

**FUTURE IS FEMALE**



It's not  
the robots  
you should  
worry about

**the FUTURE**

# ***‘Women possess more of the skills least likely to be automated’***

Which of us will be left with jobs when the robots take over?

According to Jason Hong, a computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon University, those of us in jobs that rely on creativity and empathy will be the last ones standing. Caregivers, artists and people-managers can breathe a collective sigh of relief (for now)... and so can women, who in the most part naturally possess these two traits.

Pew Research Center’s Women and Leadership 2018 study shows that women rank higher than men in nine out of the 12 qualities and competencies required for effective leadership. These include “being compassionate and empathetic,” “creating a safe and respectful workplace,” and “standing up for what they believe in.” What do these results mean for the future of work in the age of technology?

In an effort to ease our anxiety, AmCham gathered a panel of experts at its Future of Work Forum on January 29 to discuss why hiring (and promoting) women is the key for companies to flourish in the age of AI.

## **The REAL competition**

The last thing Emma Kenyon, Senior Manager for Business Development at Aetna International, worries about is a robot stealing her job.

She thinks people who are curious-minded, who develop a range of soft skills will always have employment options in the future.

“There will always be opportunities for people of diverse backgrounds with empathy, good communication skills and who understand human behaviors. I see those people as being my future competition, not the technology that will come and take over jobs,” she says.

Women make up almost 60 percent of undergraduate students on US college campuses, according to a March 2018 report by Bloomberg. With more women than men graduating from US colleges for the past

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three decades, the paltry representation of women in senior workforce positions is striking.

“When I speak to other women of my age, they are similarly frustrated and fed up of having the same conversations over and over about things like decent pay, and nothing changing,” says Kenyon.

In 2017, women in the US earned 82 percent of what their male counterparts took home, according to Pew. But the days of educated, talented women willing to stay at a company that doesn't invest in them may be numbered. Companies may soon face a choice between promoting their female staff or risk losing out on the best talent.

“I want to work at a company where I can see women working at all levels of the organization. Any organization where you stop seeing women at management levels — why would I want to work in a place like that?” says Kenyon.

## **Two to tango**

Brian Henderson, Chief Operating Officer at Baker & McKenzie and recipient of AmCham's Champion for the Advancement of Women WOI Award in 2017, knows all too well that workplace equality will remain a dream if men don't do their part to help.

While he has enjoyed a public platform to talk about such issues without negative repercussions to his career, he acknowledges that his female co-workers don't always get the same opportunities.

“Women tend not to be that vocal as they know they might get penalized in terms of their career progression. Men like myself don't experience this, and this is something a lot of men don't appreciate,” he says of his



speaking opportunity on the panel.

According to the 2018 Pew survey, just 53 percent of US respondents felt that “being assertive” helps a woman’s chances of getting ahead at work, compared to the 73 percent who felt that the same quality can help a man.

Men can do their bit by acknowledging workplace gender biases which prevent their female colleagues from reaching their full potential, and if possible, speaking out against them.

“It’s not the women we need to fix,” he says.

### Redefining success traits

A February 2018 report by PwC confirms what we’ve been told so far, which is that automation and AI will impact men and women in different ways. The study, which looked at the jobs of over 200,000 workers across 29 countries and the skills involved in each, revealed that 34 percent of jobs held by men, versus 26 percent of jobs held by women, are at risk of being automated.

“Soft skills, people skills — things we associate with a more feminine, caring approach to the workplace will be valued more in the future,” says Rob Koepp, Director at The Economist Corporate Network of The Economist Group.

‘Human’ qualities will become highly sought after in the best employers as well. “Employers must accommodate people’s need for flexible time — not just seeing people as resources who have to show up on time to do a job,” he says. Robots, people are not.

Citing Susan Cain’s award-winning book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can’t Stop Talking*, Koepp says introverted traits such as listening and learning, still viewed largely as feminine qualities, are not typically associated with workplace success though they should be.

“In our capitalist workplace, ‘alpha, extroverted’ individuals with a ‘not-always-right-but-never-in-doubt’ confidence are rewarded. But we are all different,” he says.

Welcome to the future of work. Leave your preconceived notions of success at the door.