



Women in Sport Tech: Lessons from Sport on Unlocking Talent and Driving Innovation

Insights from Women in Sport Technology
on Breaking Barriers, Leading Change, and
Redefining Workplace Culture

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It means a lot to be part of a company that doesn't just talk about inclusion, but makes it part of how we work every day.

Mei Dent

Chief Product and Technology Officer,
TeamViewer

TeamViewer has partnered with Loughborough University London for an in-depth study, which explores the role of technology in fostering greater gender inclusivity and driving innovation. This research is a crucial step in TeamViewer's commitment to addressing gender representation in technology. By understanding the experiences of women in sport technology, we aim to:



Inspire more women to pursue careers in tech-based roles



Provide organisations with actionable insights to create more inclusive work environments



Drive cross-industry innovation through increased diversity

Drawing on the experiences of women in sport technology from across 25 countries, the report offers a comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities in the field. The findings reinforce the idea that diversity of talent is crucial for progress and innovation. Incorporating insights from women in multi-sport organisations all over the world, the study highlight successful practices that have enabled women to advance in their sport technology careers and identifies key organisational elements that help female talent thrive within traditionally male-dominated environments. The report has cross-industry relevance, offering valuable lessons that can be applied across various industries to increase female representation in tech roles.



Foreword



When
organisations
prioritise
inclusivity, they
foster innovation.

Foreword by Susie Wolff

Managing Director, F1 ACADEMY™

Sport has the power to inspire change. But true progress demands more than inspiration- it requires action, accountability, and a collective willingness to challenge the status quo. That's why I'm proud to support this report, which shines a vital light on the lived experiences of women working in sport technology today.

As someone who has spent much of my life in motorsport, I know first-hand the challenges women face when entering and navigating historically male-dominated spaces. I also know how transformative it can be when those spaces evolve, when they start to reflect the diversity of the world around them and unlock the full spectrum of talent and perspective that exists.

The insights captured in this report are both revealing and hopeful. They confirm what many of us already understand intuitively: when organisations prioritise inclusivity, they foster innovation. When women are visible in senior positions, they create pathways for others. And when workplace cultures are built around flexibility, empathy, and allyship, people, regardless of gender, can truly thrive.

This work wouldn't be possible without the vision and commitment of organisations like TeamViewer, who are not only championing inclusion in the sport tech space but actively investing in understanding and addressing the barriers women face. I'm proud to partner with a brand that doesn't just talk about progress but helps drive it forward.

At F1 ACADEMY™, we are focused on creating a pipeline of talent, on and off the track, that reflects the world we live in. That includes championing visibility, supporting career progression, and fostering workplaces where women can lead without limits. This report reinforces just how important those commitments are, not just in motorsport, but across the entire sporting landscape.

To the organisations reading this: you have a choice. You can become active participants in challenging, and changing, the status quo. The recommendations here offer practical steps toward greater gender inclusivity, and they come directly from the voices of those with lived experience. This is not just a moral imperative; it's a business one. Diverse teams perform better, innovate more effectively, and represent the fans and communities we serve.

To the women working in sport tech: your presence matters. Your contributions matter.

Let's be bold in what we build next. Together, we can drive the change that sport, and society, needs.

Executive Summary

Women are underrepresented in technology roles, and this is mirrored in the sport industry. The aim of this research was to understand how sport organisations attract and retain female talent in technology. In capturing the perspectives of women working in sport technology using a survey (155 participants) and interviews (25 in-depth interviews), the report answers:

- 1. What motivates women to work in sport**
- 2. What they value within their organisation**
- 3. What role they believe inclusivity and workplace technology play in innovation**

Findings are showcased through eight key insights and are brought to life with personal reflections of women currently working in sport technology. These insights underpin recommendations to support gender inclusivity in sport technology and drive organisational innovation.



Executive Summary

Key insights

1

Women adopt more perceived masculine behaviours and personas to survive in the typically male dominated spaces of sport technology.

2

Visible role models in senior positions provide inspiration and belief that career pathways and progression are possible, helping break barriers for women in sport technology.

3

Membership of formal and informal communities are key mechanisms underpinning the recruitment and advancement of women into sport technology roles.

4

Recruitment strategies need to account for different priorities held by women based on their level of seniority.

5

Leaders visibly living and enacting a commitment to diversity, inclusive practices, and employee development helps retain women in sport technology roles.

6

Poor organisational support for women with caring responsibilities leads to women holding mid-level roles dropping out of the sport technology industry.

7

Implementing workplace technology that reduces the demanding job requirements of the sport industry can help retain women in the workforce and facilitate innovative practices.

8

Increasing gender inclusivity provides more diverse views and lived experiences that lead to innovative working practices, solutions, and products within sport technology.

Recommendations

The presented insights expose the complex and compounding issues that cause underrepresentation of women in technology roles, as well as the competitive advantage and innovation that can be generated from gender inclusivity. To progress gender inclusivity immediate and long-term actions are needed at an organisational and industry level. Relevant actions have been identified for five responsible parties:

1

Senior leadership
e.g. equality impact assessments; sustained commitment to inclusive initiatives

2

Line managers
e.g. create formalised sponsorship programme; implement flexible working practices

3

Colleagues
e.g. enact allyship; reflect on the inclusivity of your own behaviours and language

4

Women in sport technology roles
e.g. join communities and identify events and opportunities that suit your needs and personality

5

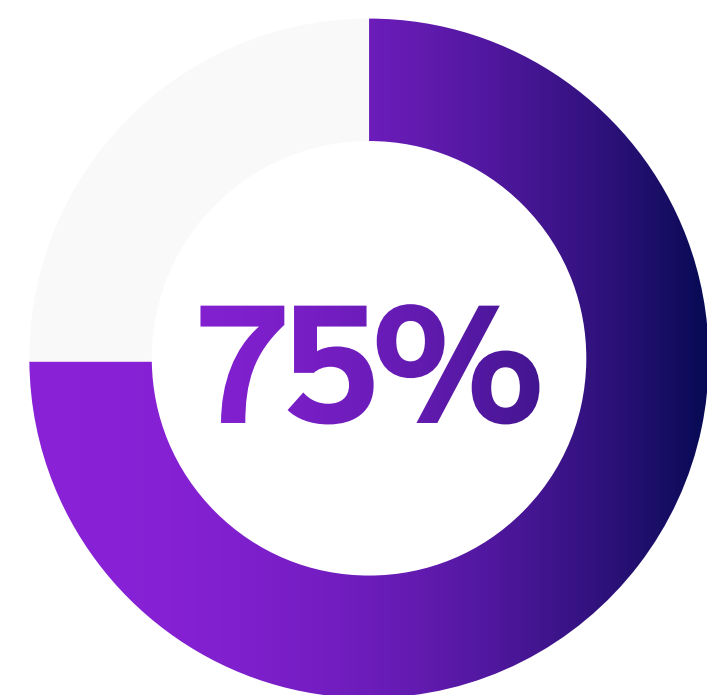
Human resources
e.g. publicise clear and transparent promotion criteria, involve women in recruitment process



Introduction

Background

The sport sector is undergoing a digital transformation, with advances in big data analytics, cloud computing, virtual and augmented reality, 5G connectivity, wearable technology, and smart devices improving sporting and business performance. Accordingly, traditional roles in sport governing bodies and teams have evolved to require technological competencies. New organisations have emerged as well providing bespoke technological solutions and innovations to the sport industry, requiring individuals with specific technical abilities. At the same time, approximately 75% of technology roles are held by men showcasing the lack of women working across technology sectors.



of technology roles are held by men

The challenge

A diverse range of consistent issues contribute to the systematic underrepresentation of women in technology roles, including:

1. Societal and Cultural Gender Stereotypes:

Traditional gender norms and social stereotypes often associated with male-dominated fields such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) discourage women from pursuing careers in these industries.

2. Opportunities:

Women and girls often lack access and encouragement to pursue the educational opportunities and pathways necessary to obtain technology-based roles.

3. Limited Role Models:

There are fewer women holding leadership positions within the technology sector. The lack of visible women in senior jobs makes it harder for aspiring women to imagine themselves in these positions and access guidance and mentorship.

4. Workplace Demands and Culture:

Long working hours and job demands associated with technology-based employment, often lead to challenging, globally positioned roles. These requirements result in poor work-life balance which may not be seen as inclusive, disproportionately impacting women, especially those with caring responsibilities. Implicit biases towards women can further exaggerate barriers in hiring practices and career advancement.

The lack of women working in technology is problematic for three reasons.

1. Diversity:

Diversity within a workforce has been shown to lead to innovation and competitive advantage for organisations. Consequently, women represent an unrealised talent pool that organisations are not utilising to their full potential.

2. Experience

When teams lack diversity of experience and perspective, products and processes risk being designed by certain groups reinforcing exclusion.

3. Representation

Continued under representation is a societal issue, intensifying cultural attitudes and stereotypes towards women working in STEM related roles. For these reasons, it is important to understand how to improve gender inclusivity within technology and other enterprise organisations.





The opportunity

The sport industry presents an interesting case to explore gender inclusivity in technology as barriers to entry are not perceived to be as threatening in comparison to other sectors, and a passion for sport incentivises women to pursue technology-based roles.

Research aim

The aim of this research is to understand how sport organisations attract and retain female talent in technology. By capturing the perspectives of women who hold a functional role where technology is used to improve performance or commercial outcomes, there is an opportunity to better understand what motivates women to work in sport, what they value within their organisation, and what role they believe diversity and workplace technology plays in innovation. The lived experiences and realities of women working within the male dominated sport sector can then inform strategic recommendations to improve gender inclusivity.

Research method

A two-phase research design was applied. First, an online survey was designed, capturing the views and attitudes of 155 women working in sport technology across all levels. Second, 25 in-depth interviews were conducted to understand the lived experiences and realities of mid and senior-level women working in sport technology. Respondents had to be currently employed by an organisation in the sport sector and hold a sport technology role.

Sport technology roles were defined as jobs involving software or hardware to improve sporting or commercial performance. Technology could be applied across any of the four pillars of STEM; Science (e.g. biomechanics or physiological testing), Technology (e.g. broadcasting), Engineering (e.g. materials, mechanical, software) and Mathematics (e.g. quantitative analysis). Full methodological details can be found in the appendix.

By focusing on sport organisations implementing cutting-edge sporting and commercial technology, there is an opportunity to learn where technology, diversity, and innovation intersect.

Research insights

In the following report, we provide eight key insights detailing: the realities of women working in the male dominated space of sport technology; the importance of visible role models and leadership committed to gender inclusivity; how flexible working practices and workplace technology can attract and retain talent; and the benefit of diversity for innovation. Each insight is underpinned by qualitative and quantitative analysis, brought to life with research data. Alongside the analysis, tangible actions that businesses can apply to unlock talent and drive innovation are provided. These changes are summarised at the end of the report in an action plan for each business department.

