

WHITE PAPER

# WOMEN IN FINANCE SYSTEMS EVENT: **5 KEY TAKEAWAYS**

BRIDGING THE TALENT GAP BETWEEN  
**FINANCE & TECHNOLOGY**





# INTRODUCTION

SystemsAccountants recently hosted our *‘Women in Finance Systems’* event 2022, an engaging and thought-provoking evening which successfully brought together over forty ERP, EPM and Finance Transformation professionals to discuss the triumphs and challenges being faced by women in the industry today.

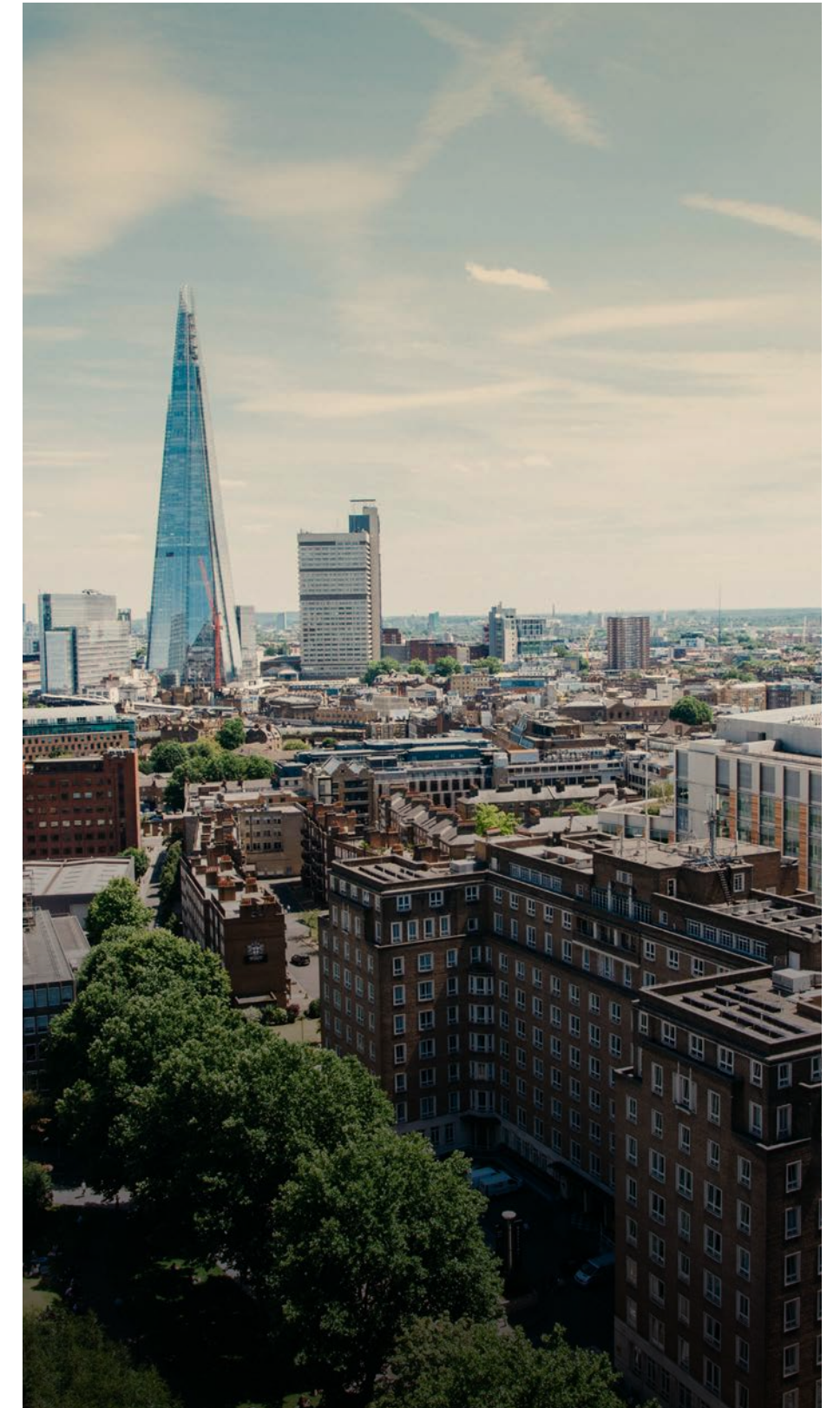
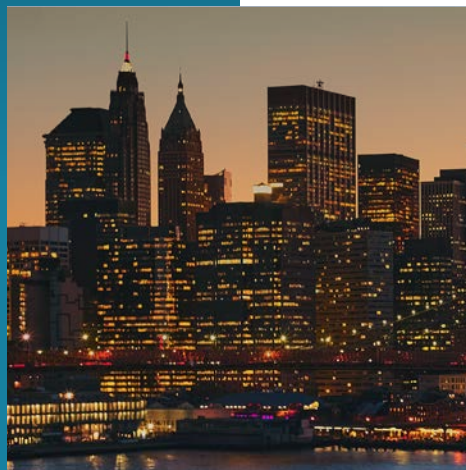
Our guest speakers were two experienced finance transformation managers, Ruvini Fernando and Abigail Round, who covered a range of topics including cultural narratives, gender expectations, mentoring, the importance of soft skills and having the confidence to be your authentic self.

