

# Women in Digital Enterprise: Career Top Tips



The Corporate  
IT Forum.



### **Purpose**

To provide practical advice to women to enhance their career prospects.

This guide has been based predominantly on the work of the Corporate IT Forum's Gender Balance Committee.

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Committee



“The secrets to women’s success in IT are very similar. Women have a future in technology because they want it.”

**Joanna Poplawska**  
Executive Director  
The Corporate IT Forum

## Your Career

A UK survey by Deloitte<sup>1</sup> states that 37 percent of women in IT say that they have been passed over for promotion because of their gender.

Only 14% of CIOs in the UK are women.

Women made up 29% of hires to UK boards last year, down from 32.1% in 2014.

The statistics are not great.

And yet many women technologists say they have never experienced any discrimination. More tellingly, women prefer to be recognised for their skills and ideas than singled out for being women.

The digital revolution, characterised by machine learning, big data, robotics and Cloud Computing, will



“The tech industry may have a problem with women, but women don’t have a problem with technology”

**Ann Friedman,  
Writer  
The Washington Post**

contribute to enhancing women’s careers. Thus, how should women use those opportunities to their full potential?

Combining social skills with good education and advanced digital skills allows women to take full advantage of digital transformation.

Digital technology has enabled the rise of the flexible workplace. Employees are no longer permanently tied to working in the office, even if the trade-off is being contactable via email and mobile phone outside working hours.

This is good news for women who are still more involved in caring for their families than men.

Let’s plan how to capitalise on new opportunities, your skills and experience to move into a better role or maximise your employability.

## Start with the list

Whether you are just at the start of your career, or if you are trying to change your career path, the first step is to understand what job would be the right fit for you. Let's start with a simple idea – make a list of factors that are important to you.

Attribute points to each of the factors that will allow you to score your potential career choices against your list of priorities.

Factor	Points	Job scoring
Salary		
Type of Role		
My Interests		
Professional Advancement		
Independence		
Home-based		
Office-based		
Location		
Flexible hours		
Job Security		
Other women in the team		



“If you don’t plan your own life, chances are you’ll fall into someone else’s plan. And guess what they have planned for you? Not much!”

**Jim Roth**  
Author

## **Can you plan your career nowadays?**

We are living in a time of unprecedented change. The days of long-term strategic plans are gone. Organisations and employees must reinvent themselves frequently to stay competitive.

Given the pace of change, it is often really hard to design a long-term career path. Those who adopt a flexible mindset are going to be at a clear advantage to seize opportunities along their career journey. However, do not abandon career planning – your plans just need to focus on different elements that better align with today’s context.

Think about one year first.

Do you need to



“I always did something I was a little not ready to do. I think that’s how you grow”

**Marissa Mayer**  
CEO  
Yahoo!

- > find out more about opportunities you have not considered in the past?  
**Yes**                      **No**
- > talk to people who are in your sought-after roles  
**Yes**                      **No**
- > talk to your “support team” - your family, your mentor, a coach, your friends?  
**Yes**                      **No**
- > list things that you don’t want to negotiate  
**Yes**                      **No**
- > list opportunities you would like to have  
**Yes**                      **No**



“You have agency over every reaction, in your work or personal life. It’s incredibly empowering to know that, and to really take advantage of that”

**Kerry Steib**  
Director  
Spotify

## Your very own Personal Development Plan

Remember, **jobs are owned by the company, you own your career.**

You don’t have to move to a new job or company to advance your career. Chances are, your current employer offers challenges and opportunities you haven’t yet tapped. Digital organisations are recruiting for a wide range of specialist skills, from DevOps to project management, service design and more. They are looking for people at all levels of experience, too, from senior leaders to apprentices.

So where do you start?

One of the useful tools to drive your career forward is a Personal Development Plan (PDP). If your organisation does not have one,



“I know society says you should be a certain way, but I think [you should] stop and look at what is your natural way of being who you are.”

**Arie Horie**  
**Founder**  
**Women’s Startup Lab**

there is nothing stopping you from constructing one yourself.

It does not matter where and when you start; just do it!

