**Empowering and Supporting Women in STEM Fields**

By Lisa Harvey Roach

Empowered women in the workplace benefit everyone. When women are empowered, they are more confident and have more control to make better decisions. To foster this outcome additional opportunities for training, sponsorship, and advancement into senior-level positions are needed. I encourage men and women to read this article, then think about what they can do to bring about equity and inclusion in the workplace.

**Did You Know?**

Ladies, did you always know what you wanted to be when you grew up? When I was in High School, I knew my next step was college but I didn’t know what my major would be. With help from a classmate’s father, who was a Doctor, I ended up in Engineering. What about you? What events and individuals helped to shape your life and career?

**Facts About Women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math)**

* For the past 30 years, women have consistently represented 26% of the STEM workforce.
* In 2018, there were 11.2 million STEM jobs; 8.3 million were filled by men while 2.9 million were filled by women.
* As the demand for STEM talent increases, women’s share of those jobs remains relatively flat.
* Earnings gaps exist. Per the [Pew Research Center](https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2018/01/09/women-and-men-in-stem-often-at-odds-over-workplace-equity/ps_2018-01-09_stem_a-09/), women in STEM earn approximately $20,000 less per year than men.

**US Bureau of Labor Statistics STEM Job Classifications:**

* Computers and Math: e.g., Computer Scientists and Systems Analysts, Computer Programmers, Software Developers
* Engineering and Surveying: e.g., Surveyors, Cartographers, Aerospace Engineers, Chemical Engineers, Civil Engineers
* Physical and Life Sciences: e.g., Medical Scientists and Life Scientist, Atmospheric and Space Scientists, Chemists and Materials Scientists
* Management: e.g., Computer and Information Systems Managers, Architectural and

Engineering Managers, and Natural Science Managers

**A Successful STEM Role Model**

There are numerous successful women in STEM fields. [Clarice Phelps](https://thebrilliant.com.au/profiles/clarice-phelps/) is one. Ms. Phelps played a key role in discovering a new element on the periodic table, at Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL). The element is 117 and is called Tennessine.

**Supporting All Women in the Workplace During a Pandemic**

Per the “[Women in the Workplace 2020](https://womenintheworkplace.com/)” report, the pandemic has negatively impacted women, more so than men. Women—especially women of color—are more likely to have been laid off or furloughed during the COVID-19 crisis, thus stalling their careers and jeopardizing their financial security. The pandemic has intensified challenges that women already faced. A few suggestions, from the report, on how to overcome those challenges follow:

1. Make work more sustainable

To make this happen, leaders and managers can reduce burnout by looking at productivity and performance expectations set before Covid-19 and ask if they’re still realistic. They may also need to reset goals, narrow project scopes, or keep the same goals and extend deadlines.

1. Reset norms around flexibility

Covid-19 has made it much harder for employees to draw clear lines between work and home, and many employees feel like they are “always on.” Companies should look for ways to re-establish work-life boundaries. For example, establishing set hours for meetings.

1. Take steps to minimize gender bias

The pandemic may be amplifying biases women have faced such as higher performance standards, harsher judgment for mistakes, and penalties for being mothers and for taking advantage of flexible work options. To mitigate the biases that women are up against, companies need to make sure that employees are aware of them.

**What Can You Do to Help?**

1. Serve as a role model and mentor to young girls and women.
2. Be an advocate for women in STEM fields.
3. Speak up! (Go to [LisaHarveyRoach.com/speakup/](https://LisaHarveyRoach.com/speakup/) for more information.)

"I was taught that the way of progress was neither swift nor easy." - Marie Curie, female STEM superhero

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Lisa Harvey Roach is a speaker, trainer, consultant, and engineer who is committed to helping others soar to their highest potential. Through her consulting and training, she shares proven strategies that help her clients win at work and in life.

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