

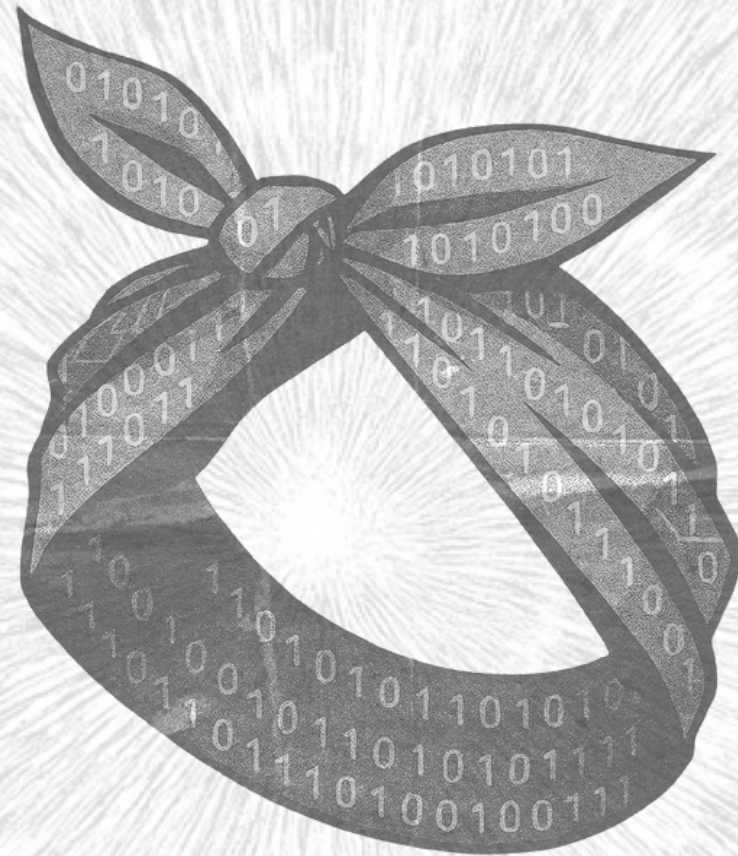
The Rise of Digital Riveters

Women in AI Quarterly Index Report



Illustrations by Copilot and Canva AI

The Riveter Effect: Women Are Taking the Helm and Welding the Future of AI



The Rise of Digital Riveters

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Eighty years ago, Rosie the Riveter—originally created as a marketing icon to recruit women into the World War II defense workforce—became a symbol of courage, capability, and transformative change, sparking a movement where millions of women rolled up their sleeves and forever changed the workforce.

That same bold spirit is now reshaping the digital age: women are stepping into artificial intelligence, building the Frontier Firm and redefining what the future of work looks like.

Just as necessity, ambition, and resilience fueled the Riveter movement, today's shift requires women to become full partners in building the organizations and technologies that will shape our world.

Yet the urgency is clear: **as of 2025, women account for only about 22–29% of the global AI workforce, hold just 14% of senior executive roles, and represent only 10% of top technology leadership worldwide. Representation in high-level research falls even further to 12–18%**, emphasizing how much ground remains to be gained.

While some regions and leading firms now approach 25–35% female representation, especially in North America, progress is uneven and gaps widen at the highest rungs—especially in core technical and product roles. Even as more women graduate with STEM degrees, too few transition to influential positions in AI, stalling diversity where it's needed most.

The stakes could not be higher. Companies that fail to empower and include women risk perpetuating algorithmic bias, missing critical innovation, and failing both customers and society by leaving untapped talent on the table.

As AI transforms healthcare, finance, education, and manufacturing, ensuring women become architects of the frontier—rather than passengers—is now essential for competitive advantage, ethical leadership, and organizational resilience.

