

## PERSPECTIVES

A weekly collection of viewpoints and analysis

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50 W. San Fernando St., Suite 425, San Jose, CA 95113  
SVBJNews@bizjournals.com



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### GUEST VIEWPOINT

# BREAKING THE SILICON CEILING

BY CHRIS MCGUGAN  
Contributing writer

**S**ilicon Valley is a beacon of innovation in the ever-evolving world of technology. Yet, beneath its shimmering facade lies a persistent shadow: the glaring gender disparity. As the leader of a company predominantly powered by women, I witness this inconsistency and advocate for its change.

The recent UN report on bias toward women underscores a global issue that resonates deeply within the tech industry. Prejudices against women persist, with nearly 90% of people worldwide holding such biases. This is a stark call for a seismic shift in societal attitudes. The sentiment is echoed in the recent controversy surrounding Barbie's portrayal in a film, which became an unexpected litmus test for society's evolving views on gender roles. If a mere doll can spark such fervent debate, it magnifies the profound challenges women face in male-dominated sectors like technology.

My journey in Silicon Valley has been both enlightening and disconcerting. While many tech giants continue perpetuating a homogenous workforce, Televerde is a shining example of diversity. Incarcerated women, frequently overlooked, make up most of our team. Their dedication and talent underscore the untapped potential sidelined by societal biases. Interacting with them brings to mind the pivotal women in my life, leading to a pressing question: If we champion women personally, why the disparity professionally?

Televerde's success story is a testament to the power of diversity. It challenges the tech industry's status quo, proving that diversity isn't just a corporate social responsibility checkbox but a catalyst for innovation and growth. When provided with the right opportunities, these women have shown they can rival the best in the business, debunking long-held myths and biases.

However, the broader tech landscape paints a different picture. Once, women held a stag-



Chris McGugan is CEO of Televerde, a B2B sales and marketing company that is based in Phoenix. McGugan, a former Oracle and Avaya executive, is based in Los Gatos and is president of the Silicon Valley Monterey Bay Council, Boy Scouts of America.

gering 70% of programming jobs in Silicon Valley. Today, that figure has alarmingly plummeted. This isn't just a setback; it's a call to action. Companies like Salesforce and Intel have taken commendable strides toward fostering diversity, but the journey is far from over. Their data-driven approaches and initiatives serve as blueprints for others to emulate, emphasizing the undeniable correlation between diversity and business success.

To my peers in the industry, the ball is in our court. We're at the helm of an industry that shapes global narratives. We have the power and the responsibility to champion change, to challenge deep-seated biases, and to pave the way for a more inclusive future. The benefits of diversity extend beyond mere optics. Diverse teams, with their plethora of experiences and perspectives, are hotbeds for creativity and innovation. They are more adaptable, more resilient and more attuned to the diverse needs of a global user base.

In envisioning the future, I see a tech world that mirrors the rich tapestry of our global society. A world where every individual, irrespective of gender or background, has a voice that contributes to the chorus of innovation. The ripple effects of such a transformation would be profound, heralding a society where technology is a tool of empowerment for all.

The call for change is not just a societal imperative; it's deeply personal. To every man in the tech industry: Think of your daughter, your niece and the young girls who look up to you. Do you want to look into their eyes years from now, knowing you could have paved a better path for them but chose complacency instead? Do you want to explain why you clung to the status quo when the world demanded progress?

This is our moment to be the change, to ensure they don't face the barriers we've allowed to persist. Let's not be remembered as the generation that stood still. For their sake and ours, the time to act is now. **🚀**