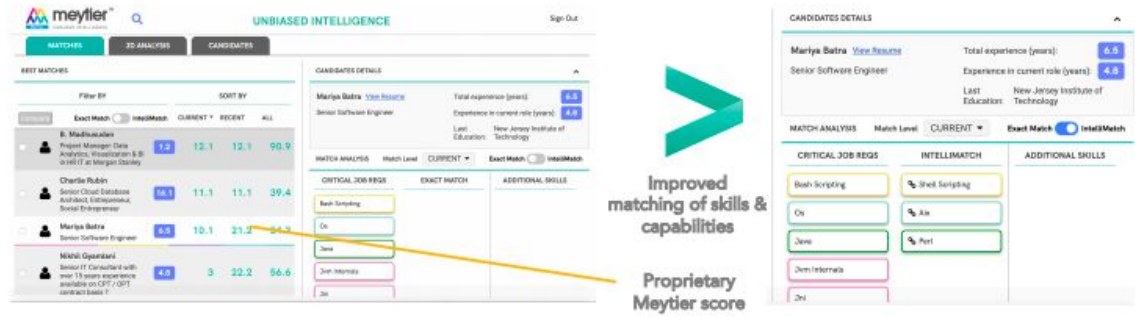


Figure 4: Normalizing Intelligence Engine (Rena Nigam, Meytier 2019)

Because of this, Nigam believes that the gender imbalance isn't due to a lack of pipeline, but rather to the fact that engaging women in the standard fashion is ineffective. Current automated resume screeners favor resumes that claim a certain amount of skills, use a particular type of language, and contain specific keywords, which often put women who tend to be more modest applicants at a disadvantage.

Meytier attempts to improve recruitment ratios not only by building a tool that normalizes the type of language used in resumes, but also one that recognizes lifetime experience rather than just recent experience, taking into account that women are more likely to experience career breaks. The purpose of the holistic platform is to match qualified women who wouldn't match job criteria using traditional metrics.

Meytier is also devoted to addressing underrepresentation in data, running tests and audits on bias in their models, and maintaining a diverse team composition themselves.

The link to Nigam's slide deck can be found [here](#).

**Katrina Wong is VP of Marketing at Hired**, a two-sided marketplace aimed at removing barriers for candidates and employers in the recruiting process.



Hiring will always be a human-based process. Hired's purpose is to improve the experience for candidates and alert employers to possible bias. The Hired platform currently features 10,000 companies, 3 million job seekers, and \$85-billion-worth of offers. One valuable service Hired offers is **data transparency**. Each quarter, Hired publishes salary reports of actual salary data, as opposed to other sources that are based on surveys. Users can find salary trends in different markets, including software engineering salaries, down to specific skill levels.

Today, most employers will screen candidates based on education level, work experience, and job titles. Hired envisions a world where hiring would be based solely on skills, where a skills-based resume would be the leading indicator of whether or not a candidate would be able to perform at a job. According to Hired's data, 1 in 5 software engineers on the platform are self-taught, so it's increasingly important to eliminate traditional biases in order to democratize opportunities.

Hired has found that 61% of the time, **women ask for lower salaries than men**. Hired has a "bias reduction mode," which masks candidate photos and names, so recruiters can focus on evaluating skills and experience to make decisions during sourcing and screening stages. A **"salary bias alert"** alerts **recruiters currently making an offer** if that offer is not within market salary range, or below other offers they've made to the same role. Since implemented, close to 9,000 alerts have been issued.

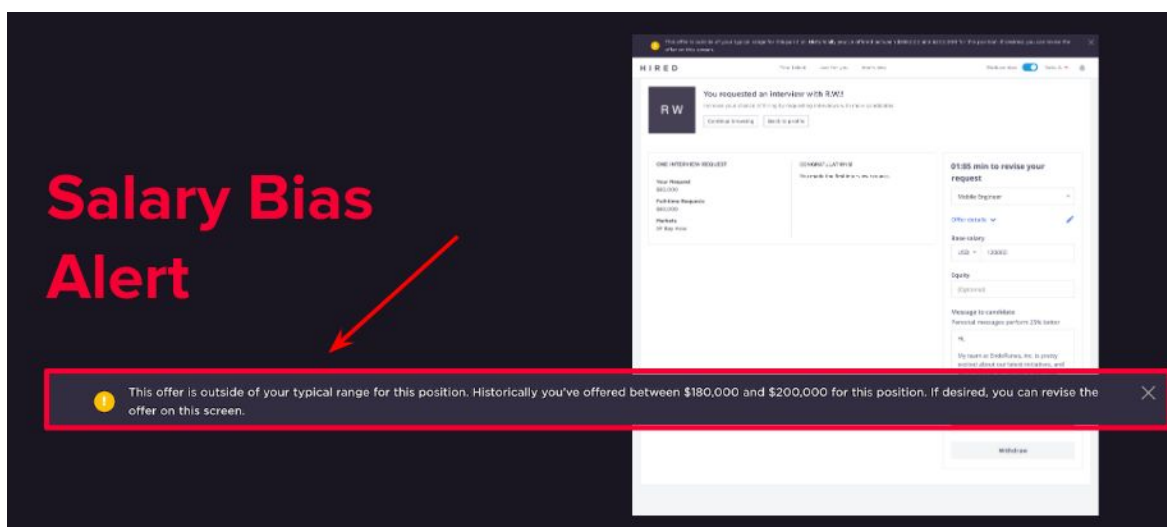


Figure 5: Salary Bias Alert Feature (Katrina Wong, Hired 2019)

With their data, Hired has been able to promote further awareness, spurring a campaign called #NothingLess ([www.nothingless.co](http://www.nothingless.co)), and creating a documentary screening across multiple countries, in 19 events and 11 cities.