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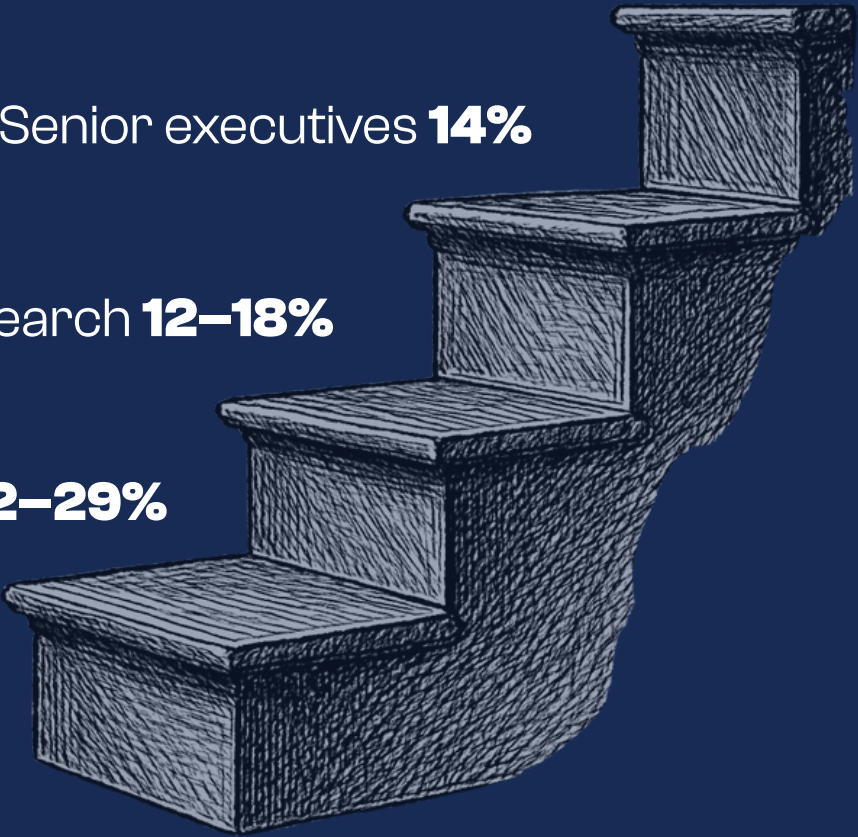
Women in AI Leadership Ladder

Top tech leadership **10%**

Senior executives **14%**

High-level research **12–18%**

AI workforce **22–29%**



Rosie's Legacy at the Frontier

The lessons of the Riveter era—belonging, resourcefulness, and barrier-breaking—serve as guideposts for today's frontier.

No longer passive users, women are stepping into the roles of architects and agents, each new skill acquired acting as a rivet and every new network connection a beam in the fast-rising framework of the modern digital economy.

This report traces how agency, confidence, and practical impact are being built—one rivet at a time—by women helping to shape, lead, and own the architecture of the Frontier Firm.

The transformation is undeniable. In **Microsoft's landmark 2025 Work Trend Index**, this year is declared **"The Year the Frontier Firm Is Born"**.

Companies are no longer just deploying new tools—they're fundamentally reinventing themselves by blending human creativity with adept, autonomous AI agents.

With AI moving from a supportive role to one of direct collaboration and orchestration, employees everywhere are taking on "agent boss" responsibilities, managing teams that include both people and digital colleagues to create more value, faster.



Source: Microsoft.com/Worklab

This organizational leap is as pivotal as the day Rosie and millions of women first redefined what was possible on the factory floor.

The architecture of these new companies—the Frontier Firm—moves beyond rigid titles and job descriptions. Teams form around goals and workflows, leveraging AI agents for routine and complex tasks, while humans focus their energy on innovation, ethics, and strategy. **Already, 82% of business leaders expect digital agents to be deeply woven into company operations in the next 12–18 months**, setting the stage for broad upskilling and a workforce model that rapidly adapts to changing needs.

The Microsoft report highlights real-world evidence of the model's power:

- Organizations like Dow, Bayer, Wells Fargo, and Holland America Line are deploying AI agents in customer service, research, logistics, and operations, saving millions and accelerating growth.
- The rise of “agent bosses”—employees now empowered to manage AI teams—accelerates skill development and career mobility across all levels.

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82% of business leaders expect digital agents to be deeply woven into company operations in the next 12–18 months

Agent Bosses are a thing.



Riveting a Fail-Proof Frontier Firm

In this landscape, women must not merely be present—they must be pivotal.

