

# TECHONOMY NYC

## Creating a More Equitable Workplace

### Speakers:

Maggie Chan Jones, CEO, Tenshey

Sarah Gerber, Co-Founder, Zero Gap

Gina Hadley, Co-Founder, The Second Shift

### Moderator:

Rich Benjamin, Author and Social Analyst

(Transcription by [RA Fisher Ink](#))

**Kirkpatrick:** I'm going to turn it over to Rich and his panel.

**Benjamin:** Hello, everybody. Welcome and good afternoon. We have, as David suggested, a wonderful panel on making the workplace more equitable. As a brief tidbit about me, I did my graduate school in Silicon Valley during the first tech boom. And one of my professors, low and behold, advised Larry Page and Sergey and they went on to found Google. And I say this to say that I saw Silicon Valley in its baby, infancy stage, for what Emily Chang, the author, calls a 'brotopia.' So now we have three panelists who are extremely savvy and successful entrepreneurs in their own right, and they've been in various dynamics of this industry and in so doing, they've learned a thing or two about sexism and gender dynamics.

So let's start with you, Maggie. Tell us how you came to start Tenshey, what it does, and why you started it?

**Chan Jones:** Yeah, so I personally spent 20 years in corporate in technology companies, primarily big companies like Microsoft and SAP. And after 20 years and spending many years being an executive sponsor for diversity and inclusion, I just felt like I could really use my experience and my credibility to help the next generation of female leaders to grow in a very male-dominated industry such as tech.

So Tenshey, our mission is all about advancing gender diversity through executive coaching. I personally had an executive coach. It started eight years ago when I was a director at Microsoft, and I have been working with my coach ever since, and that got me into becoming the CMO of SAP and being one of the most influential CMOs, named by *Forbes*. And I just felt like, "Gosh, like why are there not more women taking advantage of this opportunity to take advantage of the leadership development opportunity that many companies actually pay for."

So this is really our mission. We work with a network of coaches; we use our methodology to do matching, to find the right coach for our clients and helping them to continue to grow in their journey.

**Benjamin:** Okay. And then Gina, you're experience also, how did you come to start Second Shift? And describe for us a little bit what you do with Second Shift.

**Hadley:** Of course. I co-founded The Second Shift with Jenny Galluzzo, who is speaking at another panel today, a women's leadership panel. I am The Second Shift member. I had a great career. I had a moment when I had the opportunity to move across the country; I actually ended up doing that five times while raising a family, and so a traditional career path was not available to me. But I had experience and education and when I met my co-founder Jenny, she was a journalist and one time looked around the newsroom and realized there was no one she wanted to be. And there were no models for having a balanced life.

And as we started to have these conversations with each other, we started to have them with legions and legions of our, I would call like, our cohort of professional women, and so what we did was create The Second Shift, which is a marketplace that connects very experienced, a vetted membership of women, with businesses and stakeholders who want to work with them nontraditionally. So our mission is to retain critical female talent in the workplace, but what we've created is the opportunity for both our members and our employer partners to take advantage of the new flexible economy and the idea of remote work, and the idea of being able to work from anywhere, and be more efficient and continue. For the women, they get to continue to work, and for our employer partners, they get access to this extraordinary talent.

**Benjamin:** So is technology a component of how you do what you do? Or are a lot of these women in tech also?

**Hadley:** We actually don't work in tech. One of the things that we wanted to do was create opportunities for women. Because it's really hard to rustle up a freelance gig when you're a media planner. And so it's about helping all of these professional women who have these extraordinary skills, who don't necessarily work in what would be considered a typical freelance economy. So it's not developers. It's brand strategists, it's management consultants, it's, you know, financial analysis. So that's where we work.

But if it wasn't for technology, this would not exist. Because the way that we match our members to projects, the fact that everything that we do happens on our platform, it's all due to the ability to work from anywhere.

**Benjamin:** Okay, fantastic. By the way, looking out at the audience, I see a greater percentage of women than I saw when I was in grad school. So I think Techonomy deserves credit for that. And my question to you, Sarah, is you see this room full of people who are very influential, what advice would you give them, based on your own career, on creating a more equitable workplace, gender-wise?

**Gerber:** Well to live a little context about Zero Gap and what we're doing, we're a nonprofit, and we're focused on one single thing: creating parity while solving the problem of parity. So we bring together 50-50, so 50 percent men and women, to actually talk about the problem and the solutions, with an emphasis on the solutions to this problem. We want to be able to have people experience the world we want to create, while we're actually solving, and to be able to pull this conversation out of the silos it typically is in, in order to have more ownership from everyone to solve this. Which I think fits really well into the theme of responsibility. I think that this issue, in particular, needs a rise in responsibility and ownership.

