



High performance. Delivered.

Gender equality: leveling the playing field of opportunity and expectations for my children

Video Transcript:

Julie Spillane, Managing Director, Accenture Ireland

I grew up in a large family. There were six kids and I was the youngest. It was very evenly balanced, three boys and three girls. My two older siblings just ahead of me, who were 5 years and 6 years older than me, were both boys, so a lot of my time I was surrounded by boys.

Education was a big family value in my house as I was growing up. Both of my parents went to college, which was quite unusual for the '40s and '50s. Both also studied science so I've grown up a lot with science going on in the house.

I never saw any different expectations between the boys and the girls in our family, so it all became very neutral across the family. My mother gave up work when she got married, as people did in those days. That's probably something that was always hankering in the back of her mind. She did set up her own business a bit later. I was very lucky. I received a scholarship to attend university. I studied electronic engineering, which again had me surrounded by boys, quite a lot of the time. Even now, my father is nearly 90, and we have robust debates about education, about me doing further education, and about my career.

I've really grown up with this expectation of education and career all around me. As I reflect on gender equality, I think about the next generation. I have two kids, Connor who is nine, and Sarah who's six. Both my husband, Richard, and I work so the kids see that we share a career and family very equally. It's normal for them to see that every single day.

There's a lot of talk now about girls not choosing STEM subjects because they think it's too much for boys or they're not sure about what the career opportunities are. I'm really lucky in that I'm going to be able to provide Sarah with that understanding both from my own personal background but also from the things that Accenture does.

There are simple things, like bring your kids to work day where the kids get to learn about analytics and see coding overall. When I think about what I can do for Sarah, it's most important for me to make sure she understands the opportunities that are available to her and she's fully educated on them, but it's up to her to make the decisions for herself. For Connor, it's really important for us to also help him to understand the options available to him. Those options may be in a future family unit actually supporting a partner to work as well. The best I can do for both of my kids is to level the playing field both of opportunity and of expectation for them equally.