Below are the five key takeaways from the event.



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*I was pleasantly surprised with the women in finance system event. Both speakers had amazing presentations, which encourage as well as reflects on our daily realities.*





# 1: INCREASE MENTORING AND FEMALE LEADERSHIP

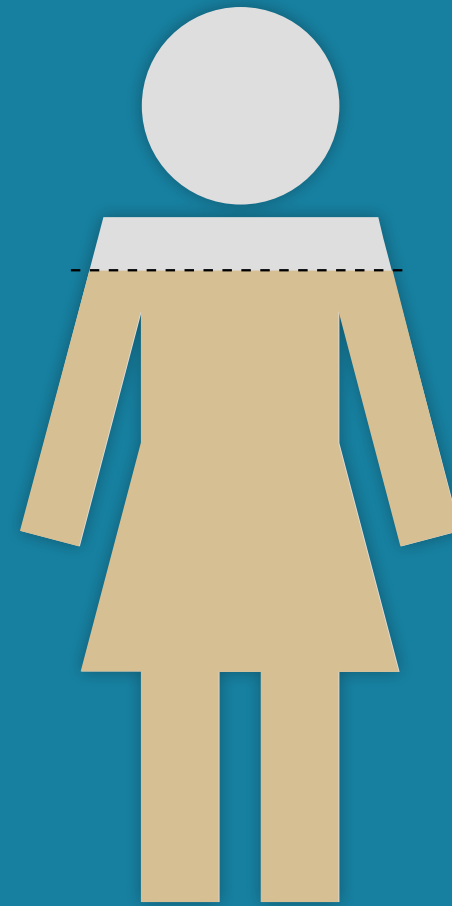
One way to help women develop their ideal careers in finance systems is to encourage mentoring. Perhaps this is why [71%](#) of Fortune 500 companies offer formal mentorship programmes; they recognise the long-term benefits of providing an opportunity for leadership and knowledge-sharing, ultimately improving career satisfaction and employee retention.

