

BUSINESS

Tech's gender mix slowly changing

Women in the field say cultural and educational shifts are needed.

SANTA MONICA • Josh Bigelow was one of a handful of men in a conference room at the Shore Hotel.

A couple dozen women gathered to discuss the lack of women in tech jobs.

The biggest names in the tech industry recently released their diversity numbers – Yahoo, Google, Facebook and LinkedIn – and they weren't good. Fewer than 2 out of 10 of their tech jobs were occupied by women, spurring a national conversation.

Bigelow, who co-founded L.A. startup Syncromatics, had a question for the group at the Silicon Beach Fest earlier this summer: how do I attract women?

He had tried. When there was an opening on his development team, he rounded up about 75 candidates. Three women applied. One did well on a competitive coding test.

Her name is Wendy Closson. Closson didn't end up taking the job. She didn't feel she was the right fit. But Closson knows all about the issues facing women.

When she excelled in math in school, she was told to be a teacher – not an engineer.

She was awkwardly hit on at tech conferences.

"You want to come to my hotel room after this?" "I was like what? It was so blunt. It wasn't even really flirting."

There's a reason that the only female-dominated panel at a tech conference was on the dearth of women in tech.

Closson said three things need to change to get women in tech: culture, the message and education.

CULTURE

Tech culture has been heavily documented. Just watch "The Social Network" or HBO's "Silicon Valley."

In "The Social Network," Facemash – Facebook's predecessor – objectified women (and men) by playing a game of hot or not. The movie shows women on the arms of the engineers at clubs and

SEE TECH • PAGE 3

BY THE NUMBERS

- 11 percent** of American engineers are women
- 15 percent** of USC computer science degrees went to women in 2013
- 23 percent** of UC Irvine computer science majors were women in 2013-2014
- 27 percent** of USC engineering degrees were women in 2013
- 23 percent** of UC Irvine engineering majors were women in 2013-2014
- 27 percent** of UC Irvine computer science faculty are women, a 10 percent increase from 2001
- 15 percent** of Facebook tech jobs are occupied by women
- 17 percent** of Google tech jobs are occupied by women
- 17 percent** of LinkedIn tech jobs are occupied by women
- 15 percent** of Yahoo tech jobs are occupied by women



SAM GANGWER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

El Pollo Loco has seen a post-recession turnaround in same-store sales. Its stock jumped 60 percent on the first day of trading.

WALL STREET CLAMORS FOR A TASTE OF CHICKEN

El Pollo Loco stock surges 60 percent on first day of trading.

Wall Street loves the crazy chicken.

After pricing its initial public offering at \$15 a share, first-day trading of El Pollo Loco stock surged 60 percent Friday – peaking at \$24.40 on Nasdaq and giving the company a market value of about \$862 million.

Trading under the ticker "LOCO," the Costa Mesa-based fast food chain made its trading debut in New York with CEO Steve Sather ringing the ceremonial opening bell.

El Pollo Loco stock closed at \$24.03, up \$9 from its initial offer. The IPO raised more than \$107 million.

Sather said "100 percent of the proceeds will be used to pay down debt." In its regulatory filings, the 401-unit chain reported a debt load of

nearly \$299 million.

Despite seeing a turnaround in sales, the company reported a \$16.8 million net loss in 2013, compared with \$7.8 million the year before.

Once the debt burden is cleared, Sather said, El Pollo Loco can redirect "cash flow" on store makeovers and expansion.

"I fully think we can be a national brand," he said.

The company's restaurants are in California, Arizona, Nevada, Texas and Utah. Sather said



Sather

SEE LOCO • PAGE 4



NANCY LUNA STAFF WRITER

Obama urges end to loophole letting firms shield profits abroad

By MICHAEL D. SHEAR and DAVID GELLES THE NEW YORK TIMES



Obama

LOS ANGELES • President Barack Obama on Thursday called for Congress to strip tax advantages that have encouraged a rush of mergers and acquisitions that give companies an overseas base while they maintain their presence in the United States.

In an appearance at a technical college that was intended to focus on job training, the president used unusually harsh language to describe U.S. companies that acquire

overseas companies to relocate for tax reasons, known as inversions. He said they were renouncing their American citizenship by "cherry-picking" the nation's tax laws at the expense of ordinary taxpayers.

"I don't care if it's legal – it's wrong," Obama said, prompting the audience to boo the companies taking advantage of the practice.

Tax inversions play a

prominent role in two proposed mergers involving Orange County drug companies. In early April, Anaheim-based Questcor Pharmaceuticals said it would be acquired by an Irish company, Mallinckrodt, for \$5.6 billion. Both companies noted that being based in Ireland, a notorious corporate tax haven, would eliminate about two-thirds of the taxes on Questcor's \$30,000-per-vial drug, Acthar.

In a far less friendly takeover attempt, Quebec-based Valeant Pharmaceuticals

SEE LOOPHOLE • PAGE 4

MORE INSIDE

CHEAP DEBT FUELING BAD DEALS

The hedge-fund firm run by David Einhorn sees an opportunity to bet against Mallinckrodt Plc should its takeover of Questcor Pharmaceuticals be completed. Einhorn said the deal illustrates how cheap financing is fueling a surge in takeovers even of troubled companies. **Page 4**

MARKETS DOWN

The Dow fell 0.7 percent this week. It's the first time the Dow has closed below 17,000 since July 9. The S&P 500 closed basically unchanged, and the Nasdaq rose 0.4 percent this week. **Page 6**

MARKET RECAP



Dow Industrials
Close: 16,960.57
Change: -123.23



Nasdaq Index
Close: 4,449.56
Change: -22.55



S&P 500 Index
Close: 1,978.34
Change: -9.64



10-year Treasury
Close: 2.47%
Change: -0.03



Oil per barrel
Close: \$102.09
Change: +\$0.02



O.C. gas prices:
Gallon: \$4.036
Change: -\$0.002

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TECH: Engineering programs aim to attract more women



JEFF GRITCHEN, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Katie Bates, a customer experience manager at Syncromatics in Los Angeles on Tuesday, is the only woman at the tech company that makes tracking devices for buses.

