

Female tech founders perceived as less competent and warm by potential job seekers

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Female technology entrepreneurs struggle with recruitment because they are viewed as less competent and warm, and the startup perceived as less likely to grow or empower employees, finds new research from Mannheim Business School.

Dr Robert Strohmeier, postdoctoral researcher at Mannheim Business School, and colleagues ran an initial experiment with 777 US job seekers and a follow-up study with 455 US job seekers. The researchers investigated participants' likelihood to seek employment with startups of various top management team compositions - all men, all women, or gender-balanced - alongside either a male or female founder.

The researchers found that female technology founders face more difficulty attracting job applicants than male founders.

This was mostly due to gender stereotypes. Job seekers stereotyping female entrepreneurs as less competent and warm leads to assumptions that women-led startups will lack economic viability and the potential for employee empowerment.

However, the results also show that a gender-balanced team significantly counters these biases. "Female-led technology ventures can bolster their appeal to potential employees by establishing leadership teams with balanced gender representation," says Dr Strohmeier.

These insights highlight the need for technology startups to promote gender diversity within leadership teams to dismantle gender-based stereotypes and attract a wider talent pool.

These findings were first published in Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal.

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