Each insight is underpinned by qualitative and quantitative analysis, brought to life with research data.

What has contributed to the underrepresentation of women in sport technology roles?

It is important to provide environmental context as to why women are underrepresented in sport technology roles. The six features below illustrate the current individual, industrial, and societal landscape of sport technology for women. These features help explain the barriers, cultures, and norms that shape gender inclusivity (or lack of it) within sport technology.

Societal stereotypes

1. Societal norms generate and foster gender stereotypes, resulting in male dominated industries hindering the belief that these spaces are accessible to women.

“I would like to say during that time was a triple male world. Tech, sport, and media, all male dominated”
— Interviewee 23

2. Misogyny and sexism fuelled by gendered culture and biases are still evident within the sport industry which leads to unequal treatment within the workplace.

“When I’m negotiating my salary with the founder, CEO, he says to me that my husband is in the [fire service]. He can work overtime, so he doesn’t have to pay me as much. Well, that has nothing to do with my value”
— Interviewee 5

3. Stereotypes manifest through a culture that in some cases is dismissive of women’s perspectives, and disregards the ideas and contributions of women, which inhibits inclusivity and positive working environments.

“They’ll have their intake with males. All of them got given leads straight away. They all got opportunities to mentor someone and shadow other people. But the females didn’t”
— Interviewee 1

Evolving diversity, equity, and inclusion landscape

Globally the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) agenda is in a state of flux, with significant shifts influenced by social movements, business, and government. With recent historical advancements shining a light on gender inclusivity there have been significant strides forward. Advancements relate to the gender pay gap, flexible working practices, and parental leave underpinned by laws and policy changes that have focused on equality in the workplace. For example, heightened gender representation on boards and in leadership.

Yet, tension around DEI has resulted in divisive debates around gender inclusivity policies. This has led to certain businesses stopping or revising their diversity initiatives, including Google and Meta1 alongside many other technology and sport companies.

“I think it’s unfortunate now in the US specifically, they’re trying to roll that back [DEI]. Diversity initiatives have been shut down at major corporations, which is kind of sad like that. I think that just makes people feel more isolated, it’s going to be even harder for me to move up in this space”
— Interviewee 20

Current political rhetoric for example, relates to merit-based opportunities and terminating DEI. Such debates incorrectly suggest that hiring the best candidate for the job and initiatives to improve diversity are mutually opposed. The question is now where this leaves organisations, how to position DEI initiatives, and what impact will this have on historically underrepresented groups.

“You can’t just post on your site anymore your goals for DEI because then we’re discriminating against all the white men, and all the white men already work there... I don’t want anyone to feel discriminated against, but [if] 80% of your people are the same. Clearly, they’re getting opportunities, so it’s just about opportunity and I think we are going to back slide. It causes me to lose sleep. Many, many of us are losing sleep. Yeah, it’s to the point that I could almost cry if we kept talking about it. Devastating”
— Interviewee 5

Job demands of the sport industry

The sport industry is highly competitive and due to its nature, requires long hours whether that be in relation to a match or event which often occur in non-traditional working hours (i.e., evenings and weekends). Irregular hours impact work-life balance as many working in the sport sector follow the rhythm and schedule of training and competition, creating variable work patterns.

“I think my work life balance is not as good as it could be, which is also part of being young and trying to really get into the industry and be a positive impact ... I think living to work is the one I’m at, at the moment”
— Interviewee 25

In many cases those working for sport organisations have high travel demands meaning there could be frequent trips away often with little notice, to support an athlete, team or event.

“Those are the two big things. You know the travel and the working hours are quite limiting. It’s not predictable and depending on which event you work sometimes it’s late nights, early mornings, all that kind of stuff”
— Interviewee 24

The results-based nature of elite sport creates a demanding environment where there is continued pressure to deliver results that are often directly tied to the success of the sporting or commercial drivers of the organisation.

“I think being in sports is pretty cutthroat, sports games are played on the weekends there’s no like the sports day is over, games are at night and games are on the weekends”
— Interviewee 20





Sporting traditions

Many sport governing bodies and teams have existed since the start of the 20th century. These older organisations carry engrained cultures, often shaped by prolonged periods of male governance. Within traditional organisations, cultural change towards improving gender inclusivity is more challenging.

“Nobody really needed to fight to get [gender inclusivity] it on the agenda because it was just there and we inherently wanted it to be part of that culture, I think perhaps there’s a difference between newer organisations that are inherently built into their culture and those that perhaps need course correction, if I compare that to [traditional sport competition organiser] I think there’s quite an outdated and old-fashioned view in this organisation”
— Interviewee 22

These traditional sport organisations contrast with start-up and established sport technology companies with much shorter histories. Younger organisations were typically thought to have more progressive attitudes to gender inclusivity (with exceptions). For start-up companies however, there is a trade-off between the primary concern of revenue generation versus commitment to inclusivity.

Passion for sport but poor pay

In comparison to the high wages offered by technology companies and other industries (e.g. finance), equivalent roles within sport organisations are generally poorly paid. Rather, women are often motivated by the attraction of working in sport. Whether that is a chance to be close to sporting history or the opportunity to support the growth of women’s sport.

“To be honest, it wasn’t actually the tech component that necessarily did appeal to me. The performance analysis, from what I could gather at the time was just if you love football and you know football relatively well, you can impact tactical and technical decisions and help players develop”
— Interviewee 25

It is not uncommon to find that women working in sport technology roles were sporty in their childhood and have a continued passion as a fan, although to be clear, many women were still drawn to the technological challenge of their jobs regardless of the sporting context or interest.

Not a true tech person

Despite clearly holding roles with significant STEM components, either through technical skills or management, many women in sport technology failed to identify as a ‘tech person’. Primarily, this originates from not studying a traditional STEM qualification at college or University. Reinforcing this point, women with clear STEM backgrounds, such as those with an engineering degree, did not report the same attitudes.

“If I’m being totally honest, my biggest insecurity was always my lack of an IT degree rather than my gender. I mean, I really always felt very, very self-conscious. You know that people wouldn’t accept me”
— Interviewee 25

Unfortunately, the consequence of failing to identify as a tech person and feeling a sense of disconnect with the STEM label more broadly, can result in a lack of confidence when talking to colleagues.

Insight One

Navigating Male Spaces:

“I do find myself
changing some parts
of my personality...
it’s not changing them,
but amplifying them”



Insight

Women adopt more perceived masculine behaviours and personas to survive in the typically male dominated spaces of sport technology.

Insight One: Navigating Male Spaces

Voice

Feeling empowered to contribute, listened too, and appreciated by peers and managers are qualities valued by women in sports technology roles, yet women can be hidden by male colleagues at points in their career. This can include meetings where more confident male voices speak over female staff, male colleagues directly asking for opportunities and promotions, and male staff stealing ideas.

“It’s really basic things like making sure if you’re in a big meeting that the women are being heard, it’s just a fact of life. I’m pretty senior now and there’s still moments that I’m like guys, are you ever going to get let me get a word in”

— Interviewee 9

Being continually ignored or excluded ultimately leads to some women moving to other parts of an organisation or leaving their job entirely.

“Most of the time when I’ve left a place, it’s because I got tired of fighting to be in the room to have my voice heard. There were definitely places where that was happening because people made assumptions about me because I was a woman”

— Interviewee 17

Behaviours

In response, women adopt different tactics to navigate male spaces. Tactics may involve relying on being naturally confident and outspoken or adopting more typically masculine traits and a persona of ‘confidence’.

“It’s tricky because there are parts of me that always think I just need to act more manly, if you know what I mean. A bit more like forceful or abrupt. But it’s a really fine balance”

— Interviewee 12

A challenge that emerges from adopting a more outspoken persona is the disparity in the way vocal men and women are perceived. Labels such as ‘bossy’, ‘pushy’, ‘feisty’, and ‘blunt’ are often applied to women whereas outspoken male colleagues are more commonly referred to using labels like ‘passionate’.

“... geared towards male behaviours you’re acting, almost like a guy, but don’t be too much, because otherwise you’re considered bossy or annoying or asking the wrong questions”

— Interviewee 12

Another behavioural response to navigating male spaces is the perceived need to work harder and be very knowledgeable to demonstrate the ‘right to be in the role’.

“In the early years, I probably didn’t speak much in the meetings. I was always afraid of saying something that would expose me or embarrass me. But it was a huge motivator for me because everything that was raised that I didn’t understand, I’d go and read about it. I’d learn about it, I’d teach myself”

— Interviewee 24

The reality that women feel the need to change their identity highlights a contradiction between the notion of gender inclusivity and not being able to be their real, authentic selves. Consequently, actions to increase the representation of women risk becoming superficial, not leading to systematic change if women are not able to present and be respected for their true personalities.



Insight One: Navigating Male Spaces



Actionable changes

Recognising women in sport technology roles have to navigate male spaces, there are a series of immediate solutions and broader systemic changes organisations can make to improve gender inclusivity.

Educating male staff around the importance and value of allyship is an immediate change that can be made. Allyship ranges from implementing tangible practices that encourage everyone to share views prior to meetings and junior career mentorship, to advocating for organisational change.

“The women who were there knew very quickly and very clearly who the male allies were right. And so, it was both a coming together to support each other, but also coming together to say, hey, this is a mentor who will actually help you. Go find this person. Talk to this person, be in this company, be in this role, be in this community”

— Interviewee 17

At a systemic level, senior leaders should reflect on the historical intersectional biases that shape organisational culture and practices. There is a need to challenge accepted practices, which have led to spaces that are exclusionary in nature, resulting in women having to adopt male traits to fit in. Leaders must be open to acknowledging and examining biases that may exist. Equality impact assessments of existing practices and policies that were shaped by a male dominated environment can identify the negative impacts on individuals with protected characteristics.

At a systemic level, senior leaders should reflect on the historical intersectional biases that shape organisational culture and practices.

Profile

Name: Liz Hamburger
Job Title: Senior Product Designer
Organisation Name: Clippd



With over a decade in the design industry, I've navigated roles spanning branding, graphic design and product design, across sectors such as finance, health, and sport. Currently, I work as a Senior Product Designer at Clippd, a golf performance platform, where I focus on enhancing user experiences and simplifying complex data for golfers. Beyond my professional role, I'm passionate about mentoring aspiring designers and previously co-ran Triangirls, a community dedicated to supporting women and non-binary individuals in tech. Additionally, I share insights on design career development through my Substack newsletter 'Good Designer'.

For women in sport tech, the ability to navigate male spaces was noted as a key consideration – what are your views on this?

