



Celebrating Togetherness on International Women's Day

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The theme of this year's [International Women's Day](#) is [#BreakTheBias](#), a powerful mission to create a gender-equal world free of bias, stereotypes and discrimination that's diverse, equitable, and inclusive and where difference is valued and celebrated. At Cerence, we're passionate about this mission and feel strongly that the best first step in achieving it is coming together to support each other and build a strong community that consistently lifts all of us up.

With that in mind, today we're reflecting on the importance of connection, including recapping the inspiring community our female colleagues experienced at the Massachusetts Conference for Women, held virtually at the end of 2021.

Building Community in a Virtual World

"Now more than ever, it's critical that we as women find ways to connect and support each other – even when that connection is through a computer screen. In a way, being at home these last two years has helped me build personal connections with colleagues that I may not have had the opportunity to build previously, given that everyone's home life was instantly thrust into their work environments. I know more about my peers' kids, pets, roommates, hobbies, etc., which has helped build a sense of community between us as we navigate these challenging times. It's these connections that give way to camaraderie and support that enable and empower us to lift each other up on a daily basis." – *Kate Hickman, Head of Global Communications*

"When I heard that the 2021 Massachusetts Conference for Women would again be held virtually – and that Cerence's Women In Tech group was offering its members the chance to participate – I was excited. Having missed the event in 2020, this was an opportunity for me to catch up on what I had missed and dive into the many important topics affecting women today. Besides the excellent speakers, one of the highlights for me was also to see how other participants from all over the world connected with each other in the live chat during the sessions, which made the entire event more engaging and fostered a feeling of support and community." – *Dala Rifat, Senior Software Quality Assurance Engineer*

"The typical goals for organizing a conference are threefold: First, a conference is a place where the most recent information gets exchanged, second, it is an opportunity for participants to network, third, it is a source of inspiration and motivation. In light of these goals, the Massachusetts Conference for Women was a real success. There were plenty of networking opportunities in the various virtual rooms of the conference. There were numerous workshops as well as many recruiters looking for talented individuals. Finally, the Massachusetts Conference for Women held the promise of being a source of inspiration because on the day of the conference, an impressive number of women were onstage sharing their thoughts in front of cameras while an even more impressive number of participants were sharing their feelings in the session chat." – *Marie-Anne Duffeler, Senior Product R&D Engineer*

Gaining Unique Perspectives

"In my view, the most memorable breakout session at the Massachusetts Conference for Women was 'The Burnout Fix' with Dr. Jacinta M. Jimenez. In this pandemic time, we are more prone than ever to face burnout in both our personal and professional lives. Dr. Jimenez gave the audience advice on how to manage and prevent it, and how important it is to check on your team members. One of many good tips I learned from her was to 'breathe six times a minute' to reduce stress levels. It is as simple as that, yet it has helped me on stressful days. In addition, Bryony Gordon shared her journey in her breakout session 'No Such Thing as Normal: A Guide for Mental Well-Being,' sharing how she struggled with mental illness and coped with it. Overall, one of the most important messages I took away from the conference is that, on our hardest days, it is perfectly fine for all of us to be able to admit that we are not okay – especially in recent years where all of us have had to adapt to a 'new normal' full of constant, sudden changes." – *Dala Rifat, Senior Software Quality Assurance Engineer*

"When a company touts that it supports women, that often means that said company has women who have moved into senior management roles via non-technical routes. Being in a male-dominated industry (software development) for many years, this is always something that I've laughed at – non-technical management roles can't be the only way to move up the ladder! But that isn't the case at Cerence. In my role, I've had the opportunity to work with women from all over the world, reaffirming my belief that there is so much that we can do to help each other. But it wasn't until I virtually attended the Massachusetts Conference for Women that I realized that I could (and should) do more for other women. As a senior level software developer, I've always tried to make myself approachable to all junior team members, but now I make sure to proactively reach out to the women I work with, making sure they don't feel left out or behind like I did back when I was a junior developer." – *Sharon Snyder, Principal Product R&D Engineer*

Participating in our Women in Tech group and in opportunities like the Massachusetts Conference for Women allow us to connect, support and grow together at Cerence. Our team's reflections are important reminders on International Women's Day to be kind to ourselves and to celebrate the strength of our community and each other in an effort to [#BreakTheBias](#).

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