

Gender equality remains a priority for digital

By [Alexandra Salomon](#)

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A career in digital holds rich potential for success and growth in the information age. Our technology evolves by the second, yet the real potential lies in the people behind the technology. As digital impacts the lives of every human being in some way, it is essential that our engineers, managers, developers and marketers are as diverse as the society they serve.

A large part of this lies in addressing gender inequality in the digital sector. Historically, certain fields within digital have carried a stigma that they are somehow only the territory of men. This limiting thinking robs our industry of the skill sets and variety in perspective that drives innovation and moves us forward.



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We are seeing change in the digital advertising industry and this change is for the better. There are more women in technical and leadership roles than ever before. As a field, advertising has undergone a significant, encouraging shift. However, there are still ways we can effect lasting change. The possibility of a career in digital needs to be explored with young girls from school-going age as they are forming their interests and choosing their subjects. This needs to be nurtured as they enter tertiary institutions. Fields such as engineering should be repackaged as exciting for women, rather than taboo. The more we engage with our youth, the more we will prepare the foundation for diversity in our future leaders.

Once women are given positions of influence with the right experience and skill sets, they perform just as well as men. The only challenge is giving women the opportunity to prove their equal ability to shine. Ultimately, the playing field needs to be addressed, so women can be influential in all roles, from coders and app developers to senior executives.

We are entering a time in digital where technology is more creative, targeted and immersive than ever before. We have witnessed the explosive growth of immersive content, from augmented reality and virtual reality through to content marketing. The meteoric rise of Pokemon Go was a turning point that gave marketers, publishers and advertisers a peek at the potential of this new platform and its connection with their audiences. While bandwidth and connectivity remain a consideration, digital video continues to grow year on year. As the customer continues to define what they want from their digital experiences, brands are investing in content and influencer marketing to engage with niche market segments. Overall, it is a thrilling, positive time for digital advertising, where we are looking at how we can have better, more effective adverts that engage rather than alienate consumers.

With more roles than ever before, the future is bright for women pursuing a career in digital. For young women entering the digital industry, I would advise the following for career success:

- **Get exposure to many aspects of digital:** The term digital covers a wide range of positions and careers. Take some online courses, join professional groups, and attend seminars to understand exactly where your interest lies.
- **Network:** Go to conferences such as the IAB Digital Summit, powered by Accenture Interactive. Here you will meet people in the industry and hear them speak about their challenges and their successes. This environment is perfect for stimulating your creativity and helping you connect with your future peers.
- **Find a mentor:** There are many women and men in digital who are passionate about what they do and who love to help fresh talent enter the industry. Find someone with a career you admire and approach them.

We are living in a world of connection, inspiration and limitless potential. I look forward to seeing how gender equality evolves in the digital space and the innovation women bring to the industry.

Alexandra Salomon will be speaking at the IAB Digital Summit, powered by Accenture Interactive, to be held on 16 March 2017 at The Galleria in Sandton.

IAB Digital Summit & Bookmarks tickets are on sale [here](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Senior Director, International, IAB (Washington D.C.) Alexandra Salomon is a veteran in online marketing, global advertising, digital publishing/media, and international business. She has worked for leading brands including AOL, Overture, Yahoo, and LivingSocial, as well as start-ups and consulting services.

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