Both speakers emphasised the importance of mentorship and female leadership to increase women's success in the workplace, sharing the following tips:

- Find a mentor who's two steps ahead - even if you're in a senior role, a mentor is valuable
- Encourage the diversification of role models with different styles, personalities and perspectives to increase relatability
- Highlight other women who are taking risks - and daring to fail - as models of success
- Share stories of women who are succeeding with blending home and work life
- Say yes to every interview, panel, or opportunity: don't wait to tick every box on a job specification, seize the opportunity for growth
- Don't be afraid to step into the role model position that you wish you had

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*Absolutely enjoyed every bit of it. It was a lovely and insightful evening of women coming together. Thank you to all of you at SA for putting this together. Looking forward to another one.*



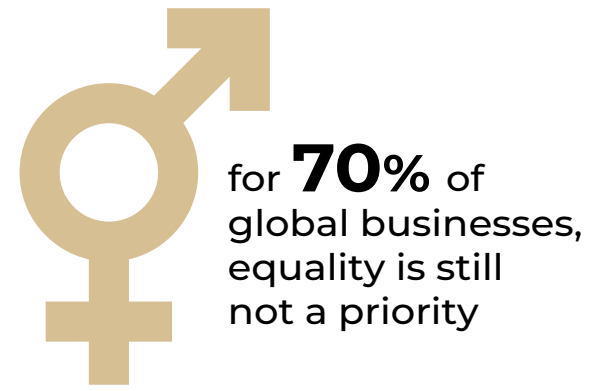
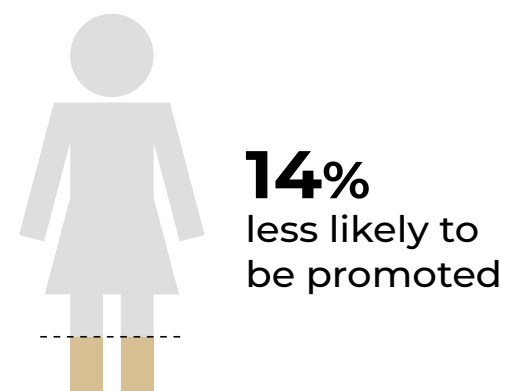
**71%**  
of Fortune 500  
companies offer  
mentorship  
programmes  
for women.



## 2: REFLECTING ON MODERN DAY STATISTICS: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

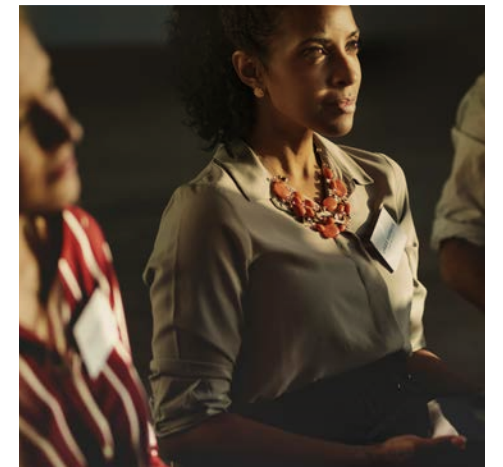
Among other statistics, Ruvini Fernando, an established Systems & Project Manager noted:

- Only [8% of CEOs](#) are women
- Women are [14% less likely](#) to be promoted at the company in each year - despite their performance being rated more highly
- Fixing the [gender pay gap by 2030](#) could boost the eurozone €146 billion in annual GDP by 2030
- Despite women's aptitude and results, an [IBM survey](#) showed that gender equality is still not a top priority for 70% of global businesses



Ruvini's talk prompted women to share some of the challenges experienced whilst working in the traditionally male-dominated accounting and IT departments, where finance systems and [ERP software](#) typically sit.

Conversations arose on some of the biased terminology men and women encounter in the workplace, for example some guests recognised terms as “*bossy*” and “*controlling*” being associated with women, whilst men were referred to as “*assertive*” and “*commanding*”.







### 3: FLEX YOUR SOFT SKILLS TO DELIVER COMPLEX TRANSFORMATIONS

[ERP and EPM](#) programmes allow us to create meaningful change which enables businesses to thrive. But, in reality, “Most people hate change, they’re scared”.

