

How One Technology Company Managed to Hire a More Diverse Work Force



Jennifer Dulski: Make your company attractive to women.
CHANGE.ORG

By EILENE ZIMMERMAN
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When it comes to hiring, Silicon Valley has long been a bastion for white and Asian men. In fact, at several of the world's most well-known tech companies, including Google, Apple, Yahoo and Facebook, women account for [fewer than one in five tech jobs](#). Several of those companies have said [they are serious about improving](#) the gender makeup of their work forces and for good reason — [research](#) shows that companies with more diverse teams tend to perform better financially.

Jennifer Dulski, president and chief operating officer of [Change.org](#), a start-up that provides free, online petition tools to facilitate social change, has made it a priority to recruit a diverse staff. Change.org has more than 80 million users (we wrote [about the company](#) last year), and this month it received \$25 million in funding to expand. Located in the heart of Silicon Valley, the organization has more than 200

employees now and 51 percent are women. Its leadership team is 40 percent women, and they make up 27 percent of the engineering team.

“Diversity is perspective,” Ms. Dulski said. “And you want to understand the differing perspectives of your user base.”

(Change.org would not disclose its own racial diversity numbers. “We are still awaiting the results of a staff survey to collect ethnicity data,” Ms. Dulski said. “We are actively working to make sure we have representation among the various aspects of diversity that matter to our staff.”)

Ms. Dulski was a co-founder and chief executive of The Dealmap, a start-up that aggregated local discounts from hundreds of group buying sites. [Google acquired Dealmap in 2011](#), and Ms. Dulski said that made her the first woman to sell a company to Google. She stayed there for 18 months as a senior executive before joining Change.org in January 2013. What follows is her advice for start-up founders who want to recruit more women.

Think about gender diversity early in your company’s formation.

It’s too late when you’re a thousand-people company to realize you’ve ignored diversity, so put it into your values early and send a clear signal to current and prospective employees that you care about it.

Be proactive.

Reach out to women, rather than waiting for them to come to you. We work with several programs that train female software engineers like [Hackbright Academy](#), [Femgineer](#), [Hack Reactor](#) and [Zipfian Academy](#). We also started hosting speakers and networking events in conjunction with Femgineer, and we invite female engineers to come to our offices to speak and network with other engineers. Sometimes they’ll talk about a purely technical topic and sometimes about their career path. These events bring people to our offices so they can see what we’re like and we can meet them.

Be open to female candidates with a variety of backgrounds.

One thing that has worked for us is being open to hiring smart, eager and talented women even if they do not have as much experience as someone else might. We look at a variety of candidates and widen our net as much as possible, so we can bring in more women that we can consider for jobs. Some of the women we’ve seen are newer to engineering — they are career-changers who might have come from industries like investment banking or marketing — and that actually brings an



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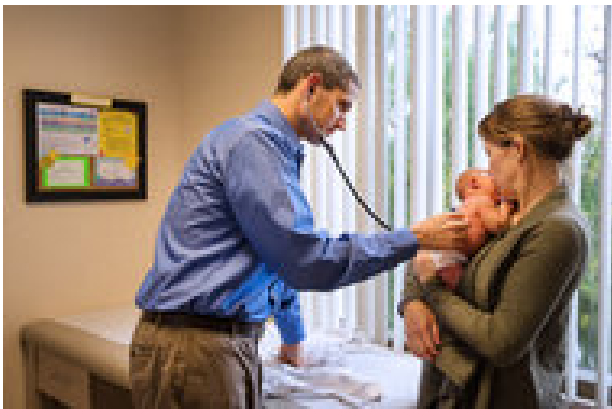
Put in place policies and programs that cultivate a diverse work force. For us, that means things like our women’s mentorship program. Ours is called WHOA — Women Helping Others Achieve — and there are about 100 women that participate. It was created by the women on our team, not the leadership. The program includes mentorship pairs, which means that everyone is both mentor and mentee. We feel everyone has value to add to the other, no matter what your career stage or your experience. They meet monthly to discuss topics of their choosing or one chosen by the program’s leadership. We also have a Life Hack series, where women give a presentation in an area in which they are expert or about their career paths and changes they’ve made. It gives them the opportunity to practice giving a presentation to a large audience.

Another thing we’ve done is to update our parent leave policy, which now gives 18 weeks of paid parental leave, whether that’s for biological or nonbiological parents. By offering more paid leave to all parents we are addressing one of the last policies in the workplace that still perpetuates inequality.

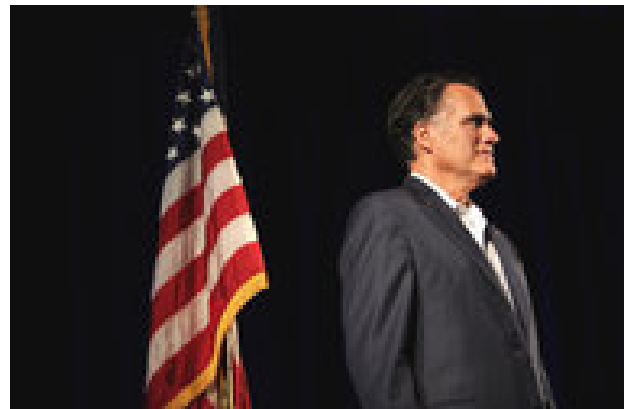
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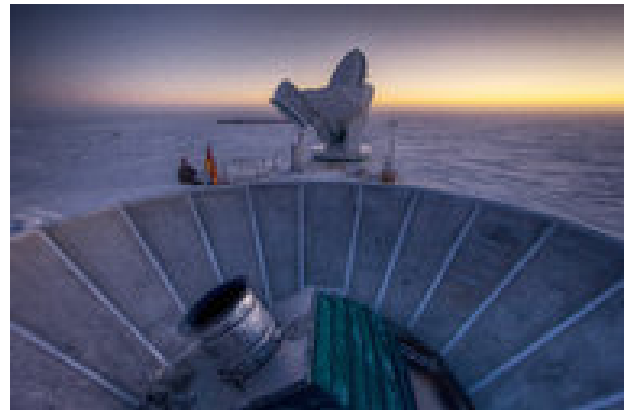
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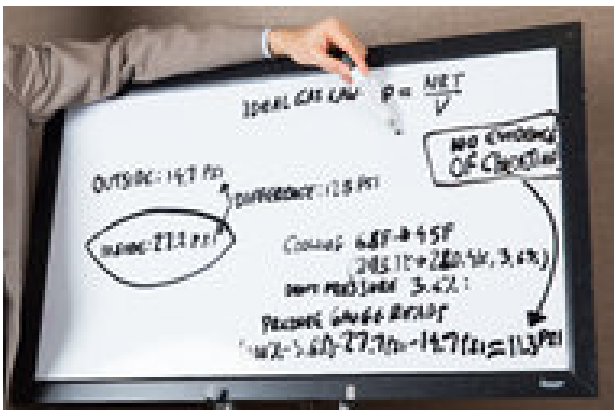
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