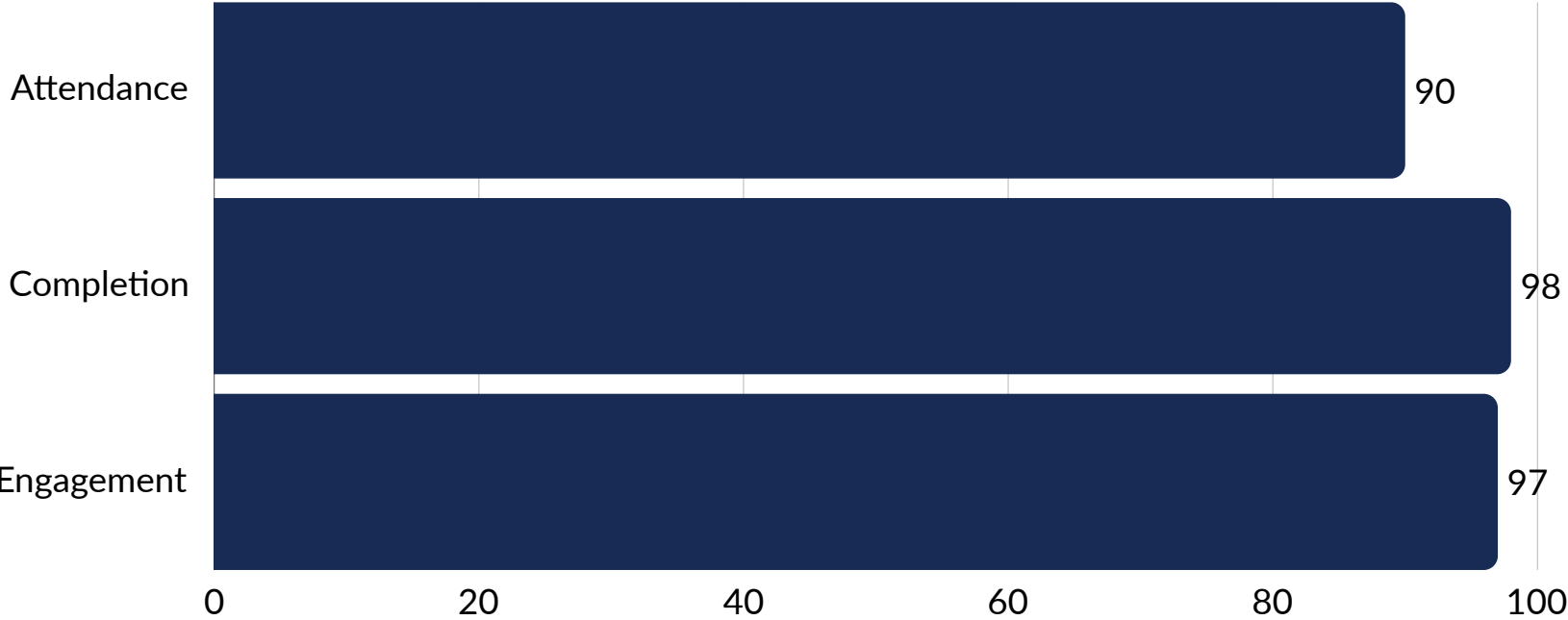
Forward-thinking organizations recognize it’s not enough to provide women with AI access; they must architect pathways for true engagement, adoption, and leadership.

Research and results prove that women don’t thrive through isolated, on-demand learning—they excel when immersed in live, interactive cohort environments where psychological safety, mentorship, and peer support turn complexity into confidence.

To help organizations transition into AI-first Frontier Firms, we outline three integrated phases.

- 1. **Forging Equity** establishes an inclusive foundation where women’s skills and leadership are central.
- 2. **Building the Engine** develops collaborative human–AI teams that enable women to lead and innovate.
- 3. **Riveting the Standard** ensures strong oversight, ethical governance, and adaptive leadership. Together, these phases chart a clear path for navigating the new digital economy.

Empressa AI Foundations for Women
Cohort Based Program (166 global attendees)



- Additional data on broader learning patterns among women—beyond the scope of Empressa’s internal findings
- Retention and Completion Rates: Cohort-based, synchronous programs for women deliver a 75–90% completion rate, compared to just 3–15% for self-paced, on-demand learning models.
 - Psychological Safety and Belonging: 82% of women cite psychological safety and inclusive norms as essential for participation, and 74% say they rely on peer mentorship or role models to build confidence and maintain engagement.
 - Preference for Hands-On, Applied Learning: 79% of women prefer practical, project-based workshops versus theory-heavy sessions.
 - Retention through Community: 83% of women report higher retention in community-driven learning programs, versus solo or fragmented formats.
 - Motivation by Progress and Recognition: 72% report an increase in confidence when tangible progress is marked with badges, milestones, or immediate feedback.



