



# Woman in Tech: The New Savvy

## ANNA VANESSA HAOTANTO

Chief Executive Officer,  
*The New Savvy*

**Age:** 31

**Tech Experience:** Almost 2 years

**Studied:** Business Management and Finance,  
Singapore Management University

**Hobbies:** Exercise and reading

**First Tech Gadget:** Intel 386

**Preoccupied with:** How do I make women more  
interested in financial literacy?

**Hopes for FinTech:** Raising the proportion of  
women in FinTech to over 25% in 2 years

There is no denial that the tech industry is male-dominated. However, there are signs that an increasing number of women are making their presence felt in this space. Personifying this under-represented demographic, Anna Vanessa Haotanto divulges to *The IT Society* her motivation for entering and staying in the tech landscape.

**Q:** Question, **AH:** Anna Vanessa Haotanto

### ON CAREER IN TECH

#### **Q: Did you see yourself working in the tech industry?**

**AH:** Not at all! I am trained in Finance and am very passionate about it. Naturally, I joined the Finance industry after graduation. During which time, I was exposed to different verticals in the industry. Working in the tech industry was the last thing in my mind then. It was an unfamiliar domain, and the fact that there are very few females in tech felt like it is a no-woman's land.

#### **Q: So what prompted you to use web as the platform to launch The New Savvy portal?**

**AH:** Personal preferences aside, the web presented a ready platform to reach out to our target audience – women – in a quick and low cost manner. Many people were already consuming content

online through their devices so it made sense to go where people already are if we want to reach them. What's more, with the web, we are not limited by geographical boundaries. Within a few months after launching The New Savvy, we got coverage from Business Insider, CNBC, Forbes, The Peak, Fast Company, The Straits Times and Yahoo among others.

#### **Q: Did you face any challenge when you started off?**

**AH:** I struggled a lot in the beginning. I was clueless about web development, much less about content production, digital marketing and publishing. But I knew web had to be it so I made myself learn from scratch – I searched for web developers and researched about websites to understand how they worked and what works best. Working till 4am was an everyday affair.

#### **Q: What kept you going despite these challenges?**

**AH:** The faith that what I am doing can bring about greater financial literacy among women. At this point, I am not certain how tangible the rewards will be, but just knowing that my efforts have already started to touch the lives of people gratifies me. I've met strangers at events who told me that they read and love *The New Savvy*. There are others who had written to me to share about their lives and financial situations. Every feedback serves as my motivation to keep going regardless of challenges.

#### **Q: Could you share a funny moment during your early days in this industry?**

**AH:** Being green, I thought every tech professional works on a broad range of topics. However, I came to realise in the early days that the scope of developers

are actually quite narrow. I recall, at one point, I was working with three developers at the same time on different topics for my website. They didn't seem to understand each other or be able to see eye to eye. In the end, I had to intervene to facilitate conversation between the three parties. It was quite frustrating, but it was also funny because I had to pay for the projects and do my own project management!

**ON WOMEN IN TECH**

**Q: Why do you think there are more men than women in tech?**

**AH:** I think gender stereotype has a big part to play in this. Most women grew up in environments, which suggest that men have better technical abilities. As a result, women tend to shy away from subjects which weigh heavily on calculus and programming. Little exposure breeds superficial or little understanding. Of course, they went on to perceive the industry as uninteresting and assume that they will not do well in the industry.

**“I think I must have made every mistake that shouldn't be made when I first started out in the industry. But that's life, isn't it? You falter, and you pick yourself up.”**

**Q: So do men really have an advantage over women in tech?**

**AH:** I have in my short time in the industry come across women who are really capable. They are not any less knowledgeable than men, and in many instances, I do find them easier to relate to. In my observation, however, many of these ladies tend to keep to themselves more than their male counterparts. That's why we rarely hear about them or their achievements.

**Q: What do you think can be done to encourage more women to join the tech industry?**

**AH:** First and foremost, I think we need to address the stereotype. Being in tech industry for a while now, I can testify that women are just as abled as men. That said, I am mindful that the industry is still very much male-dominated now. Therefore, if we want more women to join the industry, we will need support from the men who are the majority and the key drivers of the tech community. Of course, the onus is as much on us – the women. Although we are the minority, if we can band together and rally behind one another to grow collectively, I am confident that more women will be inspired to join the industry.



**20%**

of all tech startups across the world are founded by women

**Singapore is ranked**

**9<sup>th</sup>**

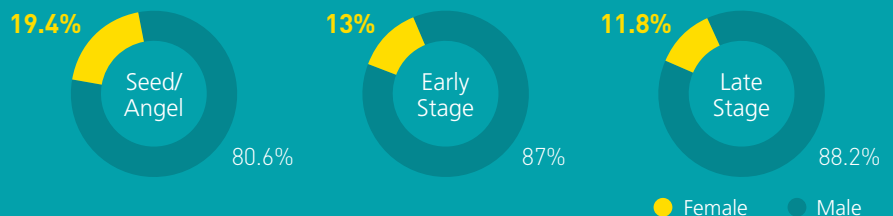
for being a city with the largest number of tech startups founded by women

In the eight largest tech companies, tech positions for females are growing

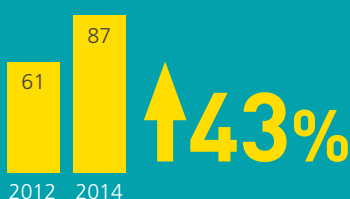
**238%**

**faster** than males

Latest Funding Stage of Startups Founded by Women



Female Chief Information Officers (CIOs) in FORTUNE 500 Companies



**Women leave tech positions because:**

- 30%** Working Conditions: Low salary, long working time, no advancement
- 27%** Work-life Balance: Less time for family, too much travelling
- 22%** Lost Interest in Work: Don't like the work or daily tasks
- 17%** Company Environment: Don't like co-workers, boss or culture

**How to retain more women in tech:**

- Mentoring programmes
- Networking opportunities
- Flexible working hours
- Personal development
- Workforce diversity