NEW AMERICA

What can cybersecurity leaders do to bring more women and girls into and up through cybersecurity?

Map Career Pathways:

Make career pathways in cybersecurity roles in your organization clear. How does each work role lead to the next position? Be explicit about the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to advance into those positions. Find ways to measure progress in unambiguous, trackable ways, and hold periodic career assessments with your employees to discuss their progress towards their goals.

Watch out for "Volunteer" Jobs:

Whether it is organizing birthday cupcakes, serving as rapporteur at the planning meeting, or taking on the project that "we all know is more work than it is worth," volunteer jobs reduce the amount of time employees can spend on the projects that build their portfolio. Such jobs tend to fall disproportionately to women. Create a company culture that prioritizes distributing these jobs evenly and allows employees to say "no" without penalty.

Make Your Policies a Selling Point:

Flexible work schedules, paid family leave policies, review and advancement programs, and other inclusive policies matter to more than just your current workforce. Good policies are a way of attracting and retaining talent, and particularly women. Your employees have friends in the industry. Give them a reason to tell those friends about your supportive working environment.

Cultivate a Culture of Mentorship:

Consider ways to reward employees who invest their time in helping others. Create opportunities for mentorship. This can be as formal as scheduling meetups and connecting new hires with seasoned employees, but it can also be informal. Physical space—like the office kitchen—that encourages employees from all departments and seniority levels to cross paths can help to build a culture of mentorship. Company leaders (of all genders) can also demonstrate this culture by visibly making time to serve as both mentor and mentee.

Boards that Care:

Board members of any gender can help to make inclusivity a priority throughout the organization. Beyond just being good business practice, recruit diverse board members who signal their dedication to inclusion through their own behavior and choices help to establish and reinforce company culture. National groups that help place women in C-suite positions and on boards can be an asset in instilling these priorities.

Women make up less than one-quarter of the cybersecurity workforce, which can lead to less innovation, inferior design, seriously underutilized human potential, and needlessly unfilled jobs in a growing field. In short, this lack of gender diversity means poorer security.

To counter this trend, we convened a diverse group of experts from corporate, academic, nonprofit, and government backgrounds. Their job was to generate new ideas, share emerging efforts, and consider strategies to bring women into and up through cybersecurity careers. This series of one pagers features these ideas, efforts, and strategies.