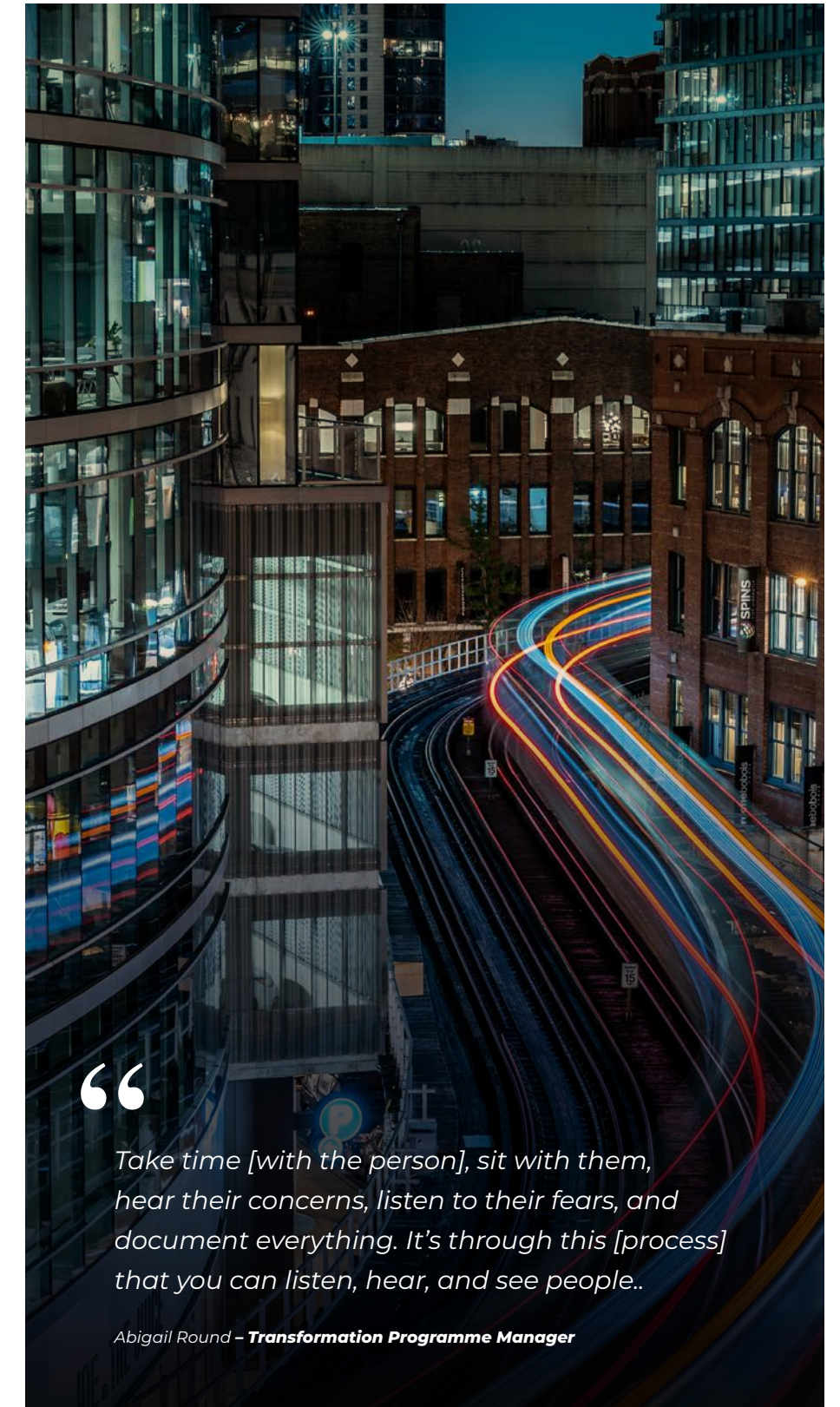
Abigail Round, an experienced Transformation Programme Manager, highlighted the role communication plays in successfully delivering complex programmes. During one particularly stressful transition project, Abigail knew success or failure sat with one senior individual - and that person was sceptical.