Having worked as a product designer in male-dominated industries like finance and insurance, I've become familiar with navigating spaces where women are underrepresented. In sport, particularly golf, I've found even fewer women than in finance, despite female participation and spending growing yearly.

My approach has been intentional about securing senior roles with clear titles. I've seen firsthand how easily people make assumptions about capability based on gender. I've consistently needed to prove my abilities first, while male colleagues often start with their expertise already assumed. During my freelance years, I frequently received comments like "You're actually really good at this" or "You've picked that up fast" - well-meaning perhaps but revealing low initial expectations for someone with 12 years of industry experience. I highly doubt these same words were ever uttered to my male counterparts with similar credentials.

I'd love to see more women in sport, tech, and design. But this won't happen at scale until workplaces become more flexible and supportive of families. Over the years, I've watched talented women leave the workplace in their mid-thirties, creating a significant gap in female senior leadership. Without addressing both representation and creating truly supportive environments, we'll continue to see promising careers interrupted and leadership potential unrealised.



Over the years, I've watched talented women leave the workplace in their mid-thirties, creating a significant gap in female senior leadership."

Insight Two

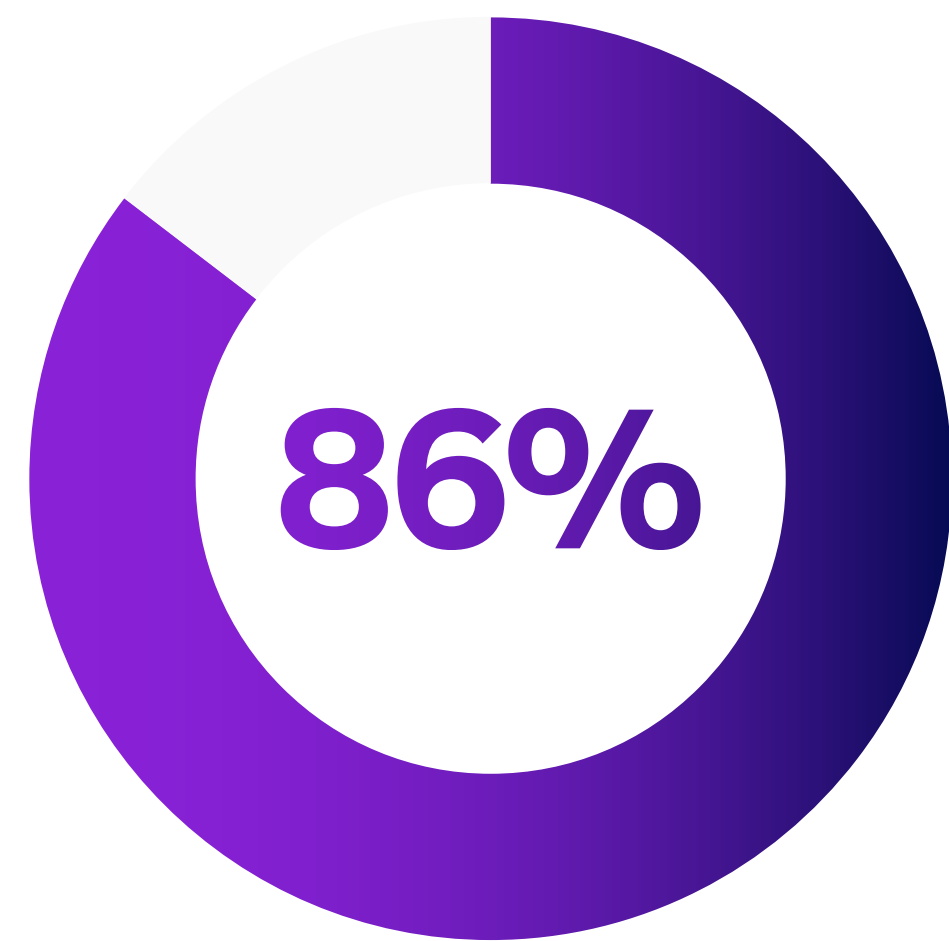
**Role Models and
Visibility of Women:**
“If I don’t see anybody that
looks like me or has had
the same experience as
me in higher roles, then
maybe I don’t belong here”



Insight

Visible role models in senior positions provide inspiration and belief that career pathways and progression are possible helping break barriers for women in sport technology.

Insight Two: Role Models and Visibility of Women



of survey respondents believed that the visibility of women in senior roles was one of their three most important considerations for gender inclusivity within an organisation.

Visibility

The visibility of senior women in the sport industry can provide inspiration and influences perceptions of whether a role in sport is obtainable for women.

“It’s seeing people in roles. Because that inspires people, and if you don’t know something exists, then you’re not going to look for it and you’re not going to go for it” – Interviewee 19

86% of survey respondents believed that the visibility of women in senior roles was one of their three most important considerations for gender inclusivity within an organisation. For organisations with fewer female employees, adopting a proactive approach to role modelling can help change perceptions and reduce barriers commonly associated with a male dominated industry. The benefit of heightened awareness of women holding senior roles is that it provides insight into the organisation’s structure, culture, and opportunities to potential female employees.

Role models

To enable visibility, female role models are essential as often individuals need to ‘see it to believe it’. Therefore, senior figures showcase pathways to progression within an organisation. Women role models can provide support for junior and mid-level colleagues helping them navigate career progression from their own experiences.

“Sometimes if they’re in a more senior role, then you look up to them and see, oh, how did you make it? Because I’ve talked to other senior female staff before that I wanted to know how they got there” – Interviewee 16

Identification with role models is critical to their effectiveness, for example, seeing another woman who has chosen to have a family promotes the belief that it is possible to balance responsibilities.

“I’m quite a senior person. That’s quite visible, that has a child...there’s more and more of a collection of women in engineering in this company who are having kids who are going on ... leave, who are coming back” – Interviewee 8

This quote exemplifies how role models can provide a pathway for others to follow as well as demonstrating positive organisational culture towards parental leave.



Insight Two: Role Models and Visibility of Women



Supportive figures

Due to the gendered nature of education beginning at a foundational age, supportive influential figures (e.g. family, friends, teachers) who encourage girls to follow their interests regardless of societal stereotypes are pivotal.

“I think women are discouraged early on because they don’t see role models. No one really believes in them. They don’t get that teacher or that coach who supports them. It can just take one person to change your opinion of yourself and your goals”

— Interviewee 5

These figures are paramount to a girl’s perception of whether certain subjects and career pathways are possible. Nurturing talent in certain subjects regardless of gender, leads to women aspiring to work within these technical fields.

Actionable changes:

Given the importance of visibility, if organisations have women in senior positions, it is essential to showcase them both internally (e.g. staff newsletter, employee events) and externally (e.g. social media, website).

Collaborations with schools and universities to deliver talks and offer site visits can raise awareness and challenge stereotypes around the gendered nature of certain fields to develop a pipeline of female talent.

In tandem, internships can help organisations increase exposure and access to the sport industry for women who may not consider applying directly for a job, due to deep routed entry barriers or concerns about organisational culture.

“We hire placements every year from university. Majority of them will be 75% female and that’s the way they get females into the company, through placements”

— Interviewee 1

Systemically, organisations need to consider how they embed structures and practices that promote and value women in senior positions.

“I’ve been involved in some of our forums, people have shared some quite upsetting stories and real examples of what’s happened to them and how they’ve been treated differently... I think that was really insightful for those senior leaders just to understand the reality of this situation, even if you’ve suddenly recruited a load more females, unless you sort some of these other cultural topics out, that’s not going to be sustainable and isn’t really what’s trying to be done”

— Interviewee 22

By demonstrating leadership commitment through investment in initiatives such as internal role model programmes, alongside policies and activities that support the gender inclusivity (e.g. listening forums), organisations can showcase their substantive commitment to inclusivity and begin to generate new cultural practices.

Profile

Name: Maria Martin Civiach
Job Title: UEFA ICT Product Owner
Organisation Name: Atos, UEFA



I am a computer engineer, originally from Spain, and have been fortunate to work in the field of IT in sport since London 2012 Olympics as a Venue IT Manager Assistant as a student. That experience sparked my passion for IT in sport, leading me to join the International Ski Federation as an IT Technical Expert. After six wonderful years, I transitioned away to focus on IT management at the International Olympic Committee, where I co-led the Results programme. Today, I work as UEFA ICT Product Owner, leading remote software teams that deliver event management solutions for major football tournaments.

What do you believe is the value in having women in senior sport tech positions? Is visibility important?

I think it's extremely important to have role models to look up to. Having worked in high profile sporting organisations that lack women in ICT management positions, at times it can feel like reaching that level is out of reach. When you don't see people like you in leadership, it becomes harder to imagine yourself there. IT and sport are both traditionally male-dominated industries, and that often creates invisible barriers—not just structurally, but psychologically. You find yourself wondering how to break those ceilings and whether it's even possible to make it to the top. Personally, I've never had a direct female role model in IT. That absence has been noticeable throughout my career. However, I've been lucky to work alongside colleagues—men and women—who supported and lifted me to grow. One woman who did have a significant impact on me was Sarah Lewis, former Secretary General of the International Ski Federation. Her leadership and guidance came at a key moment in my journey, and I carry many of her lessons with me.

Today, I try to be that role model for others—whether for colleagues or for friends and family—so they too can believe in what might seem impossible. I also actively support the Women in Tech Switzerland community, where I help organise events and promote visibility for women in technical fields. The energy and solidarity in the community is inspiring, and it's one way I try to give back. I believe organisations need to do more to support women—especially in departments where they are underrepresented. That includes better inclusion practices, stronger role modelling, and more thoughtful support around life phases like motherhood. Inclusion shouldn't be an exception—it should be the norm.



Having worked in high profile sporting organisations that lack women in ICT management positions, at times it can feel like reaching that level is out of reach.”



