

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella says Women shouldn't ask for raise?

By Hunter McAdams, September 23rd, 2015



Johannes Marliem [Satya Nadella](#) December 15th, 2010 via Flickr

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What happened?

The [Grace Hopper Celebration](#) of Women in Computing convention was held on October 9th, 2014 in Phoenix. [Satya Nadella](#), the CEO of Microsoft, was invited to speak as a guest. He was interviewed by Microsoft board member [Maria Klawe](#), who also is the president of Harvey Mudd College.

Towards the end of the interview Klawe asked Nadella what his advice would be to women who do not feel comfortable asking for a raise or a promotion. Nadella's response would upset many, as [he said](#):

"It's not about asking for the raise, but knowing and having faith that the system will actually give you the right raises as you go along... And that, I think might be one of the additional superpowers that quite frankly women who don't ask for a raise have. Because that's good karma. It'll come back because

somebody's going to know 'that's the kind of person that I want to trust. That's the kind of person I want to really give more responsibility to.' And in the long term efficiency, things catch up."

The outrage that followed Nadella's comments was immense. Many people found what he said as unacceptable. [People were upset](#) that Nadella said that women should not ask for a raise. His comments were offensive to many because it came across that his comments were inferring that women were weak and inferior.

The next day Nadella apologized in an email that he issued to all of [Microsoft](#). In the email he said:

"Toward the end of the interview, Maria asked me what advice I would offer women who are not comfortable asking for pay raises. I answered that question completely wrong. Without a doubt I wholeheartedly support programs at Microsoft and in the industry that bring more women into technology and close the pay gap. I believe men and women should get equal pay for equal work. And when it comes to career advice on getting a raise when you think it's deserved, Maria's advice was the right advice. If you think you deserve a raise, you should just ask."

At this point, Nadella had already brought up the topic of women working in computer science and how they are treated. His comments can be related back to a sensitive topic, [the gender wage gap](#). It is unclear if Nadella answered the question the way he did because he is a sexist or if it is because he feels that asking for raises is unacceptable among both genders.

Why are Nadella's comments important?

In a country where women make significantly less than men, wage is a sensitive topic. Considering this, Satya Nadella's comments were clearly wrong. As the CEO of arguably the biggest computer science company in the world, his comments show how the computer science field perceive female employees. It is very possible that he misworded what he was trying to say which would lead to a regrettable mistake.

Regardless of Nadella's intentions, he made offensive comments that enraged females and males all over the country. The question I will now be exploring is why these people were angry. It is very important to understand why Nadella's comments were found as offensive because it will put Nadella's comments in context showing why this event is considered a controversy.

Women in Computer Science



geralt ["Women in Computer Science"](#) December 2014 via pixabay. CC0 1.0 Universal (CC0 1.0) Public Domain Dedication

Statistics show that among the powerhouse IT (information technology) companies such as Facebook, Twitter, Google, and Apple [only 30% of employees are female](#). Twitter has an astounding amount, with only 10% of the employees being female.

The question is and has been, why are women such a minority in the field of computer science? Are women not as skillful at working with computers? No. Are women bad coders? No. Women actually tend to do very well in computer science based jobs. According to [Go Berserk](#) creator Ian Simmons, women pick up coding quicker. Go Berserk is a company that provides children resources to learn to code. Simmons put together pilot programs in primary schools, he used these programs to run studies on this issue on gender in computer science. Simmons said that "When we [they] did an analysis of what they had done in the report, girls were marginally better than boys."

If this is the case, why are only [14% of computer science undergraduates' women?](#)

It is because of the emphasis placed on computer science and who that emphasis is directed at. The years of middle school and high school play a large part in why computer science lacks a female presence. This is where the division happens between males and females in regards to computer science.

[Telle Whitney](#), president and CEO of Anita Borg Institute knows first hand the feeling of pushing through the division formed in the middle and high school and going on to study computer science in college. She said “I didn’t know quite what was going on, but the feeling of isolation, like ‘I don’t necessarily belong,’ was pretty prevalent.”

It is not just women that computer science lacks, IT is lacking the employment of other races as well. Computer Science is predominately made up of white males.

