

MAR 08, 2020 BY PIP MARLOW (</AU/BLOG/AUTHORS/PIP-MARLOW.HTML>)

# International Women's Day: Fighting unconscious gender bias with the power of 'and'

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This International Women's Day, we're highlighting the fact that an equal world is an enabled world. This year's theme #EachforEqual presents an opportunity to reflect on how we're promoting equality every day of the year.

And while we're not just talking equality on this one day of the year, in the lead up to 8 March it's important to draw attention to why International Women's Day still matters. Not all companies, governments and organisations hold the value of equality as highly as

Salesforce does.

When our Co-founder and CEO Marc Benioff realised there were pay disparities at Salesforce, he acted. To date, [Salesforce has spent a total of USD10.3 million](https://www.salesforce.com/blog/2019/04/equal-pay-update-2019.html) (<https://www.salesforce.com/blog/2019/04/equal-pay-update-2019.html>) to ensure equal pay for equal work. This is just one step we've taken to honour our commitment to equality for all.

But gender equality is a moving target and unconscious gender bias is still prevalent, shaping expectations of behaviours and roles. I spoke at World Tour Sydney earlier this week with Billie Jean King on this very topic, and we discussed the difficulty for women of expressing ambition – a characteristic so often attributed to men.

Language is one of the most powerful vehicles for gender discrimination and most of us don't even realise the words we use can be biased. The [World Economic Forum shared](https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/09/men-women-books) (<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/09/men-women-books>) that machine learning had analysed 3.5 million books to find that adjectives ascribed to women tend to be about physical appearance, whereas words that refer to behaviour go to men.

- The most common adjectives to describe females: beautiful, sexy
- The most common adjectives to describe males: righteous, rational, courageous

And in general conversation, the following words were associated with unconscious gender bias:

- Unconscious male associated words: active, adventurous, confident, outspoken, decisive
- Unconscious female associated words: affectionate, pleasant, compassions, kind, honest

It takes courage to recognise when unconscious gender bias is occurring. But there is one very small word that can have a powerful impact on fighting unconscious gender bias: 'and'. Continuing on from our discussion at World Tour, and is a powerful connector – linking two ideas together to create great impact.

A woman can hold ambition and humility. Just as a male can be outspoken and pleasant. The word 'and' can help us raise awareness of unconscious gender bias and help each of us take action and make better choices with the language we choose to use today on International Women's Day and every day.

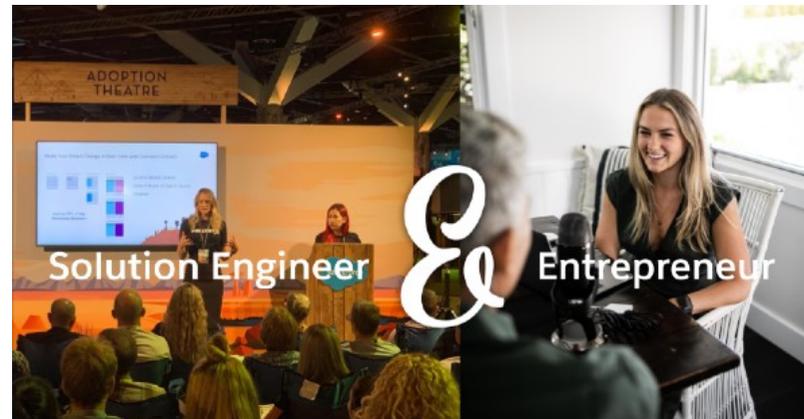
Let's start now! I'm shining a spotlight on some of the incredible women in our community, each a Trailblazer in her own right, who show the different facets we each bring to our roles and our lives – smashing stereotypes in the process.

**Billie Jean King – tennis legend and equality advocate**



We talk about how business is a platform for change, and Billie Jean King's legendary career shows that sport can be a powerful platform for change, too. Billie Jean's passion for equality has made her iconic on the tennis court and on the world stage, and she has created new inroads for all genders in sports and for every girl to compete, not just play.

Tamara Klink – Solution Engineer, Salesforce, and Entrepreneur, FIIT Collective



Tamara's purpose in life is to inspire women in tech to lead a more purposeful and balanced life. At Salesforce, this means constantly setting and achieving new goals, like speaking onstage at major events or leading webinars to educate colleagues on how to be better allies. Tamara's purpose has led her to establish [FIIT Collective \(https://fiitcollective.com/\)](https://fiitcollective.com/),

an online platform where she can reach and inspire even more women to pursue a career in technology.

## Jessica Macpherson – Consultative and decisive



Salesforce Trailblazer Jessica Macpherson is CEO and Founder of St Kilda Mums, a not-for-profit that distributes cots, car restraints, prams, nappies, linen, clothes and anything you can think of that can help disadvantaged mums.

When asked what her 'and' is, two juxtaposing leadership styles came to mind. While 'consultative' and 'decisive' sit on either end of a leadership spectrum, for Jessica they are both everyday behaviours.

This approach has shaped St Kilda Mums – a 'school-hours' workplace.

"It's very hard to be a fully participating member of the workforce and to care for children, or care for anyone really. We've built a business that operates during school hours, so 90% of our staff and our volunteers are here between 9am and 3pm," she says.

"There will never be equality in the workplace if women care for children and men don't."

## Jo Gaines – leader and advocate



As AVP Australia, Cloud Sales, Jo is a consummate leader in the male-dominated sales industry. Alongside this role, Jo is Co-VP JAPAC of the Salesforce Women's Network, a powerful advocate who develops leadership paths for women (even if those women are 'voluntold') and campaigns against unconscious bias. Why?

"I've had my share of 'me too' moments," Jo says. "That's why this is important. I have two daughters, and I want them to feel that they can speak up."

Rebecca Aichholzer – tech leader and powerlifter



A true Trailblazer, Rebecca is Head of Business Systems Success at QICGRE. She has built her career by changing the company she is part of, but at the same time she has built pathways for other women, becoming part of and helping to build the women in the tech community.

The strength she's showing in building a career in an industry dominated by men and in reaching back to pull others along with her is not just figurative.

"When I started powerlifting," she says, "there were not many other females lifting at the time. To see me standing on the lifting platform enabled other women to see that they could do it too."

Thank you to everyone who's part of our community for making that community vibrant, strong and inclusive.



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