- › Outline your desired career options
- › Define your strengths and your weaknesses
- › Identify the people, resources and support required to enable you to progress
- › Keep a record of all of your accomplishments, big and small; remember, if possible, to attach the back-up evidence (e.g. an email complimenting your service). This will also help you when updating your resume.

Personal Development Plan			
My strengths			
My limitations			
My personal preferences			
My Goals	Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term
The skills, knowledge and experience that I will need	Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term
Action Plan – how will I get them			

Experiential	Social	Formal

You might want to adopt the 70:20:10 Rule, to specifically plan your skills development.

The 70-20-10 Rule states that:

- > 70% of your learning happens through your daily tasks (experiential).
- > 20% of learning is social. It happens with and through other people, like co-workers and networking platforms.
- > 10% of learning is formal. It happens through structured training courses and programs.

You can apply this rule and come up with your own list of learning options. Use the table to the left.



“I never believed I could or couldn't do something because I was a woman. Focus on being the best that you can possibly be. All people I've worked with, they are looking for people who are the best at what they do”

**Privahani Bradoo**  
**CEO**  
**Blue Oak**

## **Be open, flexible and challenge yourself**

Special projects, off-shore appointments, or sideways steps can make you progress faster.

Taking the time to expand and deepen relationships will maximise your options - other people will help you see your career path through different lenses. Consider their views and comments.

## **Voice your opinions and be visible**

Internal and external meetings often present opportunities for greater interaction and visibility, so let your voice be heard. Share your ideas, volunteer to make presentations, speak up and be more visible in the company as a result.



“True leadership stems from individuality that is honestly and sometimes imperfectly expressed... Leaders should strive for authenticity over perfection.”

**Sheryl Sandberg**  
**COO**  
**Facebook**

## “Glass ceiling” or “sticky floor”?

You may at some point in your career feel like you’ve hit a glass ceiling, with company processes and culture holding you back. Maybe you are in a “sticky floor” than a “glass ceiling” situation? “Sticky floor” is based on our own feelings and assumptions that we can’t get ahead, so think if you need to alter your behavior and achieve more.

Speak-up, embrace ‘good enough’, not perfection, and don’t be afraid to fail. Believe that there is no glass ceiling and apply for the job/development opportunities that you want.

- › Don’t be put off by the language used in communications that is not “women friendly”



### Common mistakes made at a job interview

- › Over-explaining why you lost your last job
- › Not showing enough interest or enthusiasm
- › Not conducting adequate research about a potential employer
- › Trying to be all things to all people
- › Failing to ask for the job

- › Look at the company's mission, value and goals to really understand its culture.
- › If you believe that you do not have all the listed skills/requirements, focus on demonstrating your learning potential. It's unlikely that any candidate would be a perfect fit. Demonstrate skills you learned on the job.
- › Reach out for more information; ask for more details
- › The purpose of a CV is to get you an interview. Managers and recruiters are scan-reading (at least, initially), so make it easy for them by presenting clear, relevant information which matches your skills and experience to the job



“Find out what you like doing best and get someone to pay you for doing it.”

**Katherine Whitehorn**  
Journalist

- › Make sure that your digital profile on social media and your CV match
- › Don't be discouraged if you are going to be the only woman on the team. Your job is to be successful in your new role and you will add huge value to that team with different ways of thinking
- › Don't get discouraged if you don't get instant results.
- › If you're getting interviews, your CV is working. Interview experience will help you, and it is only a matter of time and patience before you succeed.
- › Be prepared for other peoples' comments and opinions, learn but do not allow them to destroy your inner confidence. Yes, you will get feedback and some of it might be negative. That's ok.



“Many companies offer formal mentoring programs but if they don’t, be proactive and find one yourself. Identify someone in your workplace you respect and admire, approach them directly and ask them if they would be interested in mentoring you.”

**Sharon Jones**  
Head of IT Security  
Amey

## Mentoring

Mentoring is not just a great idea; it is a proven concept.

As a mentee, you receive practical guidance from those who have most likely experienced what you are experiencing. As a mentor, helping someone develop their skills and determine their career path can provide you with a new perspective and fresh enthusiasm, and you will learn more about yourself in the process.