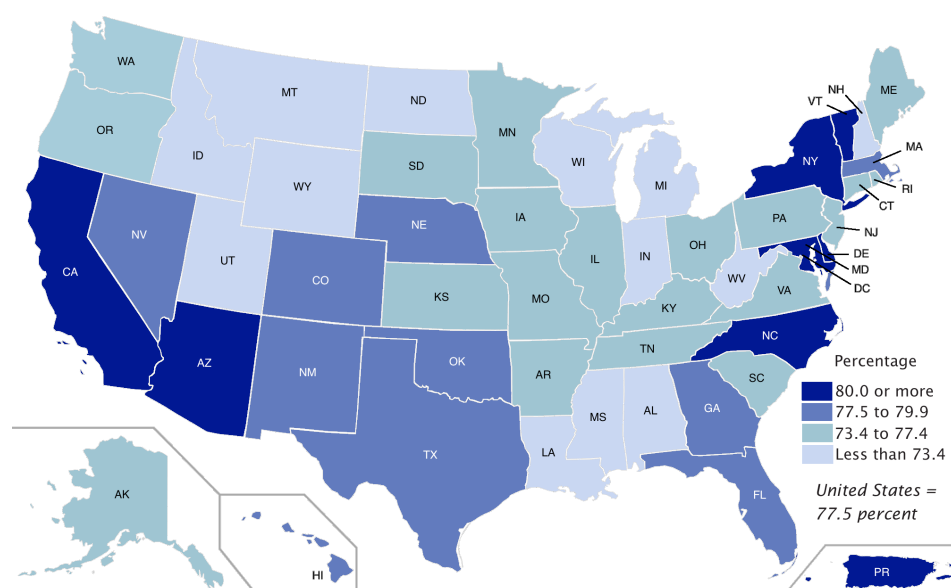
According to Selena Larson of [readwrite.com](#), there are a few factors that lead to women self-selecting out of pursuing a computer science career. One of these reasons is because as history has shown, women choose lower-paying yet more fulfilling jobs. Jobs such as teaching or journalism are deemed as more rewarding and women tend to seek them more. On the other hand, men tend to seek more lucrative jobs that may not be as preferable.

Another reason is because girls at a young age are more geared towards playing with “girly girl” items such as dolls and glitter while young boys are typically playing with robots or Legos which may possibly lead to more of a desire to explore the IT field in later years.

For these reasons women have not been engaged with the computer science field as much as they are capable of being.

Companies have started to seek out women to add to their employment team, they seek to do this to add diversity to their company but also because women have proven to be valuable assets in the computer science industry.

How does the wage gap play into Nadella’s comments?



U.S. Census Bureau. [Income, Earnings, and Poverty Data From the 2007 American Community Survey](#). August 2008, p. 14.

In today's world, specifically the United States, there is a wage gap. Women will be working the same job as a man and be paid less money for it. Does this also exist in IT is the question? According to [Claire Cain Miller](#) it is one of the smallest gaps that exists, women make about 89% of what a man would make working in computer science. This is strange considering the fact that women are largely outnumbered by men.

The wage gap is a big issue in the United States as in some cases women are paid 60% of what men are paid for the same job.

This is why there were so many angry people regarding Nadella's comments. Women are already unfairly treated in the work force so when they were told by the CEO of Microsoft that they should not ask for a raise or promotion when they feel they deserve it they were upset. Many people brought up the argument that when women ask for a raise they are being a pushy employee and that they are demanding a raise, when men are applauded for doing something similar as they are acting "ambitious".

Were Nadella's comments malicious?

It is hard to say whether Satya Nadella was deliberately being sexist, or if he simply didn't word his response right. The one thing the viewers did know is that his response did come across sexist.

Some people felt as if his comments came from his rooted beliefs that he has collected over time in the computer science field that women employees are inferior to male employees. The people who were upset thought Nadella was saying how he "truly felt".

Others argued that what he said wasn't outrageous at all. They argued the fact that he would've answered the question the same way had it have been a question regarding males asking for raises. Others said he answered it that way because Microsoft has a strict policy they follow about raises or promotions through a review strategy they have in place which leaves no room for asking for raises.

Others also argued the point that in Microsoft women and men are [paid the same](#) salaries so it does not make sense for him to become unfair towards women in regard to pay since there isn't a wage gap in Microsoft. Nadella has no public record of being a sexist and the following day he issued an apologies for his comments, saying it was the wrong response.

For those reasons I believe that Nadella simply slipped up and made a mistake, yet it was a good mistake to make because it shed light on bigger issues that are prevalent in computer science today.