

# GET IT OFF YOUR CHEST

If you have any feedback or comments on any of the topics covered in this newsletter, or on any other issues, we'd love to hear from you.

Email: [iod.northeast@iod.com](mailto:iod.northeast@iod.com). Each quarter, the best response will feature in this regular column and the author will receive an exclusive gift from the Pen Shop.



[www.penshop.co.uk](http://www.penshop.co.uk)



Allyson Cole is Managing Director of IT Accessed Limited, creators of bespoke software applications for businesses. Allyson has worked at a senior level in both IT and business operations, and specialises in combining the two to achieve efficiency and growth.

Your business needs more women to be involved in IT!

Tuesday 14th October 2014 was Ada Lovelace Day. Without Ada I might not be typing this article on my PC.

Ada's 1843 "computer" program for Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine is regarded as the first ever computer code to be published. It is also described as the most elaborate and complete code written by the people that Babbage surrounded himself with.

Yet despite her legacy the number of women entering computer science degrees has declined steadily since a high in the 1980s, and according to the British Computer Society, women currently make up less than 17% of the IT workforce.

Why the decline?

There has been some research into this with two reasons often mentioned. Firstly, the nurture not nature argument, i.e. girls are not encouraged to become interested in science and technology. Interestingly Ada was Lord Byron's daughter and "Fearing that Ada would inherit her father's volatile 'poetic' temperament, her mother raised

her under a strict regimen of science, logic, and mathematics"!

Secondly, as computing has become a more lucrative career the boys have managed to shoulder the girls out of the way, and a self-perpetuating male dominated working culture has developed.

Why does it matter to your business?

One of Ada's most important contributions is that she was "the first to express the potential for computers outside mathematics". In other words, she took a different view to Babbage and his other associates.

Women have different life experiences, so you need a mix of males and females in a team to provide different perspectives and ideas. This leads to better innovation and a better service for customers.

There are more women in our businesses than ever before, so your B2B clients are more likely to be women than ever before.

If you sell via the internet or use it to market your business beware not understanding women!

Office of National Statistics (ONS) figures show that the slight gap (0.5%) in the percentages of men and women using the

internet in the UK is narrowing, with men's use flattening out and women's continuing to grow.

The use of social networks on the internet is growing; the ONS data from 2014 shows that currently 56% of women use social networking compared to 53% of men.

What can we do about it?

There's a lot to IT these days! To make the best use of IT, modern businesses require people with empathic and communication skills as well as a solid understanding of how complex technologies function. Women get a lot of training in the former from birth – they are in the main not encouraged to develop their technological side!

My recommendations are: review your own personnel, lobby, ask questions of suppliers and encourage girls at school. Others may have more ideas.

References: [www.BCS.org](http://www.BCS.org), for more info on Ada go to [www.findingada.com](http://www.findingada.com) and [www.computerhistory.org](http://www.computerhistory.org) The ONS website is [www.ons.gov.uk](http://www.ons.gov.uk).

For more information on IT Accessed or to contact Allyson, visit [www.itaccesssed.com](http://www.itaccesssed.com)