A Renewed Vision
Calling for 50/50 intersectional gender equity in tech worldwide by 2025, AnitaB.org boldly announced an update to its vision in 2018. Coinciding with this announcement was the implementation of a multi-pronged, inclusive strategy to improve business practices, disrupt biases against women in technology, and open the field to all people regardless of class, national origin, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, identity, age, ability, educational background, and other social statuses.

We know that to sustain success, and acquire and retain talent, CEOs must cultivate a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion that reflects their markets at all organizational levels. Studies show that diverse teams are better for the bottom line, drive more innovation, produce better problem-solving outcomes, and increase group performance. Our internal team at AnitaB.org is no exception.

Technology organizations worldwide can no longer be complacent when it comes to gender and diversity. In 1995, when Anita Borg issued the original challenge to the tech industry calling for 50/50 gender equity by 2020, 37% of computer scientists in the U.S. were female. 2018 saw representation increasing slightly from the year prior, but still there was a tremendous backslide with representation of women in tech at only 24%.

It is time for a coordinated movement across the globe to increase intersectional gender equity in tech.

Diverse organizations perform better.
A 2015 McKinsey study, Diversity Matters, found that public companies across industries in Canada, Latin America, The United Kingdom, and the United States with more racial and ethnic diversity are 35% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians. Companies with more gender diversity are 15% more likely to have financial returns above national industry medians. And, in the United States, there is a linear relationship between racial and ethnic diversity and better financial performance: for every 10% increase in racial and ethnic diversity on the senior-executive team, earnings before interest and taxes rise 0.8%.

Diversity is critical for innovative problem-solving.
A mathematical study done by Lu Hong, of the Department of Economics at Syracuse University, and Scott Page, a professor of complex systems research and a professor of economics at the University of Michigan, as described in a summary of their study on Nasa’s website, showed that a group of “very able” members solved problems in a very good, but similar manner. The “able and more diverse” group tended to come up with less typical and better solutions. Their research demonstrated that a diverse team was able to outperform a homogeneous team of high-ability problem-solvers.

No company is an island. Challenges such as sexism and racism will inevitably spillover into business operations, because talent is reflective of our society. Top levels of leadership need to collaborate to advance public awareness and policy reforms that have the potential to remove barriers to full inclusion.
2018 Strategy: Walking the Talk

AnitaB.org/365 programs not only empower companies to create diverse teams and build inclusive work environments, but we’re also committed to doing that critical work ourselves.

Hired in 2017 to generate a movement for women’s tech equity, CEO Brenda Darden Wilkerson led an organizational effort to expand recruitment pathways so that qualified people of all backgrounds knew about our opportunities and we hired the most qualified applicants. Specifically, we opened our job announcements to the full diversity of our collective networks; hired search firms with good equal opportunity track records; and were sensitive to inclusion of people of all backgrounds, including the global women who are part of constituencies.

_Through intentional focus on equity of opportunity for all women of various backgrounds as a part of our organizational strategy, we leveled the playing field which resulted in amazing diversity in race and ethnicity, and beyond._

“We need the most ambitious, inventive, and diverse team to propel us to 50/50 intersectional tech equity by 2025,” said Wilkerson. “The unique backgrounds and combined experiences of these individuals is remarkable. It’s an extremely powerful team that will not only drive the necessary change for AnitaB.org, but also lead and inspire our partners, clients, and the tech industry at-large to transform the tech landscape.”

AnitaB.org will also be announcing new diversity research in order to gather more data to uncover the whole story about women’s experiences at work because we can’t manage what we don’t measure. “To achieve true equity and diversity for all, we need to ask the right questions and measure the right things so that we can take the right kind of action,” said Wilkerson. “This issue must be looked at squarely and with an intersectional lens. There’s not enough data that focuses on women of color to understand their issues and missed opportunities to provide targeted support.”

2018 Programs: Impacting Diversity in Tech

AnitaB.org started addressing diversity among women in tech with a focus on race for the first time in 2018.

In the Top Companies for Women Technologists report that year, 71 of the 80 participating companies contributed. As a result, we were able to look at diversity across more than 50,000 women technologists in companies of different sizes. The findings affirmed trends in the tech field. Women do not have equitable representation in tech. Black, Latinx, Native American, Pacific Islanders, and multiracial raced people were particularly underrepresented. Women’s representation in tech will not improve until all women have equal opportunity in the field.