So when I think about, to answer your question, what people can do, I think a really key part is actually thinking about this as you would implementing any sort of strategic plan. Not making it response-based, but more like how can you think about it over the next five to ten years? What's your plan for having more a diverse workplace? It's not like, "Oh, I'm going to respond to Me Too," or like problems in the workplace, but more like, "I'm thinking ahead about how to make this not a problem in a couple of years from now."

**Benjamin:** Yeah. I would love to dig into the practice of that, in terms of policy and culture.

But Maggie, how did you get investment for your private business? And the second part of my question is why do you think 90 percent of tech VC is going to men? [LAUGHTER]

**Chan Jones:** Well where do we start with that? So maybe I'll answer your second question first. When we look at, you know, in 2017 there are studies and research that shows that only 2 percent of the VC funding went to female-founded companies, startups, where it is a mixed team it is about 12 to 17 percent and then the rest of them, 79 percent of the funding, went to male-lead startups. Now, you know, there are a lot of reasons why. You know, the ecosystem, your network and everything, that contribute to it.

At the same time, HBR actually did a report last year showing that even in VC conversations with startups, they have a very different perspective, and I kind of look at that as the unconscious bias that is still very much out there. So when you see a very promising founder who is young and a male, they may think, "Wow, this person is young and promising for a male startup founder." For a female, it's, "Wow, that person is young and inexperienced." So those sorts of type of words that we have to be aware so that we can actually address it. If you know there's the unconscious bias, then you can go about trying to figure out how do you fix that.

To answer your first question, the good news I am self-funding my company right now, so I—you know, but at the same time, I'm seeing a lot of my friends who are startup founders, and I would also say that in New York, we are very fortunate that the ecosystem is very strong, the diversity, and I think we talked about it this morning, that I think there's a lot of room for us to grow. At the same time, we in New York City could really be the model for Silicon Valley and the rest of world.

**Benjamin:** Yeah, and thinking of ecosystems in different industries, we've seen what's gone on in Hollywood; we see what's going on and not going on, with regards to sexism in Washington. Thinking about tech and business, do you think that there is a reckoning with sexism that's going on, relative to the outer world, Me Too, Title IX? Or no? Gina.

**Hadley:** I think that there is. I mean, we were talking about this last night at dinner. One of the things that I feel super optimistic about is the fact that there is a light being shown. And you would have to be—I think someone else said—in a coma to not [LAUGHTER] acknowledge that this is a constant drumbeat. And even if it's something that you don't believe goes on in your culture, it gives everyone the permission to talk about it. And when you open the drapes and you let light in, dark corners start to emerge, so that there's no way we can't be optimistic.

That being said, I think Maggie has really brought up a cognizant point, in terms of you have to be it to see it. I think that there is—one of the things that we talk about at The Second Shift is if you bring in a diversity of voices, and the way that we work is that our members are experienced, because of the experience, they are not 22-year-olds. They are grown-ups, who come into rooms and help on teams. And for young women, they get to see what it could look like in the future. And I often think that that helps you push through some of the moments that may be the ones that could take you off the career path, because you're able to see that you can get through something.

**Chan Jones:** And that's a very good point, because one of the phrases I hear the most from women who decided to exit is, "It's not worth it." That's what I'm hearing. And when you peel out the onion, when you look at, you know, what exactly is happening—I'll give you a quick example that literally just happened last week. I was talking to one of my mentees, and she went from a healthcare company to a tech company and being a director in the customer engagement area.

So she was going to a conference similar to a conference here, and she was meeting with her colleagues and some of their customers. And one of her male colleagues said, "Hey, can you take the wives of the clients to dinner?" Like instead of the clients. I mean, I personally—honestly, I spent 20 years in tech. I really thought that this does not happen anymore. Especially with all the movements and conversations. But it's still happening right now.

So you know, what is going through this young, emerging leader's mind as, "Do I stand up for what I think is wrong and just tell the person, 'No, I'm going to spend time with the clients, because that's what I'm hired to do.' Or am I supposed to be a good team player and just go along with it? And how are people going to perceive me as a leader, being new into the industry, being new to the company?" So those are the things that are going through that person's mind, and I think all of us, as leaders here, have the responsibility to stand up for those type of things when it happens. And if you're seeing something happen to another person, stand up for that person. Be the voice. And that's what's important.

**Benjamin:** So Sarah, I want to ask you to sort of piggyback on what we've heard. We've heard the idea of ecosystems; we've heard the idea of unconscious bias; we've heard the idea of networks. If you could put your finger on other elements that people in this room or myself have not thought of, what are the other obstacles that you've encountered or that you notice?