In these situations, what does Abigail suggest? The answer sits squarely within soft skills:

“Take time [with the person], sit with them, hear their concerns, listen to their fears, and document everything. It’s through this [process] that you can listen, hear, and see people.”

Abigail invested time with the concerned person, building a personal connection and gaining their trust. By documenting meetings, concerns, and agreements, Abigail increased clarity for her client, to ensure that the complex transformation project was delivered on time and to budget.

It’s this complexity that allows women to flex their aptitude, leadership, and their soft (or [core](#)) skills.



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*Abigail Round – Transformation Programme Manager*



## 4: THERE'S ONLY ONE YOU: SHOW UP AS YOURSELF

The audience were vocal and honest about their experiences in the finance industry. Women shared their experiences of being portrayed as “emotional” or “too assertive”, when fulfilling the same remit as their male counterparts.

When faced with sexism, Abigail said, “You can’t be anyone else, so if you can’t change people’s minds, be confident to be yourself.”

Here are her tactics for [finding the right finance systems role](#):

- Remember that you were hired because you’re great at this complex job
- Finance systems is an exciting and challenging profession; but if your specific industry or company isn’t working for you, [call a recruiter](#) and move on
- Find a team that will value assertive women
- Keep on, be yourself. Know your strengths and learn to celebrate them.

Speaking after the event, she added:

*“Women bring emotional intelligence, advanced core skills and flexibility to complex ERP projects. When we direct these skills, we can make it easier to deliver the work, because we can combine people skills, technical expertise, and business acumen.”*



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*It was a great gathering! I was charged with a lot of positive energy, confidence and enthusiasm.*



