Business English lesson

Girls In Tech

Special material on the occasion of the International Women's Day, 2018

Before you read. Discuss the following questions.

- In your opinion, what is the percentage of males and females working in the IT industry?
- Do you believe it is easy for women to be part of the IT industry? Why/Why not?
- What are some of the stereotypical perceptions about women who work in the IT industry?



"STEM is simply a lot of fun".

Eklektika's exclusive interview with Ewelina Wińska - Managing Director and Kamila Kuźniewska - Co-Managing Director of Girls in Tech Poland. The interview was carried out on the occasion of the International Women's Day, 2018.

Eklektika: What does Girls in Tech do? What is your aim for 2018?

Girls in Tech: Girls in Tech is a global organization with its chapter in Poland that focuses on supporting women that are active in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) area. Our main goal is to engage, empower, educate and promote women in IT and support them in their career.

Our aim for 2018 is to build a community that will unite women across Poland. Women active in STEM – both professionals and those that begin their journey in IT. A community that will be a safe space where women can share knowledge and experience, inspire, educate and mentor.

Eklektika: What is the perception of women in the IT industry?

GiT: Women in IT are the minority and there's a lot of space for improvement. More and more companies see the potential and are determined to recruit and promote women in IT. Some of the organizations have their own internal programs for women. But still – gender-based stereotypes are harmful and undermine women's capacity to lead, innovate, democratize and change the world for the better. Girls in Tech Poland changes that through the promotion of women in the Tech industry.

Eklektika: Why is it important to campaign for women to become part of the IT field?

GiT: The feedback that Girls in Tech Poland receives from girls, women and organizations emphasizes that such large-scale actions that promote women in the Tech industry are

needed. The IT world is male-dominated, which is reflected in the mass media – technology news seems all to be about the world-changing success stories and innovations of men. When we look at the workplace – women are underrepresented, and that's why we need a community that will support and help them build a career path. Such activities are needed not only for women, but for the business in general. As lots of studies show, gender-diverse technology companies are more productive, improve employee performance and are financially more stable.

Eklektika: What are some obstacles -if any- that women face when trying to enter the IT industry?

GiT: At entry level we do not observe too many obstacles. Problems start to arise when women go up the career ladder. Most organizations don't have a well-developed family-friendly environment. Taking time off to look after a sick baby or to attend an event at school is controversial and for some hard to understand and accept.

Now, let's think about men and women that have the same level of successful performance, which should give them the same level of self-confidence. Laura Guillen from ESMT Berlin study found that although self-confidence and performance are the same for males and females, "self-confidence appearance is not equally rewarded for men and women. Where the self-confidence appearance of high-performing men directly enabled their influence in the organization, this was only true for high-performing women who also had a high prosocial orientation". In other words – women still need to work much harder than man to be rewarded on the same level that men are.

Eklektika: How has the perception of women at work changed in Poland?

GiT: The perception of women at work has been changing over decades, but changes are too slow. Nowadays the economy is based on advanced knowledge and new technologies. This requires constant learning and getting new qualifications, which is difficult for women who are raising kids. More and more organizations have started introducing family-friendly policies, like flexible working hours, home-office, spaces for women and children at the workplace. Additionally, the perception of women in society has changed dramatically – as the traditional family model has evolved a lot.

Eklektika: Why is the number of women who join the IT industry still lower than in other fields and how can we change that?

GiT: There's a lot of factors that affect women's presence in IT. First of all, there is a cultural barrier – stereotypes. There are so called "male specializations" at universities, and no one tries to change even that simple expression. This leads to the conclusion that women's work in such areas is of less value and importance than the work done by men. Another important

aspect is the educational barrier – lack of women-oriented trainings, workshop, conferences that are easy to access. No information on how to establish and run a business or even how to change career paths. Through our community and programs, Girls in Tech Poland wants to show and lead by example that success in STEM is not owned only by men. There are women too and we need to give them a voice and make others hear it.

Eklektika: The earlier the start, the better. So, what's a good way to encourage young girls to develop the skills needed in the tech industry?

GiT: From early childhood, girls should be given a chance and encouraged to explore the world not only from the perspective of pink princesses, pony horses or kitchen sets. Toys, books, clothes designed for girls are oriented towards princesses, castles, houses, vets and animals, bakeries, shops etc. Such activities like adventures, making space crafts, robots and other technical stuff, are targeted to boys and you will not find them in the girls' area of a store. So, if girls like cars, robots and things like that – let them play with them. Barbie may not be their biggest dream.

Eklektika: What are the career paths in the tech industry? Is it all about software engineering?

GiT: Software Engineering is just one of many options available. Of course, technology and engineering oriented-positions are available – Mobile App developer, Web developer, Database admin, UX Designer, Video Games Designer, Network admin, Graphic designer, Project Manager, Data Scientist, Computer Animator, Pre-sales, Architect, IT sales, Marketing.

There are jobs strictly related to programming, but also more business-oriented ones that don't require deep technical knowledge.

Eklektika: Women are said to be better at soft skills. Do such skills matter in the tech world?

GiT: Soft skills are about communication and empathy. Communicating with peers, customers, business partners. This area is very challenging for men working in a male environment – and women have positive impact on the whole team and business thanks to such skills.

Eklektika: Do you have any special words for women who would like to join the IT industry?

GiT: STEM is simply a lot of fun. You don't need to be an engineer or a developer – there's a lot different challenges. If you haven't started yet – join us and meet our professionals, influencers, network within our community!

Interviewers: Iwona Braun-Nowak - Managing Director & Joswrany McEwan – Teaching Methodology Advisor from Eklektika – Language Means Business.

TASK 1: Comprehension and discussion.

- What is Girls In Tech's goal?
- What is STEM?
- Do you agree with the views shared in this interview? Why/Why not?
- In your opinion, how can girls be encouraged to be part of the IT industry?

TASK 2: Watch the video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZXFTqAIG8U **and answer the following questions:**

1. One speaker describes her daughters who are enthusiastic about technology. What is she worried about? *That when they grow older they will realize there is a certain (male-oriented) norm about programming.*

2. What do the speakers say about women's presence in executive positions? *That' it has increased a bit, but not a lot, that men still occupy the most important positions and they don't have women in their networks and that, women executives are not perceived as highly as men*

3. What increase in the number of women would one of the speakers like to see? *doubling their number*

4. What role do emergent markets play for the Girls in Tech organization? *GiT aims to 'bridge the technological divide between Silicon Valley and other countries' (sic!); according to another speaker, this matters because the longer girls stay in school, the better the chances of getting a country out of poverty*