

Unblocked: Women Working Influence in Cryptocurrency

There are encouraging signs the crypto industry is working to achieve

By **Joanne Cleaver** - May 1, 2018

This is the crypto industry's chance for #NotYouToo.

As the tech industry struggles with its copiously documented gender gap, women in blockchain and cryptocurrency are working to avoid repeating the mistakes made in other industries.

"So far, it seems to us that the major players in the crypto and blockchain industry are not taking a more enlightened approach than the tech industry in general," according to a statement by the four co-founders of the [Token Women Project](#). "We want to educate women about the industry and how to get involved, but we want to elevate the voices of women who are using blockchain for social impact."

Less Likely to Hold Senior Roles

[Catalyst](#), of New York, and the [AnitaB.org Institute](#), a Palo Alto, Calif.-based nonprofit that advocates for women in tech, find that women are "three times less likely than technical men to hold senior roles." Catalyst finds that women comprise 12.2 percent of women technologists leave companies by mid-level." Catalyst finds that women comprise 12.2 percent compared to 17 percent of consumer brand companies and 16.9 percent of financial services companies.

*WOMEN ARE RARE ENOUGH IN THE CRYPTO INDUSTRY THAT THEIR
RELATIONSHIPS ENHANCE THEIR POWER. SIMPLY RAISING
THEIR OWN VOICES AND PRESENCE A BIT MORE THEY CAN CHANGE*

Similar statistics have yet to be collected for the cryptocurrency and blockchain categories, but preliminary reports of 67 companies, women accounted for just 17 percent of the employees at companies that even had women; a third of those women held senior roles.

Yet, there is a small but promising countertrend of women asserting their qualifications as company founders, corporate executives, and industry leaders. The more women entering the industry now, the more will become founders and leaders.

"Now is the best opportunity for women to enter the industry," says Alice Hlidkova, founder of [Through the Change](#). "The business case is not in debate. The issue is how to put it into action."

She tells *ThirtyK* the crypto industry is more open to gender equality, partly because the current generation of leaders is more open to it. "When women say, 'I have an idea,'" says Hlidkova.

Women are still so scarce that each one has a disproportionate effect on attracting other women and in product development. "Simply by raising their own voices and presence in the industry that their relationships enhance their power," she said.

Looking to Boost Participation

That women were not often in speaking roles at last January's North American Bitcoin Conference sparked much criticism. [A Miami strip club](#) for a party generated enough criticism to change industry conversation to action.

"We'd love to see the various blockchain and cryptocurrency gatherings and conferences commit to having 50 percent more coverage in the mainstream tech news websites and magazines covering women who are building companies. One of the Token Women's co-founders and public relations director of Boise, Idaho-based marketing firm Oliver F. & Partners said, "We need to make sure that with everything happening in one place, one demographic deciding how this stuff gets built out and how we use it. We need to hold ourselves so that we can hold each other and the industry accountable for not being left behind again."

Pivotal Roles at IBM

There have been a few signs of progress.

Women are calling out the industry, determined to prevent history from repeating itself. "We need to make sure that with everything happening in one place, one demographic deciding how this stuff gets built out and how we use it. We need to hold ourselves so that we can hold each other and the industry accountable for not being left behind again."

Two women – Bridget van Kralingen, senior vice president of global industries, platforms and blockchain, and Donna Dubinsky, senior vice president of IBM's blockchain initiatives.

The business and tech media are tracking gender equity and related issues closely, well aware of the heightened attention on gender pay equity research and advocacy. Groups, such as the online CryptoSister, are forming so women can meet and support each other.

About 250 people attended the first Women in Blockchain conference held in late April at the University of California, Berkeley. The Summit featured an all-woman panel on women in blockchain.

Advocates for metrics and accountability are rapidly emerging. "If you can't measure it, you can't improve it," says an intelligence company Querlo, which in 2013 started supporting digital education for Afghan women. "There are an inclusive culture. Each company can select and adapt them as needed. Simply put, it's less about any one yardstick and more about understanding one's colleagues."

Joanne Cleaver

Joanne Cleaver is a Chicago-based freelance, business and lifestyles journalist based in Chicago. Her work has appeared in a variety of publications. In her journalism career, she was the deputy business editor at the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.