Phase 1: Forging Equity

AI access alone is not enough. Research shows that women excel when trained in live, collaborative cohorts, where psychological safety and mentorship are woven in.

What works:

- Forming small, ongoing learning cohorts for real-time support and accountability.
- Making mentorship and peer-led teaching standard practice—demystifying AI while fostering future leaders.
- Removing access barriers with flexible formats and proactive support.
- Grounding every module in practical, ethical workplace scenarios—keeping relevance front and center.
- Tracking and celebrating visible growth—badges, portfolios, and new responsibilities.
- Creating belonging spaces where experimentation is safe and voices are valued.

Impact: When organizations structure AI learning this way, women become early adopters and internal mentors, multiplying skill adoption and deepening digital readiness across teams.

“Women don’t need to master every technical detail. What they need is permission to experiment, a supportive community to learn alongside, and practical frameworks they can use right away.”

“Business owners collaborating with corporate professionals, each bringing their unique challenges and insights to the table....the magic was in the room itself.”

“Witnessing participants explore the potential of AI, ask thoughtful questions, and build confidence in technology was beyond rewarding.”

“We witnessed something extraordinary—women leading the future of AI with heart, wisdom, and intention.”

Empressa AI Foundations for Women Program
Cohort Facilitator & Participant Feedback



Phase 2: Building the Engine

Hybrid human–AI teams are the new normal. Yet without deliberate action, women risk being sidelined as advanced technical and leadership roles emerge.

What works:

- Mapping clear pathways for women to move from user to leader—agent boss, product owner, and AI ethics lead.
- Empowering peer cohorts to design, manage, and present cross-disciplinary projects, practicing facilitation and troubleshooting in real-world settings.
- Requiring diverse and bias-aware teams at every workflow and deployment stage.
- Hosting innovation forums—hackathons and project pitches—that give women a stage to shine.

Impact: When women lead, manage, and design these AI-powered teams, organizations see increased innovation, resilience, and fairness—outcomes that benefit everyone in the workforce.