**Gerber:** Yeah, I think one key thing is it's not always overt sexism, even like that story. In fact, there's a lot of really well-intentioned people making poor choices—or not poor choices but making choices that actually further the divides and further bias, and further some of the things that we're fighting against, while being well-intentioned.

And I think a really good story of this was from a CEO I recently sat down with, of a startup, and in the early days they didn't have a family leave policy. And then the first employee got pregnant, and so they had to figure out a policy. And the woman who was pregnant happened to also be director of ops, so she figured out what policy they were going to do and she came back and presented it to him. And she landed on something like three months of maternity leave and three months of paternity leave. And he responded by saying, "No. We need to give more time to the women. It doesn't need to be equal. It doesn't need to be even. I want to make sure women have extra time, all the time that they need." And she was like, "No, actually I think that that's the problem, and that we don't incentivize women to come back and we don't incentivize men to be involved at home. If we don't make the policy equal and encourage people to take both of the times." And that was from someone who really believed in making sure that women were supported at work. And he really believed in closing the gap, but it was that distinction that he was missing.

So I think that like there's a lot of this overt sexism that's happening that is bias, conscious or unconscious, but there's also people who just—it's the minute things, it's the small details when you're thinking about how is this impacting someone? Or how is this impacting the divide? Or how is this impacting the culture that we have inside the company? Not just from the traditional, like comments or, you know, things that we typically think of for this issue. So I think that's a really key part, and really important, I think, for a room like this, of thinking about it's not just the standard sort of harassment, or something like that. It might be actually in your policies and ways that you think you're doing really well, when in fact that might actually be causing a problem.

**Benjamin:** Okay. Before taking a question or two, I would like to ask all of three of you the same question and it's a two-part question. As successful women, you embody a lot of what you're talking about. You have successful companies. So number one, the way you carry yourself and how you conduct yourself and run your business? How do you make inclusion, in all its forms, important? That's the first part of the question. And the second part of the question is metrics. How do you know when you're succeeding? And for you, personally, and in terms of the industry, what does success look like? Let's start this way, and then go all the way back to Maggie.

**Gerber:** Okay. So the first part was more personal.

**Benjamin:** Yeah, is more personal. How do you live what you're thinking about conceptually?

**Gerber:** Yeah, for me, one key part is hiring women. I work a lot—so I work in production as my background, and there's a lot less women available to work with, and so I really work hard to make sure that I have equal teams in all of the teams that I build. So that's a really key, important one for me, in terms of my practice.

And then metrics, I think it actually ties into that. I think metrics are also based on can I have equal teams? And can I find those people who maybe I didn't find right away, but digging a little bit further can find a great candidate? But I think the other metrics are also just the kind of conversations we're having and I think that it matters what exactly we're talking about, culturally and within in our companies. And making this an important conversation is part of how I measure where we are right now. And I think we're in a good place, in terms of the conversation, but I don't want to lose that, too. And I think that we're at a particular moment, if we don't take advantage of it, it could pass by. And I don't want to see that happen.

**Benjamin:** Okay, Gina.

**Hadley:** We hired two men this year, in my company, so we feel really like we're—our diversity inclusion. [LAUGHTER] But all kidding aside, we're a female-founded company that has a mission, and so we're really lucky that we have all of these like-minded people who want to help us on our mission. But we did hire two guys this year. But I think I also—I'm in a different stage than my co-founder. I have older children, I'm modelling behavior for my 16-year-old daughter and my 13-year-old son. I'm very lucky that I have a partner—my husband is very involved and we co-parent and we share a ton of responsibility. And I feel like what I try to do in my own personal life is somehow deconstruct that myth that you get to have it all, all at once. You decide what your all is, and at that very moment, that's—you make decisions. And I think that that's also part of the myth that pushes so many women off of a career path, that it is, "I'm not—I'm doing everything terribly, so I have to make a choice right now."

And so many times you make the choice that you're just going to step away. And so what I've—we practice this at the office. There are days when you get the call again from the nurse that your son has thrown up at school, and I am lucky to work in a place where everybody realizes, because I go pick him up has nothing to do with how I feel about the company or my responsibility towards my job. It's the idea, the antiquated idea of face time, and the fact that you have to—you know, if you don't crush it every day—no one crushes it every day. And so I'm trying to model for the younger women that I work with, and then our colleagues that are in the holding company with which we all get to sit together, that there is a balance.

