

Encouraging and Supporting Women in IT – FDM Group

Issue

The IT industry is renowned for being one of the most male dominated sectors, made up of only 14.4% women in the UK. This issue stems from childhood perceptions and has been a problem in the industry for decades, despite the first programmer in the world being female (Ada Lovelace). Furthermore, research reveals that women currently hold 20% of senior management positions globally, with even less representation across management roles in the IT industry.

Action

FDM commissioned an internal review to assess how many women were in the business and also how many of these women were in management positions. FDM took a number of actions to increase diversity, by launching a global *Women in IT campaign* to encourage more women into the industry. This campaign involves:

- Hosting career seminars and networking events called 'Advantage Sessions', to inspire and advise women who are seeking to work in IT
- Carefully selecting 'Female Champions' throughout various levels of the business to act as role models and assist in promoting the opportunities for women. These are all female FDM staff based in Europe, USA and Asia
- Introducing a 'Buddy Scheme' where women at FDM can request a female mentor from the business
- Creating a 'Women's Network' where a panel of staff from all levels of the organisation discuss/suggest internal and external developments
- Sponsoring Computer Clubs for Girls (e-skills CC4G) so that female youth can learn more about IT in a fun and entertaining way
- Partnering with everywoman to sponsor the FDM Everywoman in Technology Awards 2013, recognising and rewarding role models throughout the sector
- Becoming a supporting partner of the everywoman in Technology Leadership Academy to develop female talent via master classes, panel discussions, inspirational speeches and online resources

Result

The number of women at FDM has been increasing steadily since the launch of the campaign, with now over 50% of the management team being female and 23% of staff overall. In 2012, FDM's COO, Sheila Flavell, was honoured as 'Corporate Leader of the Year' at the Cisco everywoman in Technology Awards and as a result of these efforts, the UKRC invited FDM to sign the CEO Charter recognising their commitment to encouraging and supporting women in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET). In 2012/13, FDM was voted into The Top Ten IT Employers for Women by students/graduates across the country (trendence survey, Guardian UK 300). FDM is proud to be championing women in IT and will continue to encourage, nurture and support women worldwide.