The link to Wong's slide deck can be found [here](#).

**Lindsey Zuloaga is Director of Data Science at HireVue**, originally an on-demand video interviewing platform, now a platform that aims to transform traditional recruiting, interviewing, and training, focusing on expression and personality as opposed to just a resume. Zuloaga leads a team of data scientists who work closely with engineers, developers, and psychologists to build and optimize algorithms that analyze vocabulary, speech patterns, facial expressions, and code quality. HireVue hosts a suite of products, including scenarios, games, coding challenges, and candidate-fit ranking, built to assess talent by simulating actual job performance. HireVue uses a competency-based model that measures competencies most relevant to job-specific performance.

While also currently working on off-the-shelf solutions to predict types of job-related competencies more generally, HireVue mainly works with clients using custom-built models for each particular role, based on past performance data given by the client combined with analysis by industrial-organizational psychologists.

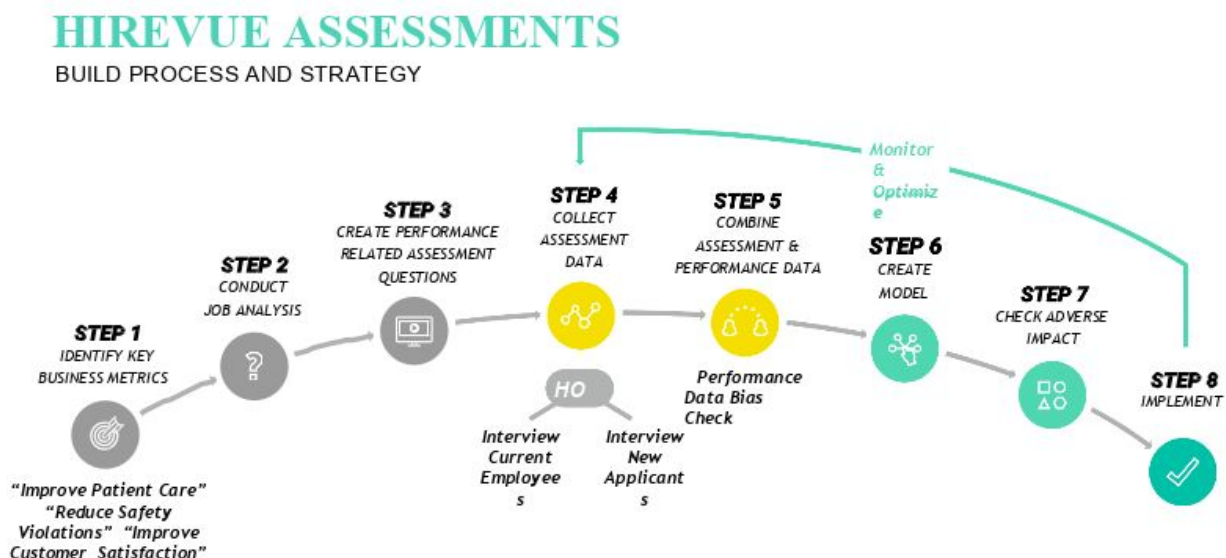


Figure 6: HireVue Assessments (Lindsey Zuloaga, HireVue 2019)

A consideration for algorithmic fairness underlines the process of model building at HireVue. Given the many definitions of fairness, the company claims it is impossible to satisfy all at once. Current EEOC guidelines maintain that if the passing rate of any group is less than four-fifths of the top-scoring group, it may be evidence of adverse impact.

HireVue's bias-mitigation strategy involves taking the same data used to build an algorithm that predicts a business metric or job-related competency, and testing if it can be used to predict identifiers like gender or race. By removing features that have a large effect on bias but little effect on predicting competency, they can ensure that only the most relevant features are used in the model while minimizing adverse impact. Models are then continuously evaluated.

HireVue also increases transparency by allowing both candidates and recruiters to send and receive detailed feedback; tests its platform on people with disabilities; educates its clients on best practices; and has published its AI principles [here](#).

The link to Zuloaga's slide deck can be found [here](#).

## **Session II Q&A**

In a Q&A session with Nigam, Wong, and Zuloaga, attendees asked questions regarding what would happen if candidates attempted to inflate their skills in order “to game” the job-matching algorithms on AI-based platforms, if behavioral interviewing was still relevant, if historical inequalities could still be prevented while using past performance data, how to fix underrepresentation in data, industry regulations, and the potential of AI-based approaches in the future.