## 5: WHAT CAN HIRING MANAGERS DO TO ENCOURAGE MORE WOMEN TO APPLY?

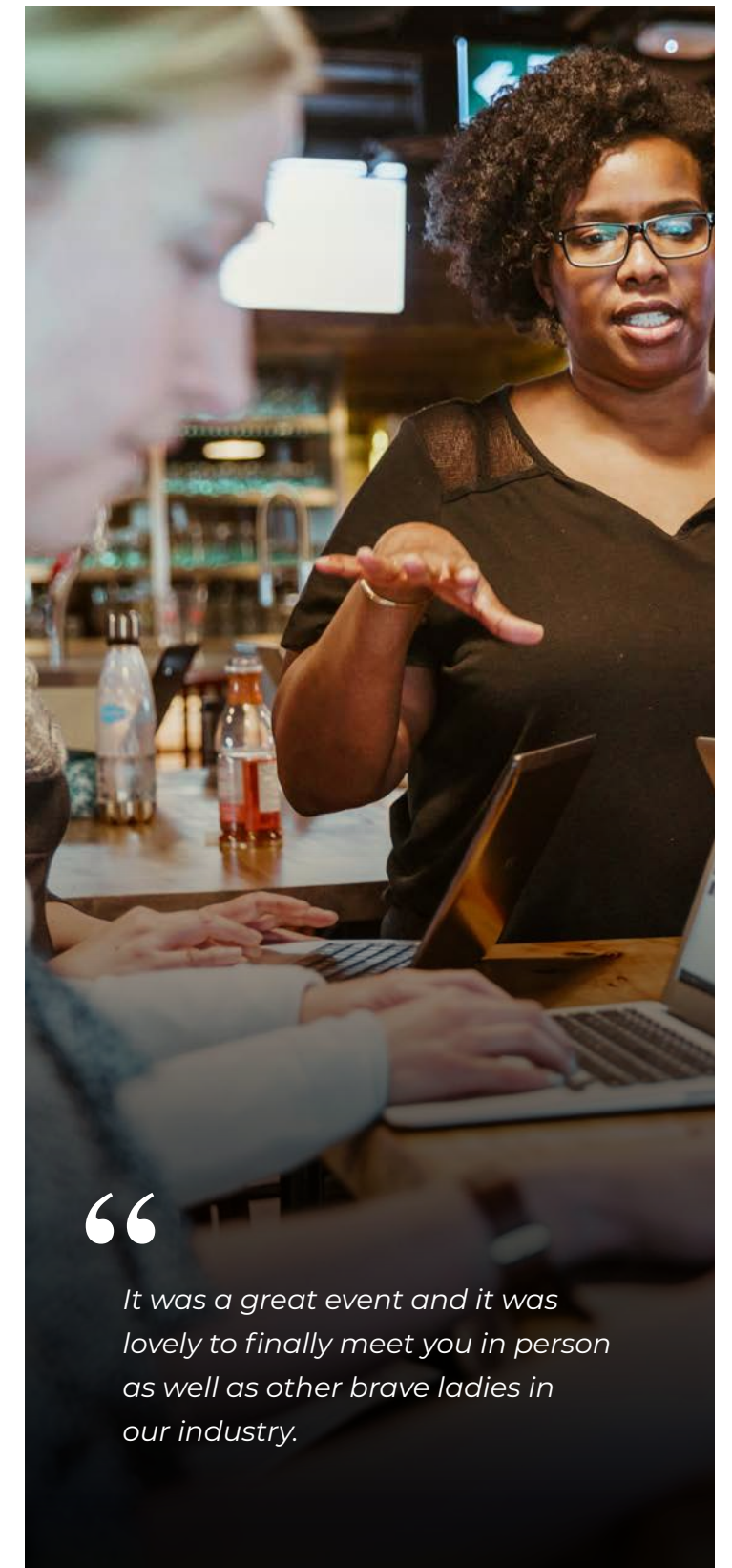
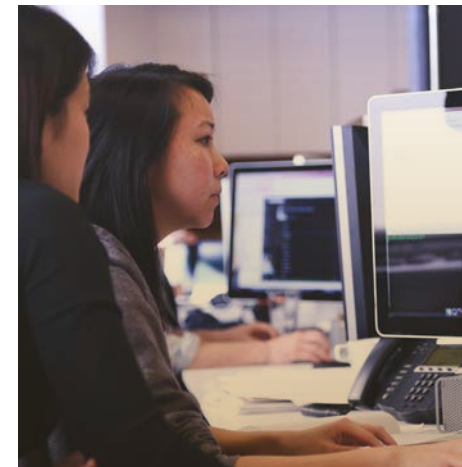
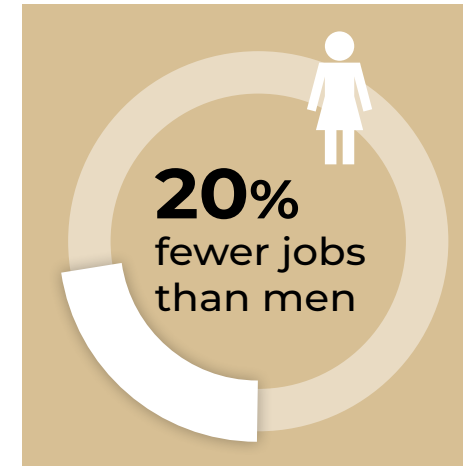
Research shows that women fixate more on their knowledge gaps than men and feel they should fit every criteria to apply to a new role. Statistically women apply to [20% fewer jobs than men](#) and this mindset could result in missed opportunities to grow.

So what can hiring managers and recruiters do to increase the number of female candidates applying for roles?

- Build out inclusive language in job descriptions
- Train recruiting teams to recognise bias in resourcing e.g. bias towards gender, names, age and ethnicities
- Utilise methodologies such as anonymised hiring
- Encourage individuals to pursue more challenging opportunities - remember, every job description is a wish list, not a resolute checklist

The conversation at the event flowed, with women sharing more stories about promotions, moving industries, sharing insights about career development, and swapping details - a room of women uplifting other women.

Want to read more about being a woman working in finance systems? [Read more here.](#)



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*It was a great event and it was lovely to finally meet you in person as well as other brave ladies in our industry.*



# THANK YOU

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