Insight Three

Communities, Networks, and Isolation:

“When you’re in a team where it could be 98% males and there’s one other female... it’s quite nice to be that person... look, let me help you out”



Insight

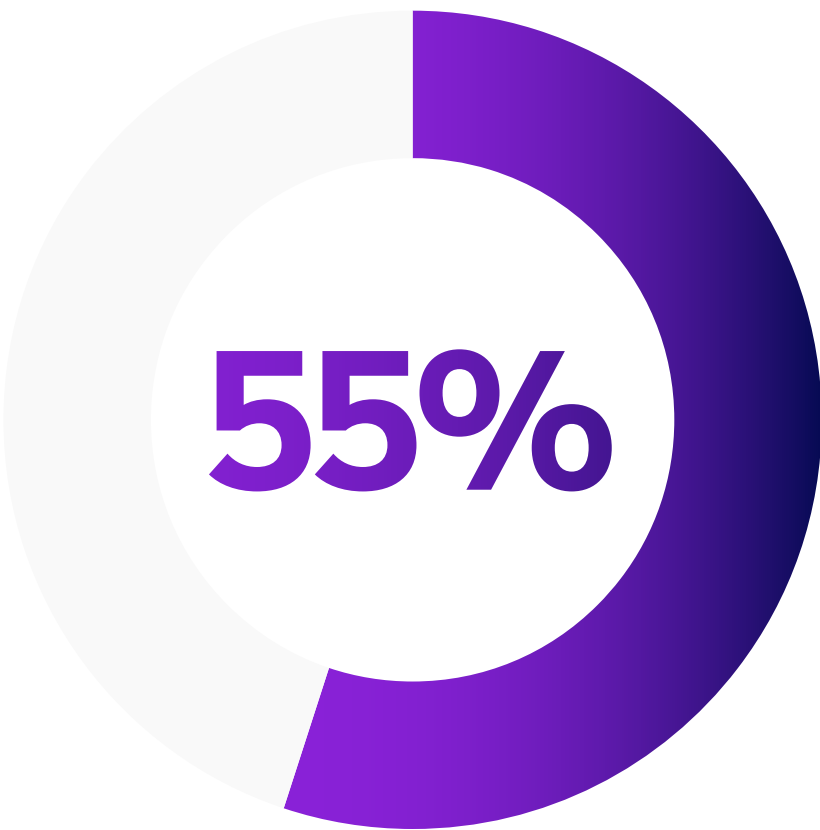
Membership of formal and informal communities are key mechanisms underpinning the recruitment and advancement of women into sport technology roles.

Insight Three: Communities, Networks, and Isolation

Types of community

Communities are a central pillar supporting the recruitment and advancement of women into sport technology roles. Communities can present in different forms depending on whether they are formally or informally organised and internal or external to employment. For instance, employee resource groups are formal and internal whereas, societies for women working in a particular sport, role, or location are formal and external. Equally, informal groups through friendships with colleagues or women in other companies can create a sense of belonging and community in the workplace, as well as providing support to each other.

“One of the things that made me accept this offer over other sports tech offers that I had is because of one coworker that I have here. That’s a woman around the same age as me, maybe like 3 or so years older. And she is really accommodating”
— Interviewee 20



of survey respondents indicated that they were part of a formal or informal network or group for women working in the sport industry.

Why join a community?

Emphasising the benefits of communities, 55% of survey respondents indicated that they were part of a formal or informal network or group for women working in the sport industry. Benefits of being part of a community include knowledge sharing, finding job opportunities, meeting likeminded peers, openness around sensitive topics (e.g. pay, maternity leave, managing people), personal development, mentorship, and finding confidence or inspiration.

“Where it’s beneficial is that the more people that are discussing these things and using that information to help each other and to help their respective organisations and their respective teams, I think that’s very powerful. It doesn’t necessarily have to be a big formal event and balloons and all sorts of things that can literally be a conversation”
— Interviewee 18

In the absence of female colleagues to share experiences with or external networks to connect with, isolation emerges as a problem.

“I’ve had a few people on exit interviews just say, ‘Do you know what? When I come in, you know there’s eight men around me and they just don’t talk about the same things. They’re not interested in the same things ... they don’t want to talk about whatever I want to talk about’. And I’ve had that loud and clear” — Interviewee 4

The role of communities and networks for finding employment is important in the sport industry, regardless of gender, as many jobs are not advertised publicly. For women in sport technology, this is a double-edged sword as well-connected women often benefitted from being approached about job opportunities that are not advertised, but such practices can also sustain gender-biased hiring practices.

“I got the job at [governing body] because I was there for another meeting and the boss was like, yeah, I immediately just like the way you worked. And then four years later, he called me for the job when I finished my last role. And so it was like they had picked me already just from that one experience” — Interviewee 24

Insight Three: Communities, Networks, and Isolation



Actionable changes

Given the importance of communities in the recruitment and advancement of women into sport technology roles, networking skill sessions and creating opportunities suited to different personality types offer an immediate solution to help support women already in the industry. Likewise, social events and opportunities for internal connection between women working in different teams and departments can promote community formation.

Organisationally, creating employee resource groups can help formalise communities but must have support from senior staff and male allies to ensure the group is legitimate and their suggestions are actually implemented.

Systemically, encouraging women inside and outside of the industry to join communities, framing communities in a way that are not off-putting to introverted personalities, and advertising the benefits of communities should all be championed.

“I’m lucky enough I earn good money, which I only managed to do through this women’s network because we all used to talk about our salaries. And when I first joined the group, I was on 50% less than the other women in the group” – Interviewee 12

Social events and opportunities for internal connection between women working in different teams and departments can promote community formation.

Profile

Name: Beth Montgomery
Job Title: Games Technology Integration Senior Manager
Organisation Name: International Olympic Committee (IOC)



I have been working in Technology for multi-sport events for the last 15 years. My first experience was at the Commonwealth Games in Delhi in 2010 and I quickly realised I loved the fast-paced environment of events. My area of focus has primarily been in managing software applications, results services, and now in Systems and Service Integration, which is a critical area in the Olympic Games to harmonise technology service providers. I have been fortunate to work on the Olympic Games in Rio, Tokyo, Beijing and Paris and am now supporting the next Summer and Youth Olympic Games.

Networks have been highlighted as a key enabler for women to access and progress in sport tech roles. What is your view on the role of networks?

Networks are critical in the events industry. My first position came through a friend who recommended me for the role and almost every role following that has come through a personal recommendation. Additionally, a lot of host-city organisations for events globally get established quickly. Having contacts who have visibility of which roles will be available, and when, can be very important to plan your next career move.

I have been very fortunate to have (male) managers who encouraged me and trusted me with increasing responsibility throughout my career which helped me to gain confidence in the early years - something which I think can also be a barrier for women in technology. There are many quite niche roles in sports technology which of course means there is no 'perfect CV' to qualify you for these positions and I have seen that women tend to not apply for roles which they do not feel closely matched to. Having a personal network of people who have seen that you have a good attitude and problem-solving approach, can present many opportunities that you may not otherwise have considered.



Having a personal network can present many opportunities that you may not otherwise have considered.”

Insight Four

Attraction:
“Getting to work in
sporting history”



Insight

Recruitment strategies need to account for different priorities for women based on their level of seniority.

Insight Four: Attraction

Differing attraction factors based on seniority

The appealing elements of working in sport technology differed based on a woman's seniority. Consequently, HR practices should account for the different factors that are prioritised and valued at junior, mid, and senior level. The survey findings provide insight into what initially encourages women to apply for sport technology roles and unsurprisingly, the opportunity to work in the sport sector was the most popular reason (78% of survey respondents). For women working in entry-level roles who completed the survey, opportunities for career progression were more important, whereas for women in mid-level and senior roles greater emphasis was put on organisational culture and mission, opportunities for women, and relationships with other employees. Senior leaders who undertook the survey reported more interest in the existing senior leadership team and an organisation's pioneering attitudes when applying for a job. They also rated the visibility of women in senior roles as more important for inclusivity in comparison to junior and mid-level staff.

Job adverts

How a sport technology role is advertised is pivotal, as women are often more hesitant to apply unless they meet all the job criteria. Therefore, the job specification and advert wording can be a barrier for women if not designed with gender inclusivity in mind. Alongside the job description, supporting commentary and advert framing can encourage applicants regardless of whether they meet the criteria.

“It's on the bottom of every single one of our job adverts...we have this tagline... Research shows that while many men, while men apply for jobs when they meet the average of 60% of the criteria, women and other marginalized groups tend to only apply when they check every box... So, if you think you have what it takes but don't meet every single point in our job ad, please still get in touch. We'd love to have a chat and see if you could be a great addition to our team”

— Interviewee 3

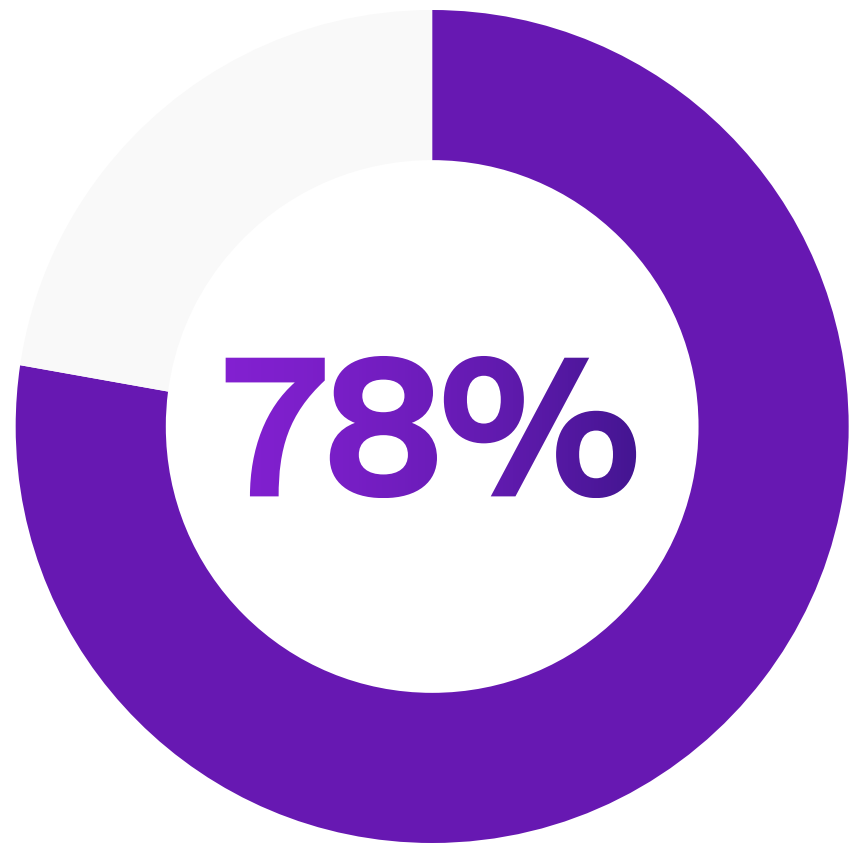
Although the actual figure is debated, the notion of encouraging women to apply had boosted applications.

Hiring for skills, not ticking boxes

An organisation's ability to authentically convey that a woman has been hired based on talent as opposed to being a diversity hire is a consistent tension within the sector. This requires ensuring women feel respected and believe they have been hired on merit. If organisations are not able to ensure the legitimacy and belief as to why individuals are being hired this can lead to dissatisfaction and challenging work cultures.