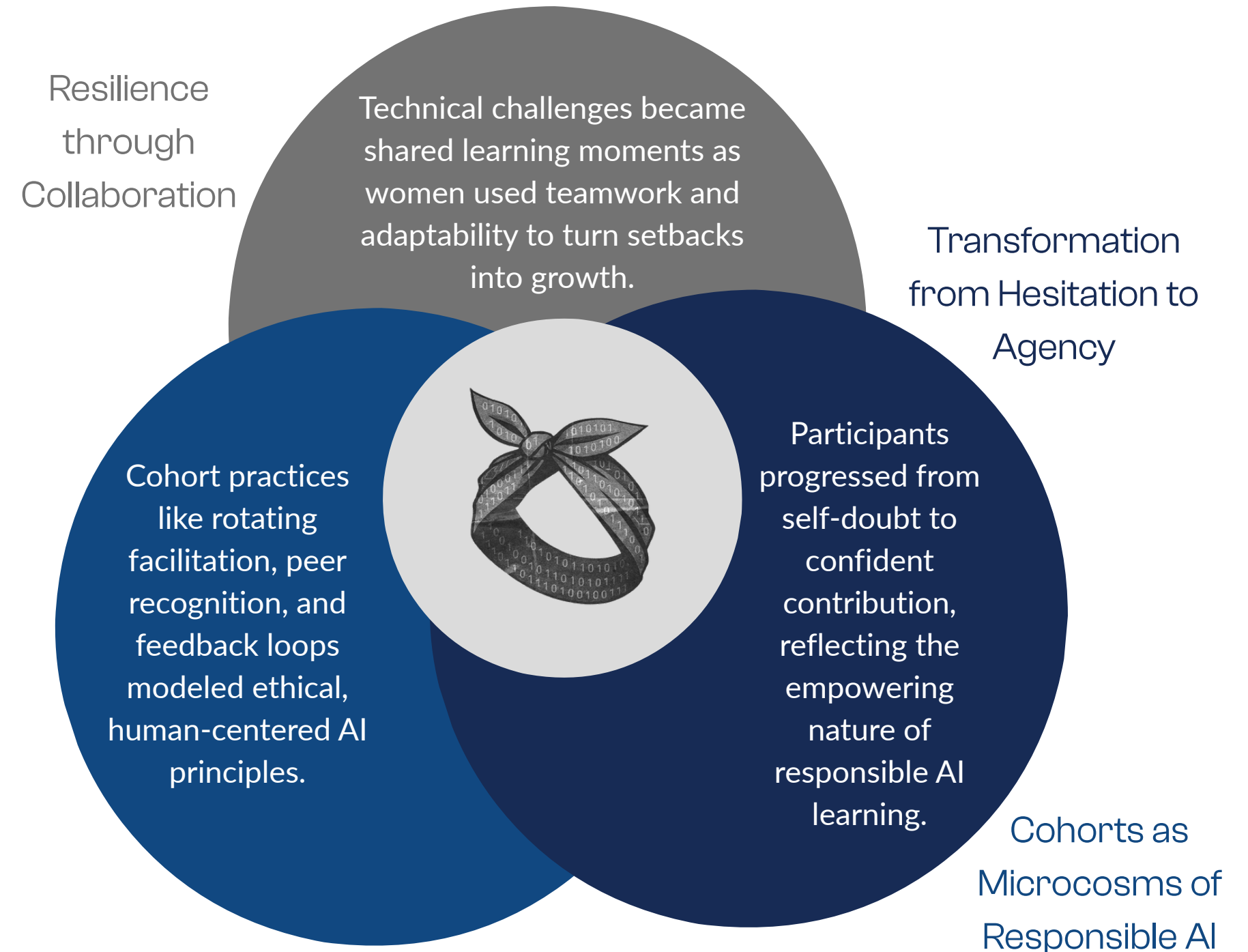
Phase 3: Riveting the Standard

As organizations shift to human-led, agent-operated models, empathy, ethical vision, and adaptive leadership become non-negotiable.

What works:

- Actively staffing boards, audit groups, and AI strategy councils with women empowered to shape risk, bias review, and policy.
- Training women to contextualize AI agent workflows—making human judgment, ambiguity, and diverse stakeholder needs explicit parts of every decision process.
- Advancing authentic, inclusive leadership styles that blend analysis, intuition, and adaptive communication.
- Tying leader advancement and organizational incentives to trust, equity, and social impact—metrics where women excel.

Impact: Human-centered leadership turns automation risks into game-changing opportunities.



Empressa AI Foundations for Women Program
Systems & Women Learning Key Themes





Empressa AI: The New Workbench

Today's Digital Riveter is a united collective—driving ethical, inclusive, and human-centered AI forward. And Empressa is rising alongside her, equipping her with the skills, confidence, and power to shape the future.

Unlike conventional AI, Empressa's GPT product is powered by the lived experiences and insights of women across industries. Each time the platform uses an expert's contribution, she earns royalties—turning personal knowledge into real value and fueling a new human-centered knowledge economy for the AI era. This growing wisdom network offers 24/7 mentorship, bias-aware guidance, and an inclusive community for rising leaders.

#AINeedsWomen

When the Empressa team set out to launch the platform through a flagship event—AI Foundations for Women—they knew the training event needed to be hosted in an inclusive, mission-aligned women-centric and trustworthy space. So, in just one month, they built Empressa Playground: a vibrant, bias-aware AI lab for curiosity, experimentation, and hands-on learning.

Over 250 women applied to facilitate, and 57 were selected, bringing extraordinary diversity and expertise. On launch day, 166 women from across the Americas, EMEA, and APAC filled 33 cohorts, navigating everything from tech glitches to steep learning curves—turning challenges into creativity, camaraderie, and shared momentum.

What emerged went beyond skills or certificates—it was a shared sense of agency. Women made key decisions on data, design, and responsible innovation, turning every win, badge, and connection into a new rivet in a more resilient digital economy.

Today's workbench is cognitive, powered by diversity, adaptive learning, and human ingenuity.

These shifts aren't symbolic—they form the foundation of a future where questions of access, leadership, and decision-making are answered with intention and inclusiveness.

With each cohort, peer circle, and mentorship match, workforce equity moves from aspiration to daily practice. This movement—echoing the spirit of Rosie and now grounded in digital space—marks the rise of the modern Riveter. Her legacy isn't individual achievement alone, but the reshaping of sectors and the setting of new standards for a creative, just, opportunity-rich era.

In the story of Empressa and its global community, we see the blueprint of the next industrial revolution—where every contribution and every challenge met becomes a rivet in a future-ready workforce.

We Can Do AI!

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This report was prepared with the support of the following AI tools:

Microsoft Copilot, ChatGPT, Perplexity, Canva and Empressa AI