If your organisation has an internal mentoring scheme, take advantage of it.

There is also value to be had from getting a mentor from outside the organisation.



“My mentor said, ‘Let’s go and do it,’ not ‘You go do it.’ How powerful when someone says, ‘Let’s!’”

**Jim Rohn**  
Author and motivational

Be proactive and explore different possibilities.

- › Find people to challenge and inspire you
- › Identify someone within your organisation to be a sponsor and demonstrate to your sponsor your capabilities
- › Get feedback as often as possible
- › Be very clear on time commitment and objectives
- › Prepare before each session so you use your mentor’s time most effectively.
- › As a senior employee, try reverse mentoring to refresh your knowledge

### **Mentee Expectations Form**

By clarifying your own expectations, you will be able to communicate them more effectively to your mentors. You

can use the below worksheet to develop an understanding of what you expect to gain from your mentoring relationships.

<b>The reasons I want to be mentored are to:</b>			
Receive encouragement and support <input type="checkbox"/>			
Increase my confidence when dealing with professionals <input type="checkbox"/>			
Challenge myself to achieve new goals and explore alternatives <input type="checkbox"/>			
Gain a realistic perspective of the field <input type="checkbox"/>			
Get advice on how to balance work and other responsibilities, and set priorities <input type="checkbox"/>			
Gain knowledge of “do”s and “don’t”s <input type="checkbox"/>			
Learn how to benefit from a network of talented peers <input type="checkbox"/>			
Other <input type="text"/>			
<b>I hope that my mentor and I will:</b>			
Tour my mentor’s workplace <input type="checkbox"/>		Go to events, such as workshops, together <input type="checkbox"/>	
Meet over coffee <input type="checkbox"/>		Other <input type="text"/>	
<b>I hope that my mentor and I will discuss:</b>			
Career options and job search preparation <input type="checkbox"/>		How to network <input type="checkbox"/>	
The realities of the workplace <input type="checkbox"/>		How to balance work and family life <input type="checkbox"/>	
My mentor’s work <input type="checkbox"/>		Personal goals and life circumstances <input type="checkbox"/>	
Technical and related field issues <input type="checkbox"/>		Other <input type="text"/>	
<b>The things I feel are off limits in my mentoring relationship include:</b>			
Disclosing our conversations to others <input type="checkbox"/>		Using non-public places for meetings <input type="checkbox"/>	
Sharing aspects of our private lives <input type="checkbox"/>		Other <input type="text"/>	
<b>The amount of time I can spend with my mentor is likely to be, on average:</b>			
1 hour <input type="checkbox"/>	2 hours <input type="checkbox"/>	3 hours <input type="checkbox"/>	4 hours <input type="checkbox"/>
Each week <input type="checkbox"/>		Every other week <input type="checkbox"/>	
		Per month <input type="checkbox"/>	



“I’ve failed over and over  
and that’s why I  
succeeded.”

**Michael Jordan**

The Corporate IT Forum runs a cross-organisational Mentoring Scheme. Find out more by contacting us.

## **Life outside work**

You can find plenty of interesting opportunities away from work in nonprofit, religious, social and professional organisations, schools, sport teams and family life that translate to valuable professional experience.

For example, you can:

- › Practice your presentation skills at one of the Forum’s workshops
- › Join a local speakers club  
Not got one? Set one up!



“Life doesn’t always present you with the perfect opportunity at the perfect time.

Opportunities come when you least expect them, or when you’re not ready for them.

Opportunities, the good ones, they’re messy and confusing and hard to recognise. They’re risky. They challenge you.”

**Susan Wojcicki**  
CEO  
Youtube

- › Join one of many women’s networks
- › Run a charity project

## **If you don’t want to change your job, seize other opportunities**

Career development isn’t just about moving on. You should still focus on seizing opportunities where you are now.

- › Have different to-do lists (high priority, large tasks, just-do-it items, personal development focused activities)



“People with goals succeed because they know where they’re going.”