“I remember one conversation I had with my boss where I said to him, you didn't hire me because you wanted to reach a target, did you? He said no, I didn't...I hired you because I thought you were the best person for the job... that's the moment that I let it go... But it did cross my mind because I'm a woman. It would probably not cross the mind of a man”

— Interviewee 11



of survey respondents said working in sport was the most popular reason for getting involved.



Insight Four: Attraction



Job capabilities versus sports knowledge

It is not uncommon for women who hold a technical with a proven track record, but limited sporting knowledge to have their capabilities and opinions questioned.

“I still have a colleague who was senior ... I know doesn’t give a crap about what I think about various things. Because I’m not a [sport mentioned] specialist, how can I possibly have a view?... It doesn’t matter, the fact that I’ve got 26 years of experience of different sectors, much more complex organisations”
— Interviewee 18

These experiences call into question what is being valued internally, and such norms may result in missed opportunities to attract or retain talent from diverse, non-sporting backgrounds.

Interestingly, 43% of survey respondents had held a role outside the sport industry. These women were more likely to have a role in broadcasting production, software programming and developing sport computer technology reflecting how, for some roles, technical expertise is more important than contextual sporting knowledge. These women were also more likely to join the industry due to role responsibility, promotion, pay, and location with a reduced focus on the appeal of working in sport.

Actionable changes:

Organisations can implement both immediate and long-term initiatives to attract women into sport technology roles. From a HR perspective, inclusive wording on the advert description, images that visibly show women in senior roles, and ensuring the job is advertised publicly and transparently will appeal to a broader talent pool.

Involving women in the recruitment process through shortlisting, interview panels, and tours for prospective staff can reinforce the commitment to gender inclusivity and provide candidates with someone relatable to help understand the organisation.

“One of the things that made me accept this offer over other sports tech offers that I had is because of one coworker that I have here. That’s a woman around the same age as me.”
— Interviewee 20

Framing role responsibilities and organisational characteristics appropriate to the level of seniority is important to ensure the different desires, values and characteristics held by each group are prioritised. Regardless of how sport has historically functioned, the prioritisation of sporting knowledge needs to be reflected upon. Many roles do not require in-depth knowledge of the sport, and an individual’s technical skills should be the primary driver for recruitment. By ensuring a role appropriate balance between sporting knowledge and technical ability, an organisation will be able to attract a more diverse range of talent.



Insight Five

Retention:

“I know what I need to do,
I just need an opportunity
to show it”



Insight

Leaders visibly living and enacting a commitment to diversity, inclusive practices, and employee development helps retain women in sport technology roles.

Insight Five: Retention

Quality leaders

Retaining talented staff is a key priority for all organisations. Staff retention relies on employees being fulfilled within their current role. For women working in sport technology roles, satisfaction with a role and the decision to stay with an employer are connected to various organisational factors including opportunities for development, culture, and transparent promotion processes. High quality leadership plays a significant role in employee satisfaction and retention as managers and executives set organisational culture, and gatekeep development and progression opportunities.

“I also did my professional accountancy qualification supported by [employer] at the same time. And then took on varying different roles in the finance departments and moved sideways and upwards and until very recently had never applied for a job, always got the job discussed and morphed or created or was just part of a development plan”

— Interviewee 22

Senior leadership set culture

Strong senior leadership should ‘walk the walk’ and set an inclusive and supportive culture through public advocacy and enacting policies with clear, measurable goals to ensure accountability alongside reviewing why policies may be failing.

“Senior leadership team and managers saying look go out and find out why aren’t we seeing these people reach everything we’ve laid out for them? And finding the root cause and talking to them and getting to the bottom of what’s going on.

And when people see that happening, they’ll see that as real-world help, not talking and ticking boxes”

— Interviewee 18

When senior leadership fails to create structures and norms that support inclusivity and development, there is little incentive for women to stay in sport technology roles.

“I guess that we’re just being treated like numbers and not any value behind us as people and any interest in developing us as people. And I know that comes from the top down because I have a lovely manager, but I don’t feel there’s any support in career progression or development”

— Interviewee 7

Line management

Effective line managers set the workplace culture, provide support, and create opportunities for junior staff. Both mid- and senior-level staff frequently relayed stories of supportive managers who were pivotal in their careers and decision to progress through a company.

“I had a really good female mentor there who was my line manager at the time, and we were going through a redundancy and a restructure. And at that point, she put me forward to work towards project management certification. So, while I was there, I became a project manager. And I attribute a lot of my career to her”

— Interviewee 7

Equally, poor line management negatively impacts employee retention, partly from a perceived lottery of being allocated a manager who doesn’t create opportunities, or simply by working under individuals who prioritise their own careers and fail to recognise the developmental needs of their staff.

“You find a lot of people become quite selfish in that point [mid-level management] ... Because of the lottery of your line manager, your opportunities are gone”

— Interviewee 1

For women working under these line managers, quality management can be the difference between staying in a role or leaving.

“He [line manager] was so supportive and at a very difficult time in my life and I maybe would have dropped out or gone somewhere different that wasn’t so hard. I wouldn’t have progressed to another level”

— Interviewee 10



Insight Five: Retention

Sponsorship

For organisations attempting to retain female talent working in sport technology roles, career progression opportunities whether through professional development or promotion should be a central focus. Successful progression was underpinned by sponsorship.

Sponsorship places an emphasis on senior staff advocating for junior colleagues to be given greater responsibility and opportunities. Further, the importance of demonstrating capabilities is heightened for mid-level professionals looking to move into senior roles.

“Mid-career, which is where I am, it’s all about sponsorship. I know what I need to do. I just need an opportunity to show it. And so, I need somebody who’s in the room”

— Interviewee 17

Actionable changes:

To improve retention of women in sport technology roles, training for line managers should focus on :

1. Demonstrating how to provide and create opportunities for employees
2. Supporting staff with career plans
3. Implementing flexible working practices

HR policies and overseeing line manager allocation alongside clear and transparent promotion criteria can reduce the politics associated with development opportunities and promotion processes. Organising a formalised sponsorship programme for junior and mid-level staff can address concerns about access to opportunities.



Profile

Name: Erika Abbas Hanna
Job Title: Senior Director of Hardware Operations
Organisation Name: Hudl (Agile Sports Technologies Inc.)

In my career, I have developed hardware products across multiple technologies, starting with electronic paper eReaders (E Ink), audio speakers (Sonos), and now video and data capture (Hudl). I now lead the teams that manufacture and deliver Hudl cameras and wearables worldwide. While every customer has a unique need, it is exciting to see how similar approaches to problem solving can be applied across many different industries. I never imagined that I would work in sport technology, but the drive to excel and the need to build and grow high-performing teams exemplified in sport resonates greatly with all my work in hardware.



Being given opportunities is an important factor in supporting women in sport tech from their journey from mid to senior level roles. What are your reflections on this and the role of mentorship and sponsorship?

I feel passionately about the difference between mentorship and sponsorship. Early in your career, mentorship is very impactful, and it is important to spend time with a mentor who can advise you on daily activities. Each person you encounter has something to teach and you usually have ample opportunities to learn and grow, because most experiences are new. However, by mid-career, mentorship becomes less valuable. You already have encountered many experiences and have the tools to manage these. Of course there is always something new to learn, but growth can stall.

In this stage, sponsorship becomes significantly more valuable. A sponsor is someone who has access to assigning new responsibilities or projects, who is in the room when new opportunities are discussed, and who knows both your strengths and what challenges you want to take on next. In mid-career, promotions are as dependent on timing, and business need, as they are on your skills and hard work. Sponsorship by a senior leader can be the difference between being given the opportunity to demonstrate the skills that take you to the next level and being passed over. Mentorship and sponsorship are valuable for both men and women, however given the multifaceted realities and challenges that often disproportionately impact women, these are important support mechanisms for women to access.

“ Sponsorship by a senior leader can be the difference between being given the opportunity to demonstrate the skills that take you to the next level and being passed over.”



Insight Six

Caring Responsibilities:
“The reality is there are women who are doing an awful lot more at home”



Insight

Poor organisational support for women with caring responsibilities leads to women holding mid-level roles dropping out of the sport technology industry.

Insight Six:

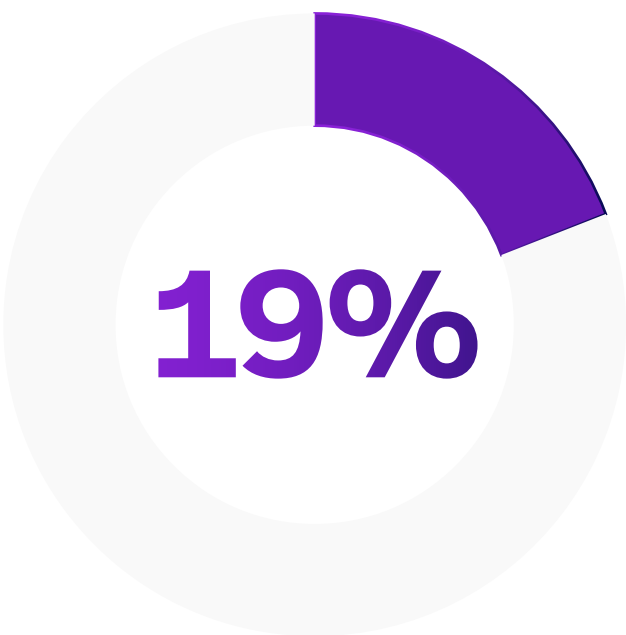
Caring Responsibilities

Losing women in mid-level roles

Typically, caring responsibilities primarily fall on women creating a loss of talent at mid-level roles when women are most likely to choose to have a family. Other caring responsibilities exist (e.g. sick spouse, elderly parents), however childcare often sits with women, leading to competing obligations that alter work-life balance.

“A lot of people really struggle with that [childcare], and we also find females will leave first over males and they’re usually looking for more stability compared to males”
— Interviewee 1

Caring responsibilities change what women value in a job. Survey respondents with caring responsibilities (19%) were less influenced by a love of sport instead favouring role responsibility, promotion opportunities, better pay, and prior knowledge of the organisation.



were less influenced by a love of sport instead favouring role responsibility, promotion opportunities, better pay, and prior knowledge of the organisation.

Sport tension with caring responsibilities

Women with caring responsibilities were more likely to specify flexible working practices as important for supporting gender inclusivity, illuminating the shift in the needs of certain women working in sport technology. Working in sport can include travel demands, the need to be ‘on the ground’ attending events, and working during social hours (e.g. playing golf at the weekend and late-night dinners) which conflict with the heightened caring responsibilities and stability often required for those with dependents.