### **Key Takeaways:**

- At HireVue, they often can detect skills-inflation because the skills often do not match the job description. The HireVue process is human-based: “Talent Success Managers” reach out to candidates, and employers assess in person.
- Explainability is important, but transparency in algorithm development should not enable exploitation. Using a rubric, detecting similarities, and rewarding dissimilarity, may be part of the solution.
- Behavioral interviews are still relevant, especially for customer-facing jobs.
- Platforms need to continuously check their data and algorithms for adverse impact in order to prevent perpetuation of historical biases.

- If there is underrepresentation in data, firms need to be transparent and admit that there is not enough data, instead of using data that will not provide the right results.
- The definition of fairness needs to be industry-specific, and industries should create standards that are continuously updated. EEOC regulations are old and only pertain to pass/fail outcomes rather than rankings. Algorithmic fairness only recently became a salient topic and standard in education.
- Entry-level outcomes are improving, but much work is still needed at the executive level in analyzing performance reviews, linguistic underplay, and biases.
- Natural Language Processing (NLP) is getting better and more robust (especially with the advent of BERT, Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers). The training sets are also more diverse.
- The culture of the company is still very important and cannot be replaced by AI solutions.
- Companies looking to build or use HR-related algorithms need to ask: “What is the training set? Is it diverse? What are the outputs?” Data scientists need to be a part of the conversation to scrutinize the process. A team trained to understand these problems is crucial - the startup world often tends to take shortcuts (not hire the data team, push tools out fast in order to test them), but there are too many possible consequences.
- AI-based HR solutions have huge potential to create positive impact as long as they are used wisely. Leveraging data to effect change and create awareness already helps shift perspectives.
- Hiring is only a slice of the whole work-life picture.

## **Trending Topics**

### **Emotional intelligence and empathy in the workplace**

**Lily Jampol, People Scientist and DEI Strategist at ReadySet**, applies behavioral economics to company success, identifying emotional intelligence as a key factor to improving leadership effectiveness and employee diversity.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the awareness of one’s emotions as well as the emotions of others, and emotional regulation refers to someone’s response to stress, including suppressing or internally processing emotions. Exhibiting high EI in the workplace would encourage more **effective communication, trust, and efficiency**, and could improve D&I initiatives on a long term basis.

Jampol found that women in companies received less feedback than their male counterparts and that the feedback they received was often inaccurate or not helpful. Many managers reported their fear of being “too harsh” or assumed women could not handle criticism. Similarly, emotional regulation can have varying effects on different ethnic or social groups due to different cultural expectations of power and expression. This could also translate into **tone policing**, such as if a person who is rightfully upset is told to stifle their anger, which is dangerous and unhealthy for all parties. Instead, Jampol emphasizes that EI should be used to promote diplomacy and allyship among members of a company.

**Amy Cross, Founder of GenderFair**, discussed the effects and setbacks of **Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)** in tech companies.

Cross pointed out that ERGs are not usually effective since members must contribute their personal time and are often composed of all-female members, lacking needed male allyship. Encouraging more empathetic mindsets through games like WAGES or virtual reality training, giving authority to ERGs by involving C-suite company executives, and allowing employees to work in ERGs during company time would increase the effectiveness of such groups. This valuable work supporting ERGs should be included and valued on performance evaluations.

Employees claim to lack the knowledge and tools to fulfill the role of an empathetic ally. Companies must practice **bystander empowerment** and ensure support for employees who take action against aggression or biases they see in the workplace.

## GENDER FAIR

### LEVERAGES DATA TO ACCELERATE EQUALITY.

**Gender Fair rates companies on their fairness practices for leadership, employee policies, advertising and philanthropy.** The Gender Fair mark makes it easy to know which companies value equality – and which don't.

- > Transparent data analytics inform consumers, employees and investors that a company is certified to have best-in-class fairness policies.
- > Our free iOS **app** allows you to search 1,000+ brands for top scorers.
- > Metrics are derived from the UN Women's Empowerment Principles.
- > Only 16% of companies currently meet the standard for equality.

Figure 7: Gender Fair (Gender Fair 2020)

## Resources

- **Session I Resources**

- [Atlassian Balanced Team Tool](#)
- Great Places to Work reports: [Women in Work](#) and [Managing Millennials](#)

- **Session II Resources**

- [All the Ways Hiring Algorithms Can Introduce Bias](#), Harvard Business Review, May, 2019
- [Who's to Blame for a Biased Algorithm?](#), Andrea Kropp, Gartner, May 4, 2018
- [Better Allies](#) and [Male Champions of Change](#)

- **Additional Resources**

- Five findings on the importance of belonging: [EY Belonging Barometer study](#)
- Kapor Center: [Leaky Tech Pipeline](#) and [The Leaky Tech Pipeline Report](#) (2018)
- [Can We Keep Our Biases from Creeping into AI?](#) Kriti Sharma, Harvard Business Review, February 09, 2018
- [Want Less-Biased Decisions? Use Algorithms](#). Alex P. Miller, Harvard Business Review, July 26, 2018
- [Help Wanted: An Examination of Hiring Algorithms, Equity, and Bias](#), Upturn, December 2018