**Earl Nightingale**  
US author, radio presenter  
and motivational speaker

- › Understand business strategy / priorities and how your skillset fits
- › Book time to get involved in new things that will help with your career development
- › Do more, don’t wait to be approached
- › Don’t bypass any opportunities – try anything!
- › Give and receive feedback
- › Promote yourself. Ensure that your leader knows the details of your successes.
- › People often promote capable individuals who they know and like.

Career advancement doesn’t just happen by clocking in time. You need to increase your value over time by exploring different opportunities.

- › Spot gaps – define the role you want and make a case



“Don’t sit there and wait for someone else to do it for you. You do it – and it makes all the difference!”

**Jacky Lamb**  
Head of IT  
Novae

- › Build & share knowledge – you can start by doing the filing / information management / intranet
- › Build your professional profile – attend team events / socials / volunteer
- › Be an innovator – have ideas and float them. One or more may stick!

## Networking

Decide who you need to help you. It's incredibly beneficial to your career to broaden your network outside your immediate team. If you build relationships with colleagues in other teams or organisations, it'll give you a support network you can turn to for career advice. Having a good network can also help you do your job better, because you are better connected to the wider business.



“Networking is marketing. Marketing yourself, marketing your uniqueness, marketing what you stand for.”

**Christine Comaford-Lynch**

In the old days, many male leaders built up their careers through traditional forms of networking, such as referrals via the old-school-tie network, club memberships, inviting prospective clients to lunches, playing golf and attending sporting events.

Social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook are effective networking tools, irrespective of gender. Anyone can use these platforms to join discussion groups, keep in touch with colleagues and clients.

Digital doesn't mean that the conventional modes of networking are now redundant, but there are other tools that can be influential in promoting your expertise and knowledge.

## Defining your Network

Who are the people you can help you get what you want? – Sponsors, Mentors, Support Team, etc.

Who might try and block you?

What do you know about them?

How will you engage and enroll them?

What conversations will you have and when?



“You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing you cannot do.”

**Eleanor Roosevelt**

## **Invest in your development**

Take every opportunity to continuously learn and stay curious.

Invest your time in conscious learning and do not hesitate to ask your organisation to support you.



“By having the courage to take the first step into rooms, circles, and conversations where you may feel like you don’t belong, you also open the door for others to contribute their diverse perspectives, creating more meaningful, collaborative solutions for today and beyond.”

**Kim Vu**  
VP  
Bank of America

## How can the Corporate IT Forum help you?

- › Participate in the Forum’s Mentoring Scheme
- › Attend future Forum Gender Balance events. Learn and network
- › Join the Forum’s Gender Balance Committee to guide the content of future activity to the benefit of you and your organisation
- › Access the online resources that formed the basis for this guide
- › Ask to be introduced to those who delivered presentations at Forum events for any further guidance



“Surround yourself with people who support you and get involved.”

**Sarah Friar**  
**Chief Financial Officer**  
**Square**

- › Volunteer to be a presenter to enhance your personal brand
- › Join Special Interest Groups- Digital Enterprise, Supplier Relationship Management and more, to deepen your knowledge and meet other professionals with similar challenges



### Organisations represented on the Committee include:

BAE Systems  
Barclays PCB Technology  
DHL  
Environment Agency  
Financial Times  
HM Revenue and Customs  
Kimberly-Clark European Services  
Met Office  
PepsiCo  
South West Water  
SSE  
SThree  
Tullow Oil  
Waitrose

## Join the Gender Balance Committee

The Group's Mission is to:

- › Support women in corporate IT to be successful in developing their career paths
- › Attract more women into a corporate IT environment through collaboration with internal and external stakeholders
- › Promote cultural change within organisations to improve gender diversity

The Group also:

- › Builds peer relationships to support personal and



- professional development of women within IT departments
- › Undertakes inter-organisational analysis of priorities and issues around gender balance to support changes in corporate culture and working environment
- › Shares best practice, tried and tested solutions

The Group is responsible for deciding the content for Forum Gender Balance events. To find out more about the Group and to view the output produced, visit the Forum's website.

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