FROM PAGE 1

parties. In the HBO show, the only noticeable female plays an assistant.

Why aren't female engineers on TV – like doctors on "Grey's Anatomy" or lawyers on "Law & Order," or a female police officer on "The Killing"?

To get to where and why the male-dominated tech culture exists, you can start at where most tech companies start – as a startup. The ratio there is even more skewed toward men. Many have less than 1 out of 10 women in tech jobs. Some have none.

Look at their job postings: there's no wonder why startups attract men, Closson said.

The applicant should code in his/her off-time and be prepared for long hours. The company advertises ping pong tables, free snacks and beer.

"I want pedicures. I want tea breaks," Closson said. "I want to be able to have a child-friendly atmosphere. I want flexible hours."

It's no surprise startups are mostly men, Pinterest engineer Tracy Chou said.

"A lot of startups don't have time to wait for a good female candidate to come along," Chou said.

They're usually a small team that needs to replace a missing cog in the machine as quickly as possible. Women need to be seen as an investment, she said.

Closson said the marketing should change. A competitive sal-

ary isn't enough. Women are attracted to engineering for a different reason.

Female engineers want to make a difference, such as creating prosthetic limbs or solving environmental problems, according to a study from UC Irvine sociologist Carroll Seron.

The research also shows women are consistently discouraged in their educational experience.

Companies need to go to high schools and universities for women and minorities – recruiting them for internships and encouraging them to stick with their majors when it gets tough, Chou said.

Pinterest has women in 16 percent of its tech jobs – on par with Google and other companies. But Pinterest aims to change that number. This year, its engineering internship program grew up to 32 percent women.

You won't find people pulling all-nighters at Pinterest anymore. Since 2010, the team of 15 has grown to 400 employees. Work-life balance is important. Employees have flexible hours and can work remotely. Pinterest has maternity and paternity leave. The babies are jokingly called "Pinfants."

STARTING EARLY

Luke Melia, co-founder of the app Yapp, noticed his daughters weren't getting the computer education he had hoped for in New York City's public schools.

So he began teaching 6-year-

old Jemma and 8-year-old Chiara how to code – mostly using Hopscotch, Codecademy and kid's Ruby.

Now Jemma asks, "Hey, when can we do Javascript again?"

Last year, the girls created animated Christmas Cards – complete with falling snow and a Santa that shrunk and went up a chimney.

"It's like a different world and not many people know about it," Chiara said about coding.

To his daughters, there's no question that coding is for girls.

GIRLS NEED SUPPORT

Gary Carter runs the Youth Tech Program for the city of Santa Monica.

The city started the summer program three years ago after the Silicon Beach scene exploded on the Westside – with companies like Hulu and Snapchat nearby.

During the six-week program, the high school students learn to code and how to start their own tech startup – including critiques from branding experts. At the end, they pitch their ideas to a panel of investors and city officials.

This year the program had six girls out of 27 participants, triple previous years.

His goal is 51 percent participation.

Girls do apply. But unlike the male students, he hasn't seen the same support from parents.

One year, a girl applied but her

mother said she had another commitment – a fitness camp to get her in shape for the prom.

"That upset me," he said. "Really? They're going to a fitness camp to prepare for the prom? You're going to value you that higher? This has academic and career value."

WHAT GENDER GAP?

A few years ago, when Ava Eastman was a student at Laguna Beach High School, she didn't know about a gender gap. She was supported by her chemistry teacher, Steve Sogo, who encouraged her to do an advanced research course, where she led a team of students.

It wasn't until the chemical engineering major started visiting schools that it dawned on her – there aren't that many women in engineering. She got into a half dozen top tier schools for engineering, such as UC San Diego, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and Boston University.

She remembered going to the University of Washington, one of her top picks, and seeing maybe a couple girls in an army of men.

She persuaded a faculty member to talk to her about the field. He told her she'd have a "tough road" in an all-male field. She decided against the school.

Now she's at the University of Colorado at Boulder, a school that is pioneering – getting national recognition – in its recruitment of women and under-represented

minorities.

Eastman went to Girls Explore Engineering – a day where the school invites about 100 high school students to hear female faculty and alumna about careers in engineering. The message? Engineering is a helping profession. Engineers change the world.

Her backup school suddenly become her top choice.

Eastman says sometimes her classes for more than 50 percent women. In her sorority, her best friends are engineers.

About a third of engineering and computer science majors at Boulder are women, which is on par with most schools in the U.S.

So girls aren't dominating computer science yet, but the fact they're getting excited could say something – couldn't it?

This year, for the first time in UC Berkeley's records, more girls than boys signed up for an introductory computer science course – 106 women and 104 men, according to the San Francisco Chronicle.

Samantha John thinks getting girls excited early is key. That's why she co-founded Hopscotch, a programming game for kids that's received accolades in the tech world.

John was always insecure about coding in college. "It just seemed like something for boys," she said. "I was really surprised when I found out how much I liked computer science and programming."

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