“I think in the end; the travelling lifestyle is something that it’s a limiting factor for a lot of people ... I’ve seen a lot of women around my age (late 30s and early 40s) ... They’re amazing, they’re so qualified. But then, they have the feeling that they need to go home and settle down, otherwise that’s something they’d miss out on”
— Interviewee 24



Insight Six: Caring Responsibilities



Actionable changes

It is critical for senior staff to advocate and demonstrate a caring culture, by embodying and showing empathetic leadership. This builds trust and leads to staff believing their organisation values and supports individuals with caring responsibilities.

“I worked for a chief executive who ... wouldn’t miss an assembly. He wouldn’t miss a school play ... it was the best advocacy any parent could have. And it’s much more impactful when the dads do that than the mums” —
Interviewee 9

Different work formats and mechanisms (e.g. rotational, job share, remote) can unlock and retain female talent that is being lost at mid-level, as women perceive they must make a choice between home and work. Organisations must ensure their policies and processes support individuals with caring responsibilities. Policies could include clear and visible family leave policies (e.g. in job adverts, onboarding), as well as specific training for line managers to support those with caring requirements. Additionally, an organisational code of conduct could be considered that focuses on the notion of care and how these principles (e.g. flexible mindset, community centred approach, acknowledging different working circumstances) can showcase commitment to building a diverse and inclusive workplace culture.

The realities of the organisation still need to be considered, and an approach is needed to identify ways in which groups with varying needs and responsibilities can be supported effectively, to minimise loss of talented staff.

“I do believe at a certain point there’s a mismatch. Where the reality of this organisation in certain level roles is that you won’t be back to have dinner, and you won’t be able to pick them up from school. You’re just physically not going to be able to do it. I think there’s also the right balance to be struck ... is there a reality that says for this period those two things don’t mix, but actually let’s make sure there’s a route back in for people like that?”
— **Interviewee 22**

This questions the feasibility of ‘having it all’ within some silos of the sport industry and presents the need to reflect on deep-rooted systems and beliefs about how certain organisations function and if different approaches could be considered to make certain environments and roles more inclusive.

Insight Seven

Workplace Technology:
“We can hire anybody
around the world to come
and do this job and there
is no limit”



Insight

Implementing workplace technology that reduces the demanding job requirements of the sport industry can help retain women in the workforce and facilitate innovative practices.

Insight Seven: Workplace Technology

Changing attitudes to work

Norms and attitudes to working patterns have shifted following Covid-19 as employees have developed preferences for greater flexibility to work remotely. Behind this change has been the proliferation of workplace technologies that enable remote working, online collaboration, and digital communications. The sport industry is well positioned to capitalise on workplace technology where working hours and locations have historically been tied to events (see Job Demands of the Sports Industry on page 7).

“COVID allowed us to be fully remote, whether you were two minutes down the road or in another country. And it’s not just that it gives you the access. People just think it’s the norm ... you’ve seen more and more of it of where they want people back in the office. And that if you start to kind of go backwards on that approach, you won’t be able to support women to stay in those sectors as well”

— Interviewee 10

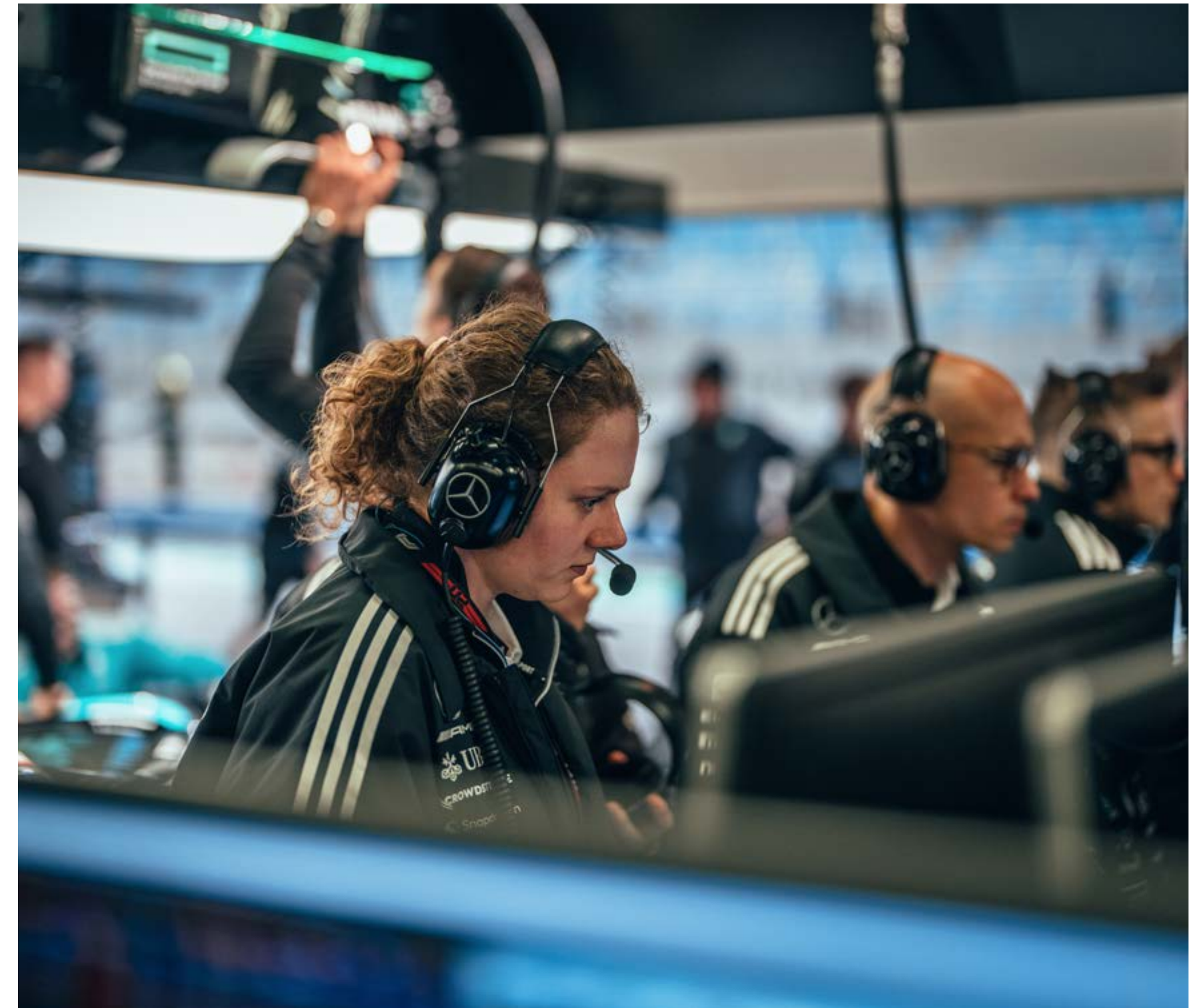
Innovation

There is a connection between workplace technology and innovation as flexibility and global coverage have enabled individuals that might have previously been excluded from roles to maintain their positions. By reducing employment barriers such as geographical location and caring responsibilities, teams can be comprised of more diverse staff groups which helps with ideation.

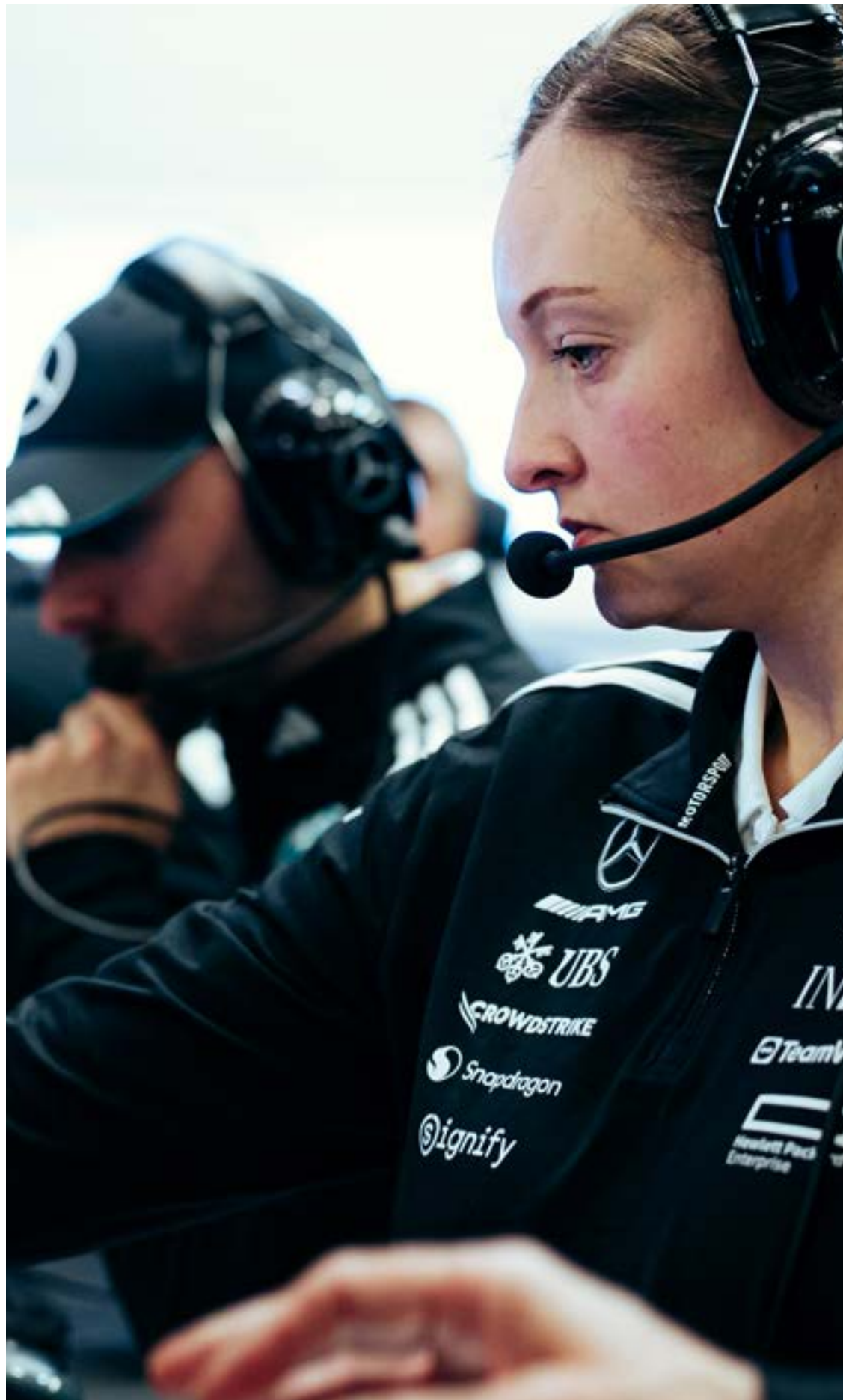
“Workplace technology has enabled the ability to be more flexible in terms of where and how we collaborate across the team. From a working mother perspective, this has allowed additional flexibility to work from home to accommodate parents’ evenings or school commitments without having to take a full day annual leave. This increases loyalty towards the organisation in response to supporting commitments outside work.”

