



# GIRLS WHO CODE

## VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

JEN MCHALE-BRYAR: We believe that attracting, retaining and advancing women is critical to be a high performance business.

JASON WARNKE: Hi, I'm Jason Warnke, part of the Accenture Internal IT organization. I'm glad to be here today with Jen McHale-Bryar, who is an Associate Director also in the Accenture Internal IT organization. She also leads the Chicago Girls Who Code Summer Immersion Program. We're going to talk about this critically important program and how it's impacting girls looking to pursue careers in STEM fields. Thanks for joining us today, Jen.

JEN MCHALE-BRYAR: Of course, I'm happy to be here and always happy to talk about Girls Who Code.

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JASON WARNKE: Great, then let's get to it. Jen, Girls Who Code is an excellent organization. Could you share a little bit about yourself and why you decided to lead the Girls Who Code Summer Immersion Program here in Chicago?

JEN MCHALE-BRYAR: Sure, well, I've been a female in IT for many, many years and, you know, one of the things I've always noticed is that, you know, our gender parity isn't quite there and I've been really excited to see where Accenture's been going to try to get to gender parity across all of Accenture. But we know that we can't just do that, you know, without starting when people are younger and bringing them through – bringing girls and then women into the field.

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I'm also the mother of two teenage daughters, so it's a personal topic for me too. You know, I still see them, despite having an IT professional as a mother think of coding as, you know, something that boys do and is associated with gaming and that's not their thing. So I definitely think that giving exposure at an early age is really important and that is Girls Who Code mission. And so, when the opportunity came up to help run the Summer Immersion Program here in Chicago, I jumped on it and I've been doing it for four years.

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JASON WARNKE: That's awesome. You know, you and I share that in common. I have two teenage girls as well and I can say as a parent that's been in the IT field for a long time, my girls haven't naturally gravitated to this field at all as well, despite us being in this field. And so, there is definitely something afoot there, not because you and I don't talk about it with our own girls, but because there isn't the right dialogue and action being taken at the lower levels and into, you know, secondary education. So it is definitely a hot topic.

Girls Who Code shares a similar inclusion and diversity vision as our own Accenture, how has this impacted the partnership between the two organizations?

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JEN MCHALE-BRYAR: Yeah, I think, you



know, we believe that attracting, retaining and advancing women is critical to be a high performance business and we know if we want to continue to be able to find those resources and find those high performing women with deep technology skills, we need to kind of go back down into the educational system and help provide that exposure at the right points. And so, Girls Who Code Summer Immersion Program is specifically targeted to girls in 11th and 12th grade. So entering those grades over the summer, they're spending 7 weeks here at Accenture and at other partner classrooms all around the country and what they're doing is they're learning to code across those seven weeks. But they're also getting exposure to our women professionals, they're getting exposure to what it's like to work in a technology workplace, they're getting exposure to the people we bring in as speakers, the field trips we take them on. For example, we took them to our digital hub. They got to see some of the great stuff we're doing there. And every week, they meet with, you know, professional mentors. They spend an hour a week together talking about different things like college search, building a resume, getting out on LinkedIn and getting input into their final projects.

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And so, for many of these girls, this is the first exposure they've had to women working in a professional field like this. And so, we give that exposure, we have that opportunity, we have fabulous professionals here in the office who can help do that and we hope that eventually these girls will come back and become our future employees.

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JASON WARNKE: That's really cool. As my oldest is entering 11th grade, I'm definitely after this going to get her involved. So super cool.

So what issues, you mentioned a few of them, but what other issues does Girls Who Code look

to address?

JEN MCHALE-BRYAR: You know, one of the things that they found is it's not just, you know, like having a coding class available. That's not it. We've actually done some joint research with Girls Who Code. It's called Cracking the Gender Code. And what we found is the different factors that influence girls interested in computing and how it changes over time. And Girls Who Code tries to show in their programs to attract, you know, to correlate with those various points in time in their life.

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So there's clubs in middle school that have actually started, have a book series similar to like the Babysitters Club Series, now for young girls to get them like interested and excited before they even can actually do a class. And then this program is really capturing the time when they're starting to think about majors, starting to think about careers and college. And so, it's not just about the, you know, mechanics of the coding, but it's helping them understand how it could be a career for them, it could be a field that they could be interested in and not just be, you know, here's how to code from A to B.

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JASON WARNKE: Wow, so what opportunities does Girls Who Code Program provide both long term and short term?

JEN MCHALE-BRYAR: Yeah, so the short term is obviously the exposure, the college guidance, the, you know, that decision-making as they're finishing up high school and things like that, but then we stay close to them. So what we're hoping to do is see them come back into our summer analyst and our new analyst programs. We already have the first graduates are starting to do that. And then we are looking to hire them once they graduate from college. And, you know, we're among the first 20 companies who



joined Girls Who Code, this #HireMe campaign, committed to helping build this college to career pipeline. So we have to stay in touch with these girls from 11th grade, through college and, hopefully, right into our analyst post college program.

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JASON WARNKE: This is amazing. I just have to say it's an awesome story. It's an excellent program. It's got world-wide notoriety. It's making an impact. I want to thank you for your leadership in getting our organization as involved as we have been and contributing to its global success really. I can't wait to see where this goes and actually for us, you and I both to see our girls get involved in the program and share with their friends as well. I do think this is one of those really important, but well beyond a movement, but this is critical to, you know, success, long term success, in the technology field as we get more women into the field of IT. I think it's critically important.

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So that's it for another edition of Accenture 24/7 Podcast. Thanks for joining us today. Until next time, I'm Jason Warnke.

SPEAKER: Thank you for joining today's podcast. Be sure to subscribe to the Accenture CIO Podcast Series on iTunes for all episodes.

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