Tomorrow's Affairs
Analysis of today
Assessment of tomorrow

By: Elise Quevedo

Women in Tech Leadership: Leading Innovation and Breaking Barriers

Let me start by saying how delighted I am to write for Tomorrow's Affairs. In this column, I will discuss many subjects in the technology realm, including women in technology and breaking the glass ceiling. I look forward to you joining me on this journey. With that said, let's begin.

I am pleased to see the vibrant energy of 2024 showcasing the significant impact women in technology have made, it makes me hopeful that a new era is here.

Female leaders are breaking stereotypes, driving innovation, and paving the way for future generations. From boardrooms to laboratories, coding hackathons to AI policy-making.

As I look back on 2024 and peek into 2025, it's clear that the landscape is evolving, thanks to the courageous efforts of women leading the charge.

Women have always played key roles in the tech industry, even when their contributions have been overlooked. Take Ada Lovelace, for example, who was called the world's first programmer, or Grace Hopper, a trailblazer in computer science who laid the foundation for modern computing. Yet, systemic barriers have kept many women away from leadership positions.

However, women like Reshma Saujani, founder and CEO of Girls Who Code, and Safra Catz, CEO of Oracle, have demonstrated that female leadership is possible, necessary, and transformative.

The key takeaway from these pioneers is that representation matters. Seeing women in leadership inspires others to aspire, challenge norms, and break through the glass ceiling. Without role models to look up to, we cannot change. I will always advocate for speaking up and not giving up.

2024: Another Year of Milestones

As 2024 unfolded, it became a year of remarkable milestones for women in tech leadership. Did you know that for the first time, women held 30% of C-suite roles in Fortune 500 tech companies? We can thank organisational policy changes and a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

I like to follow the journey of challenging roles, and one to watch has been X Corp (formerly known as Twitter) CEO Linda Yaccarino, who has shown that even through challenging times, female leadership can help companies thrive.

She helped X regain the TAG (Trustworthy Accountability Group) Certification, and in just a few days, Yaccarino will take the stage at CES Las Vegas, one of the biggest technological events in the world. Her career is an example of resilience and leadership

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Similarly, the emergence of innovators like Dr. Leila Harris, who has led significant advancements in green technology, highlights how women are driving meaningful conversations in sustainability.

Outside the corporate world, initiatives like TechLadies in Asia and Black Girls Code in the United States continued to empower women and girls to pursue careers in technology. I feel we need more movements that nurture talent and create an ecosystem where young women feel they belong. Growing up, I did not have those communities where I felt I belonged, so I understand firsthand how much more important this is today.

Challenges Are Still Here

Despite these achievements, challenges remain. The gender pay gap, unconscious biases, and a lack of mentorship opportunities

still hinder many women from reaching their full potential.

A 2024 survey by McKinsey revealed that women in tech leadership roles still face burnout at higher rates than their male counterparts, mainly driven by unequal demands at work and home.

I, to this day, continue to experience a gender pay gap in the tech sector, and many opportunities are given to my male counterparts solely because they are men or receive higher pay for the same contract for the same reason. We must work to ensure that these challenges become part of our past, not our present or future.

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We also cannot ignore intersectionality. Women of colour, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those with disabilities often experience more discrimination, making their journey to leadership even more difficult. Addressing these issues requires sustained effort and collaboration between governments, corporations, and society.

Will 2025 Have a Brighter Future?

As we enter 2025, inclusivity in tech leadership is on the rise. Companies are finally realising that diverse leadership teams drive better business outcomes. But will 2025 be the year when more action is taken instead of just talking?

I believe policy interventions will play a pivotal role in making these changes happen. For example, the new European Union directive mandates that a minimum of 40% of corporate boards be women by the end of 2030, another goal we can make happen together.

This decision has already influenced corporate strategies worldwide. In the United States, tech companies embrace frameworks like the Rooney Rule, which ensures that women and minority candidates are considered for leadership roles.

Mentorship and Advocacy Matter

One of the most effective ways to accelerate progress is through mentorship. I was pleased to see that in 2024, the number of mentorship programmes designed for women in tech has grown, and I look forward to that growth continuing in 2025.

Programmes like "Lean In Circles" and "Million Women Mentors" have created networks where women can share knowledge, resources, and encouragement.

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Advocacy also plays a critical role. Male allies, organisational leaders, and policymakers must actively support gender equity initiatives. This involves hiring more women and creating environments where they can thrive, free from bias and with equal access to opportunities.

What to Expect in 2025?

What I envision for 2025 is a tech industry where leadership represents the world we live in. We can achieve this by having gender parity and ensuring that leadership has a diversity of perspectives and individuals.

Education and early exposure to STEM fields remain a vital part of the process. Programs like "She Codes" and "STEMettes" encourage girls to pursue science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, helping to create a strong pipeline of future leaders.

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It is our job to reshape cultural narratives to celebrate women's achievements in tech so that it can inspire the next generation to dream bigger. Our journey in tech leadership is far from over.

The key lies in sustaining this momentum we are having, addressing the current inequalities, and fostering an inclusive culture that values our voices and does not silence them.

With the efforts of individuals, organisations, and communities, a new future is within reach.

I take this opportunity to thank the male counterparts in my circle who support women, allow us to speak up, and encourage us to continue being us. I also want to thank the women who are role models for the younger generations.

Because, as I always say, together we are stronger.

Elise Quevedo is an author, speaker, analyst, and storyteller. Ranked among the Top 2% most viewed profiles on Linked In and recently named Top 50 Women in Tech Influencers She often writes for digital publications and collaborates with Fortune 500 companies as a global thought leader. Also known as "The Digital Ghost Queen" for her behind-the-scenes work, including ghostwriting, she has inspired audiences as a keynote speaker around the globe at events. She is the author of "Creating a Kick-Ass Attitude," where she shares her passion for having a positive attitude and always moving forward no matter what happens. As a Global Thought Leader, she enjoys collaborating with brands, attending events, and sharing her independent views. On a personal note, Elise is a globetrotter who loves discovering new cultures and people and having thrilling adventures experiencing what the world has to offer.