— Survey response

Supporting this connection, nine in ten respondents believed workplace technology contributes to innovation.



Insight Seven: Workplace Technology



Work-life balance

Interestingly improved flexibility enabled by workplace technology has not necessarily improved work-life balance. Often, rather than increasing efficiency, workplace technology displaces traditional working hours. Work is completed at home in the evenings and weekends to catch up for caring responsibilities undertaken during traditional office hours.

“I’m quite strict with myself, I won’t answer emails and things outside of hours. There was a real clear blue pill, red pill moment for me, four months ago where I just so happened to check Slack and the product manager asked me if I could jump on a call, it was 9:00 at night. I was like, I’m in my pyjamas. You’ve got to be joking”

— Interviewee 12

Women were contactable at all times of the day blurring the lines between work and home, in addition to the existing demands of sport limiting the ability to achieve work life balance in many cases. In the survey, fewer women reported improved work-life balance or innovative working practices indicating that how workplace technology is implemented and managed is fundamental to reaping the potential benefits.

Actionable changes

The implementation of workplace technology to drive innovation requires openness to hiring remotely to secure the best talent. Remote working practices can be enabled through workplace technology but requires managers to support this approach. Practically, organisations need to ensure organisational infrastructure is in place and all staff have access to workplace software and hardware.

From a cultural perspective, workplace technology can be used to employ the best person for the job regardless of location and gain more diverse points of view to inform innovation. HR policies should therefore support onboarding workers from other locations or countries. Creating clear boundaries and policies for work-life balance are necessary to ensure workplace technology does not replicate the work-life balance issues it is intended to solve. Examples include implementing acceptable email times and providing work phones that can be switched off outside typical business hours.

Creating clear boundaries and policies for work-life balance are necessary to ensure workplace technology does not replicate the work-life balance issues it is intended to solve.

Insight Eight

**Inclusivity as a
Path to Innovation:**
“When you diversify,
whether it’s the skill set or
who we are as humans, you
will get the best answer”



Insight

Increasing gender inclusivity provides more diverse views and lived experiences that lead to innovative working practices, solutions, and products within sport technology.

Insight Eight: Inclusivity as a Path to Innovation

Inclusivity fuels innovative practices

Gender inclusivity, as well as other forms of diversity drives innovation, generating significant organisational benefits. Diverse lived experiences, cultures and lenses through which individuals see the world, leads to employees bringing new ideas, altered ways of working, and different approaches required for innovation.

“To me, it’s obvious that if you have everyone from the same background, you’re always going to get very similar approaches... the more variety you have, the more different ways of thinking... and different ideas... makes innovation”

— Interviewee 8

The survey findings add further weight to the overwhelming view amongst interviewees that gender inclusivity improves innovation. Nine out of ten participants believed that gender inclusivity contributes to various types of innovation such as creating new products or services, improving business processes (e.g. manufacturing, supply chain logistics, sales), and altering the way a company operates, delivers value, or makes money. This was primarily believed to be due to inclusivity.

1. Improving the range of perspectives and experiences influencing thinking
2. Introducing different working processes
3. Increasing the number of ideas generated

The ability of managers to step out of their comfort zone and accept that gender inclusivity provides a competitive advantage to an organisation is necessary to ensure genuine investment in diversity and the opportunities that it brings.

“When I just have one-to-one meetings with a male to talk about a project, especially if they’re higher up as well. They always have their own direction to go with same data set, they could have different approach to it, and they want me to do things their way. Which I struggle with a little bit sometimes because what you see is different from what I see”

— Interviewee 16

Without gender inclusivity, there are limits to the way in which technology can be utilised to design products and services, and this can result in exclusionary thinking.



Insight Eight: Inclusivity as a Path to Innovation



Actionable changes

The benefits of gender inclusivity can only be realised if there is belief from senior leaders, as this mindset permeates through the rest of the workforce. It is pivotal to embed inclusive practices into the organisation and celebrate different perspectives and viewpoints to get the best out of the workforce.

“I look at a team as a whole when we do recruitment. What are your gender diversity gaps? What issues can we solve within your team? Talking to managers about the positives that gender diversity brings and diversity in general... getting someone with a completely different background and opinion to just challenge you and bring in that idea”

— Interviewee 3

2 out of 5 survey respondents felt that their organisation was not doing a good job relating to gender inclusivity, meaning 40% are not satisfied. Some organisations are not fully embedding and authentically demonstrating their commitment to gender inclusivity.

Authentic organisational investment internally to alter systemic beliefs, structures and cultures around gender inclusivity and its value is paramount to attract, but importantly retain women who will believe diversity efforts are genuinely embedded into the DNA of the organisation. Unconscious bias training for all staff would be a valuable initial step to changing internal beliefs and ensuring predispositions are minimised. Additionally, funded scholarships for prospective talent from underrepresented groups should be considered, as a way enhance accessibility and show commitment. It is imperative though that DEI efforts are collective, rather than select individuals feeling burdened with the responsibility.

“It gets tiring... I have to fight and fight. I’m the only woman. I’m the only Latina. And you carry the weight., The Latino community wants you to represent them Then the women want you to represent them, and then the working parent. And so, you’re doing your job, and then you’re representing three different cohorts. I’m like oh God, it gets so tiring and like, OK, I’m done. I can’t do this anymore. I’m gonna exit. I’m done fighting”

— Interviewee 23

Profile

Name: Marilou McFarlane
Job Title: Executive Coach, Consultant and Advisor
Organisation Name: Women in Sports Tech (WiST) Founder



As a trailblazer and a successful leader in the sports tech industry and a former NCAA Division 1 athlete, Marilou founded Women in Sports Tech (WiST) to drive growth opportunities for women and employers in sports tech. Her experiences in C-suite leadership roles at Mustard, Edufii (CoachNow), STATSports, and SportsBoard led her to recognise how valuable diversity is to the innovation process, and the value that underrepresented groups bring to the industry through new ideas and ways of working successfully together, which benefit the organisation. Today, as an Executive Coach, she works with leaders globally in the industry through coaching, consulting and advising to build strong and inclusive work cultures and to reach their own peak performance as leaders within sport business.

What do you think organisations could do to increase the representation of women in sport technology roles? Could you recommend 2 priorities or key considerations?

Women are still significantly underrepresented in sport technology roles. Organisations looking to drive meaningful change should consider focusing on two key priorities.

First, build robust talent pipelines. Business leaders must be intentional about recruiting, developing, and retaining women in sport tech. This starts with early exposure—offering mentorship, internships, and role models for young women and non-traditional candidates. Partnerships with organisations like WiST and others can provide access to diverse talent and ensure women have clear pathways into the industry. Additionally, leadership and career development programs tailored to women can help break the cycle of underrepresentation at senior levels.

Second, create inclusive workplace cultures. Representation alone isn't enough, businesses must foster an environment where women feel valued, supported, and empowered to lead. This means going beyond traditional DEI efforts and embedding inclusive practices into organisational DNA. Transparent promotion pathways, equitable pay structures, and strong sponsorship internally (not just mentorship) are critical. By taking these steps, organisations can drive lasting change and build a sport tech industry that truly reflects the diversity of the athletes and fans it serves.

“Transparent promotion pathways, equitable pay structures, and strong sponsorship internally (not just mentorship) are critical.”

Recommendations

Initiatives and change cannot be considered in isolation but rather a concerted effort to enact immediate and long-term actions will support heightened gender inclusivity within sport organisations. The changes below can also benefit all employees.

Here we outline the next steps various groups should consider.

Senior leader

- Undertake equality impact assessments to acknowledge and systematically examine organisational intersectional biases
- Invest in initiatives, policies and activities that connect senior leadership with junior colleagues (e.g. listening forums, role model programmes)
- Show sustained and consistent commitment to inclusivity initiatives
- Collaborate with schools and universities through talks and site visits to alter stereotypes about working in technology
- Put on internal events to celebrate and showcase women in senior roles making them visible
- Consider different work formats and mechanisms (e.g. rotational, job share, remote) to secure talent that may be excluded by other work models
- Enact an organisational code of conduct focusing on the notion of care

Line manager

- Implement flexible working practices, alongside clear boundaries and policies for work-life balance (e.g. acceptable email times, providing work phones)
- Create a formalised sponsorship programme for junior and mid-level employees
- Provide opportunities for employees to gain experience in advanced roles
- Support staff with career planning
- Evaluate the inclusivity of social events and workspaces

Colleagues

- Understand the value of allyship and key behaviours such as inclusive meeting practices, junior career mentorship, engaging in employee resource groups, and advocating for organisational change
- Mentor and sponsor junior colleagues
- Reflect on the inclusivity of your own behaviours and language

Women in sport tech roles

- Join communities
- Identify events and opportunities that suit your needs and personality
- Be active in relevant employee resource groups
- Connect with other women colleagues

Human resources

- Enable employee resource groups and provide appropriate resources
- Involve women and underrepresented groups in recruitment process including shortlisting and interview panels
- Publicise clear and transparent promotion criteria
- Offer internships and funded scholarships to prospective talent to increase exposure and access for underrepresented groups
- Deliver unconscious bias training to all staff
- Train line managers to support those with caring requirements



Breaking barriers

This research has evidenced the barriers to entry for women in sport technology and demonstrated how to overcome them to unlock talent and enhance innovation. The presented evidence shows the organisational benefits to product, process, and business model innovation that can be generated from gender inclusivity. Leaders should see inclusivity as a competitive advantage that rewards organisations willing to realise, support, and embed gender inclusivity as part of their cultural DNA.

A range of actions have been proposed for organisations to consider, these are intended to improve gender inclusivity. The actions range from immediate, proactive changes that businesses can make to increase the attractiveness of jobs and retain women within the technology workforce through to long-term, systemic actions requiring resources, leadership buy in, and cultural repositioning at an organisational and societal level.

Leading change

Throughout this research the importance of leadership was acknowledged as integral to setting organisational culture. Tangible organisational action to minimise barriers and inequalities felt by women is a critical first step. Actions include support and development structures (e.g. sponsorship), effective line management, and education around allyship, as these all contribute to an organisation's ability to show authentic and meaningful change towards gender inclusivity.

Societally, there is need for collective effort from leaders across all STEM related sectors to change stereotypical narratives around their industries and increase awareness of the importance and value of diversity. Deep routed stereotypes and beliefs are resulting in many women and girls believing certain subjects and industries are not for them. It is the responsibility of all enterprise and business leaders to work to change these misconceptions and showcase women within these fields.