In 2018, one immediate action AnitaB.org took to address this issue was to provide access for women from a wide variety of backgrounds and academic institutions to attend the Grace Hopper Celebration (GHC) – the world’s largest gathering of women in tech. Scholarship students came from different academic institutions globally, and underrepresented women, including Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and/or Native American, received 31% of these scholarships. All of the BRAID program participants sent students to GHC, representing a cross-section of academic institutions with significant minority representation.
At GHC 18, we also worked to ensure that our speaker lineup reflected the diversity of our community by asking potential speakers how their panels would contribute to expanding the perspectives featured at the event. For the first time, AnitaB.org presented Innovation CO-Laboration (CO-LAB), a session focused on creating transformative and radical solutions for the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women of color in tech and advancement of women of color founders and entrepreneurs. This program has gone on to become an event series produced year-round. We also set a target to fill no less than 30% of our keynote and featured session speaker slots with women of color; and we are pleased to say that achieved that goal.

We also hosted several programs at GHC 18 to promote diversity. These events included our community socials for our Systers affinity groups, which allow women in tech to identify themselves culturally and to offer support to one another, as well as a range of panels and talks on equity-related issues, including intersectionality.

2018 Report: Becoming the Change

We understand that to be an authentic leader for women’s diversity and inclusion in tech, promoting change among external stakeholders is not enough. Although we are a small organization compared to the companies we serve, we want to demonstrate that we are serious about being a model of intersectional diversity as we lead this movement. Transparency matters, which is why we are doing the hard work of looking at our own organization, making change from within, and sharing our findings.

We have been working hard to lead by example as we advocate for 50/50 intersectional gender equity in tech by 2025 and are proud to say that the diversity of AnitaB.org shifted significantly in just one year’s time. In total, our staff diversity increased by 24% from 2017 to 2018, and the diversity of our leadership team increased by 22%.

We’ve included both bar and pie charts to illustrate employee backgrounds, as well as the percentages of change year over year. We also improved in other diversity dimensions, including age, state and country of residence, disciplinary background, and sexual orientation.
The headcount of the organization increased to 66 in 2018, up 6% over 60 in 2017. Representation of most diverse groups saw growth in 2018, with the biggest increase, 11%, in Black/African American staff, making total representation 18%. Asian staff increased 6%, representing 26% of the total staff. The next largest increase, 4.5%, was individuals of two or more races, increasing representation to 6%. There was an increase of 2.5% of Latinx staff for a total of 10.5% representation. There was no change in representation of American Indian/Alaska Native staff. As our head count rose, there was also a steady increase in male representation. We added 8% males in 2017 and 2% in 2018 for a total representation of 14% in 2018.
The leadership headcount decreased to 17, down 11% from 19 in 2017. The largest shift in representation was an increase of 24% Black/African American staff in leadership roles, making total representation 35% for 2018. The next biggest change was a decrease of Asian representation in leadership roles by 14%, making total representation 12%. There was an increase of 12% representation of individuals of two or more races who are represented in leadership for the first time. There was no change in representation of American Indian/Alaska Native or Hispanic/Latinx staff in leadership roles. The decrease in leadership headcount did affect the percentages of gender representation in leadership in 2018. There was a 5% decrease in male representation and a 5% increase of female representation, making total representation 6% and 94% respectively.

The Change Continues: Looking Forward
Technology is creating the future of our global society. It is an increasingly pervasive influence in every sphere of life, making it a necessary human right for full participation.

Looking ahead, AnitaB.org is continuing to develop our executive team and increase our staff to over 100 employees, while adding a diverse slate of ambitious, inventive individuals, mirroring the markets we serve, to propel us to 50/50 intersectional tech equity by 2025. We are expanding our vision by focusing on five global initiatives needed to achieve our goal, including hiring, retention, pay parity, venture funding, and women’s empowerment. Enhancing intersectional engagement, program offerings, and grant opportunities that expose more women to the tech industry will also be key to our future strategies. Finally, we will continue to build a robust suite of year-round AnitaB.org/365 services to include various dimensions of diversity and assist partners in advancing women in technology in the U.S. and beyond.

Each of us on the AnitaB.org team has chosen to do this work because we believe that women should have equal opportunity to achieve their full human potential in a complex, changing, technology-driven global economy.

If you’re interested in helping us reach these goals, please see our career opportunities; consider becoming a donor, sponsor or corporate partner; and help spread the word about our work within your own community.

Most importantly, become the change. Together we can achieve 50/50 equity of women in tech by 2025. Thank you for being part of this growing movement!