Our metrics are provable in how many jobs we book and how many projects we have and the companies that we work with. When Jenny and I first started having this conversation, over two years ago, there was not—you had to kind of explain that there was economy of workers who didn't want to work all the time but were experts and they weren't just administrative assistants or front desk people. And now you go in and not only do the business leaders get it and say,

"Oh my gosh, I need someone to do data analytics. We have this deck we never get to do." But then then it's also, "That's my wife. That's my sister. That's my entire class from Harvard." I can't—like everyone is acknowledging that we are working differently and for us, the metrics is the sales cycle has condensed tremendously. And so we're seeing our jobs pick up, we're seeing more companies come on. And one of the things—I mean, for us, Microsoft has been a great pilot program partner, and they have been early adopters, and for a company that seems like the least agile of all the tech companies, they're the ones that will try anything at this point.

**Benjamin:** Based on the CEO's comments with David, I believe it. It was such an informed conversation.

**Hadley:** Yeah, it is a company who has been through everything. Everybody in HR and legal has post-traumatic stress disorder, but they've gotten through it, [LAUGHTER] and they realize like nothing—it's true, they're like, "Wow, that didn't kill us. So let's try something new. Let's try a new initiative."

**Benjamin:** Fantastic. Alright. Maggie, final word.

**Chan Jones:** Yeah, for me it's really about creating the culture you want, from the get-go. Even as a startup, start early. I actually have a framework on the type of culture that I want to create so we use it for how we hire; we use it for how we connect with vendors and partners for our partnership.

And from a metric standpoint, we're really focusing on how many women can we help? And also how many male leaders can we help to really understand how to be an inclusive leader. And those are the key things for us.

**Benjamin:** Yeah, so let's take on question. And speaking to your comment, Gina, I heard a cutting critique of Sheryl Sandberg, speaking about *Lean In* and being an executive, and they said, "The way you guys dig in into workers, vendors, salesforces, the nitty-gritty of it." They called her *Lean In* mentality, "trickle-down feminism that doesn't necessarily trickle-down."

But anyway, a quick question. Yeah.

**Audience 1:** So Taylor Swift says there's a special place in hell for women who don't help other women.

**Hadley:** That's actually Madeleine Albright who said that first.

**Audience 1:** It was Madeleine Albright who said it first. However, so I think yes, sexism is alive and that needs to be killed. But I think the first problem we need to solve is that, that I don't think women are very supportive of other women in the workplace. I've experienced it many of times, as have my friends. So I'm just wondering what you guys propose as—

**Hadley:** I think we have to stop perpetuating this myth that everybody's—all girls are mean to each other. [APPLAUSE] I do. I think we have to—I *really* do. Because I think for—I think it's

something that we keep saying over and over again, and so now it's becoming part of a mythology. Maybe I've been lucky enough that I've never experienced it, but I think that on both sides, like I think that we have to be very cognizant of continuing to talk about the fact that other women—that women don't help women. Because in this city, if you think about what's going on with the Female Founders Fund or Golden Seeds or all of these organizations for women, or even like Makers and all of these organizations.

And it's also, you know what? Nobody teaches anybody to be a manager. That's my problem with so much of this as well. And so this is—I think a lot of it has to do with managerial skills, and that—look, we've also been told that we have to act a certain way in order to not let our feminine side show, which is also going to be somehow a detriment to us in the workplace, and for a lot of women, that was just keeping it neutral, or maybe not showing favoritism to other women, because you were going to get dinged for that.

**Benjamin:** Okay—

**Kirkpatrick:** We've got to wrap.

**Benjamin:** That gentleman had one last question. Or should we wrap up?

**Green:** Hi, my name is Will Greene. And so I live in Vietnam. I've been based there for five years and worked in a lot of different sectors, and I've seen many of the same issues there that we're talking about on the stage today. So I'm just curious, to what extent are your respective organizations working and thinking globally? And are there any countries that you look to, either for opportunity for impact, or as a positive example in terms of workplace culture and policy, for gender parity?

**Chan Jones:** I'll take that. So great question. I actually just came back from the Women's Economic Forum in New Delhi in India last week, and it was represented by over 100 countries, and it was a gathering of women and men talking about gender equality, gender diversity, those type of topics. So I think like, no matter where I go, I hear similar stories, I hear similar needs, on how do we get to gender equality? So you know, absolutely, for example in Tenshey we definitely look at, you know, globally where we can help organizations and leaders to be more inclusive and those are the things that we look at.

**Benjamin:** Thank you.

**Gerber:** And I was just going to add, Iceland is doing some interesting things. And I think one of the key things that I identify there, is that men have a lot of ownership in the conversation, and they're not afraid to talk about it. And I think that's super key, is they're super comfortable talking about the fact that there's a gap and that there's an issue. And so it makes something that everyone is a part of the conversation, rather than one side.

**Kirkpatrick:** Wow, great.

**Benjamin:** Wonderful. Okay.

[APPLAUSE]