Redefining workplace culture

Regardless of progress resulting in more women entering the sport technology industry, the research insights demonstrate how women feel the need to harness masculine traits to navigate sport technology spaces. These behaviours raise a significant question as to why women feel this is needed to survive (and thrive) within the sport industry. Organisations must continue to develop workplaces and cultural norms needed to allow women to be their true self, rather than assimilating their identity to match the dominant male persona.

Final thoughts

Is sport its own worst enemy? The prioritisation of sporting knowledge and fandom to assess an individual's credibility and capability to undertake their role leads to missed talent opportunities. Misplaced belief that sporting knowledge is synonymous with performance in a technology role, underscores the challenge facing sport organisations addressing gender inclusivity.

Women in sport technology are a diverse collective with varying values, realities, and needs. Therefore, targeted interventions and support is required to attract and retain related to different attributes such as, level of seniority, caring responsibilities, disability, and remote workers. If steps can be taken to celebrate such differences, the value of women within the workplace will be truly realised.



Appendix 1:

Survey Methodology

Study design: Cross-sectional, online survey.

Data collection: The survey consisted of 5 sections and 48 questions.

Survey Design: The survey was based on previous research investigating the experiences of women working in STEM roles and focussed on the following areas:

The survey was based on previous research investigating the experiences of women working in STEM roles and focussed on the following areas: Piloting: Prior to data collection the survey was piloted with four women working in sport technology in different capacities and levels to collect feedback on ease of completion, relevance to participants, wording, and any missing questions or responses. Following piloting, several additional response items and two open ended response boxes were added to provide greater flexibility.

Target population: To be eligible participants were required to identify as female, be over the age of 18 and have the capacity to fully understand and consent to the research. They were employed by an organisation in the sport sector (e.g. sport teams, international federations, national governing bodies, league and competition organisers, media, sport product design and manufacturing, sport technology providers) in a role that involves the use of technology to improve sporting or commercial performance. Examples of eligible roles included but were not limited to software programmers, performance and video analysts, sport scientists, apparel design, engineering sport equipment, mechanical engineering, developing sport-specific computer technology, broadcast production, and business analysis roles using software for customer and sponsorship insights.

Administration: The survey was conducted online hosted on JISC surveys. The survey was open for five weeks from the start of February 2025 to March 2025. The survey was distributed using non-probability convenience sampling through online advertisement on LinkedIn and women in sport networks. The limitation of convenience sampling is that the response rate cannot be calculated.

Sample size: 155 responses were collected. Response rate could not be calculated due the convenience sampling method employed.

Ethics: Ethical approval for the survey was obtained from Loughborough University. The survey was anonymous, and informed consent was mandatory for completion. Participants were not required to answer any questions they did not wish to.

Analysis: Descriptive statistical methods have been applied to summarise and segment the data. Chi-square (χ^2) analysis was used to compare associations between categorical variables. All analysis was undertaken using JASP (Version 0.19.3) [Computer software].

Appendix 2:

Survey Participant Demographic Data



Job Level					
Entry-level	31	American Football	1	Portugal	1
Mid-level	91	Baseball/Softball	2	Saudi Arabia	1
Senior leadership or C-Suite	32	Cricket	2	Solomon Islands	1
Ethnicity		Football (Soccer)	46	South Africa	4
Asian (Bangladesh, Indian, Pakistani)	4	Hockey	1	Spain	2
Asian (prefer to self-describe)	2	Golf	2	Sweden	1
Black (African, British, Caribbean)	8	Gymnastics	2	Switzerland	3
Chinese	2	Modern Pentathlon	1	United Kingdom	80
European (prefer to self-describe)	9	Motor Sports	14	United States of America	35
Mixed or multiple ethnic (prefer to self-describe)	11	Netball	1	Have you previously worked in a similar role to your current position outside of the sports industry?	
White (English, Irish, Scottish, Welsh)	92	Rowing	1	Yes	66
White (prefer to self-describe)	22	Rugby	15	No	88
Other ethnic group (prefer to self-describe)	2	Sailing	1	Commercial or sporting performance related role	
Parenting or caring Responsibilities		Tennis	2	Commercial	60
Yes	29	Volleyball	1	Sports performance	55
No	121	Weightlifting	1	Both	25
Prefer not to say	3	Multi-sport organisation	56	Other	14
Disability or long-term health condition		Organisational Headquarters Location		Technology in your role	
Yes	12	Australia	7	Software programming	56
No	140	Barbados	1	Performance and video analysis	64
Prefer not to say	2	Brazil	1	Sport science testing	39
Organisational Size		Canada	1	Apparel design	7
Under 10 employees – micro-organisation	10	Denmark	1	Engineering sports equipment	15
Under 50 employees – small organisation	30	Finland	1	Mechanical engineering	4
Under 250 employees – medium organisation	28	France	1	Developing sports computer technology	32
250+ employees – large organisation	6	Germany	1	Broadcasting (i.e. production elements)	21
What sport does your organisation primarily work with?		India	1	Using business specific software	59
Swimming	1	Ireland	3	Social media analytics	51
Water Polo	1	Italy	1	Other	25
Athletics (Track and Field)	2	Kenya	2		
		Luxembourg	1		
		Netherlands	2		
		New Zealand	1		
		Nigeria	1		



Appendix 3:

Interview Methodology

Study design: One-time, semi-structured, online interview protocol.

Interviewer characteristics: Interviews were undertaken by both members of the research team (one female, one male). Both are experienced qualitative researchers with doctoral level training in research methods that have conducted interviews in the sport industry previously. Both interviewers are employed as Senior Lecturers in sport business.

Relationship with participants: Participants had not met the research team prior to the interview.

Sampling: Sampling was purposeful to identify and ensure high-quality participants were selected who could contribute meaningfully. Convenience and snowball methods were employed to recruit participants as the research team drew upon existing connections within the sport technology industry to advertise the study and facilitate introductions to eligible participants. Participants were approached via LinkedIn and email and the purpose of the interviews was made clear from the beginning.

Inclusion Criteria: Two groups were eligible for participation. To be eligible via group 1, participants had to identify as a female and be working in mid-level or senior-level role with strategic responsibility that uses technology to improve sporting or commercial performance within a sport organisation. To be eligible via group 2, participants had to be at a senior level responsible for employee attraction and retention or relevant strategic leadership in recruitment. Twenty-five interviews (20 women in group, and 2 men and women in group 2) were undertaken with mid and senior-level individuals working in the sport sector capturing the views of a diverse cohort.

Interview guide: An interview schedule was devised that focused on seven key areas relevant to the aims of the research. Interview questions were based on previous research and key findings from the survey focussing on:

- Factors that attract and retain women in sport technology roles
- Reasons for the underrepresentation of women in sport technology roles
- Perceptions of gender inclusivity in the sport sector

- Workplace culture and technology
- Role of networks
- The relationship between inclusivity and innovation
- Initiatives to promote diversity and gender inclusivity

The interview script was piloted to ensure all questions were clear and understood by participants.

Data collection: Each interview was recorded, and an interview transcript was generated for analysis. Notes were also taken during interviews to keep track of emerging concepts. Interviews typically lasted 60 minutes and ranged from 30-70 minutes.

Analysis: Thematic analysis was undertaken by both researchers applying inductive, open coding to the interview data within Lumivero NVivo (Version 14). Iterative analysis led to the generation and refinement of the insights. Data saturation was achieved as ongoing analysis indicated that after 15 interviews no new parent codes were created from the data.

Appendix 4:

Interviewee Characteristics



Interviewee No.	Role	STEM Field	Organisation Type	Organisation Head Office	Organisational Scope
1	Broadcast Technician (mid-level)	Engineering	Sport Technology Provider	Europe	Global
2	Sport Science (mid-level)	Science	Sport Technology Provider	Europe	Global
3	Strategy (mid-level)	Technology	Sport Technology Provider	Australia	Global
4	Strategy (senior)	Technology	Sport Simulation	Europe	Global
5	Strategy (senior)	Technology	Non-profit organisation	North America	North America
6	Broadcast and Media (senior)	Technology	Football Team	Europe	Global
7	IT Project Management (mid-level)	Technology	Football Team	Europe	Global
8	Race Performance (senior)	Engineering	Motor Sport	Europe	Global
9	Operations (senior)	Technology	International Governing Body	Europe	Global
10	Digital Lead (mid-level)	Technology	Non-profit organisation	Europe	National
11	Broadcast Systems (mid-level)	Technology	Competition Organiser	Europe	Global
12	Product Designer (mid-level)	Technology	Sport Technology Provider	Europe	Global
13	Product R&D (mid-level)	Engineering	Sport Equipment	North America	Global
14	Strategy (senior)	Engineering	Competition Organiser	Europe	Global
15	Product owner (mid-level)	Technology	International Governing Body	Europe	Global
16	Data Analyst (mid-level)	Mathematics	National Governing Body	Europe	National
17	Hardware Operations (senior)	Engineering	Sport Technology Provider	North America	Global
18	IT (senior)	Technology	International Governing Body	Europe	Global
19	Technology Operations Manager (senior)	Technology	Competition Organiser	Europe	Global
20	Data Analyst (mid-level)	Mathematics	Sport Technology Provider	North America	Global
21	Data Analyst (mid-level)	Mathematics	Football Team	Europe	National
22	Operations (senior)	Technology	Motor Sport	Europe	Global
23	Strategy (senior)	Technology	Non-profit organisation	North America	North America
24	Technology Integration (senior)	Technology	International Governing Body	Europe	Global
25	Data Analyst (mid-level)	Mathematics	Football Team	Europe	Europe



TeamViewer provides a Digital Workplace platform that connects people with technology – enabling, improving and automating digital processes to make work work better.

In 2005, TeamViewer started with software to connect to computers from anywhere to eliminate travel and enhance productivity. It rapidly became the de facto standard for remote access and support and the preferred solution for hundreds of millions of users across the world to help others with IT issues. Today, more than 640,000 customers across industries rely on TeamViewer to optimize their digital workplaces - from small to medium sized businesses to the world's largest enterprises - empowering both desk-based employees and frontline workers. Organizations use TeamViewer's solutions to prevent and resolve disruptions with digital endpoints of any kind, securely manage complex IT and industrial device landscapes, and enhance processes with augmented reality powered workflows and assistance - leveraging AI and integrating seamlessly with leading tech partners. Against the backdrop of global digital transformation and challenges like shortage of skilled labor, hybrid working, accelerated data analysis and the rise of new technologies, TeamViewer's solutions offer a clear value add by increasing productivity, reducing machine downtime, speeding up talent onboarding, and improving customer and employee satisfaction.

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