

Tech Talent Charter (TTC) Signatory Spotlight: Corndel & Zoopla
[Open Playbook](#): Retraining into tech programmes

The issue

The issue of the lack of women in tech is well documented – recent research by PWC confirms that only 3% of women say a career in technology is their first choice, and only 5% of leadership positions in the technology sector are held by women. As a training provider specialising in management and digital skills, Corndel wants to help close the gender gap in tech and improve diversity within the sector. We do this by working with our partners and clients to deliver high quality training in data, software engineering and DevOps to a diverse group that makes a genuine difference to their lives and career prospects. Corndel are an actively anti-racist organisation and have developed an equality, diversity and inclusion framework to help contribute to societal change. This includes the development of a staff-led task force with vocal support from senior staff and stakeholders, encouraging company-wide involvement and participation, creating a safe space for a company-wide conversation, and using a framework for collective learning and action – [read more](#).

The strategy

Corndel works with clients to help upskill their teams to promote diversity. For example, we developed and delivered a software engineering apprenticeship in partnership with Zoopla. Zoopla is committed to giving opportunities to women who are looking to forge a career in technology and innovation. The rigorous recruitment process for this cohort of trainees involved an inclusive approach to recruitment, capitalising on Zoopla's membership of the Tech She Can Charter. Seventy per cent of the Zoopla trainees are female, compared with an estimated ten per cent industry average.

The method

Corndel developed and delivered a software engineering apprenticeship in partnership with Zoopla. Catrin Anderson, Chief People Officer at Zoopla explained the drivers behind this unique recruitment drive. "We have ambitious plans for the future combined with a commitment to innovation, so we are very excited to launch our first apprenticeship programme. In particular we want to give opportunities to women who are looking to forge a career in technology and innovation, helping us build a pipeline of talent that will benefit our customers for years to come."

We are delighted that this cohort of apprentice Software Engineers is 70% female; an impressive ratio given that just 3% of females say technology is their first career choice.

Zoopla and Corndel, along with 160 other leading UK organisations, are proud signatories of the Tech She Can Charter which has been a valuable support throughout the process. The Charter is a commitment by forward-thinking organisations to increase the number of women working in technology roles in the UK. Zoopla's new intake is a shining example to other organisations that female tech talent is out there if you are committed to change and take practical steps to approaching recruitment in the right way.

All the successful candidates should be extremely proud of their achievement of being selected for the role. Working in close partnership with Zoopla, Corndel managed the recruitment process for the ten new Software Engineer positions. Here is an insight into our approach:

Stage 1: In the job advert we specifically mentioned the support of the Tech She Can network to attract female applicants.

Stage 2: At the CV and application screenings stage we encouraged applications from people who have a passion for coding but no professional experience. A total of 480 people applied.

Stage 3: The aptitude tests had been specifically designed to test for some of the skills required to be a good developer without requiring any prior knowledge of coding or software development. This is a tried-and-tested approach for attracting diverse groups of applicants and to avoid discriminating against

people who have not come through the more traditional pathways such as a Computer Science degree.

Stage 4: We ran four assessment centres with 12 candidates in each. Designed in partnership with Zoopla, this process enabled participants to demonstrate their collaborative skills and creative thinking. The Zoopla team had a chance to observe the group's work and evaluate based on the company's core behaviours.

Stage 5: The final part of the selection process was individual interviews during which representatives from Zoopla's HR and Tech teams met with short listed candidates to better understand their personalities and evaluate how they could add value to the existing team.

The impact

The group's journey began with a 12-week bootcamp, delivered through Corndel's partnership with Softwire. Starting out with limited coding experience, they were on a steep learning curve for 3 months and then joined their new colleagues in Zoopla's product and tech team, at a Junior Developer level.

Ongoing learning is delivered via 12 monthly workshops which introduce the developers to more advanced concepts as they develop their engineering skills. After the bootcamp the recruits were straight into a major rebuild of the Zoopla platform, quickly having had the opportunity to apply their new skills.

One of the learners, Viktorija Buklajeva, tells us about her journey so far: "I am using fundamentals that I learned during the bootcamp in my day-to-day work. The concepts and workflow I learned during the bootcamp made it easy for me to work in a professional environment and a lot of concepts translate from one language to another. I've had great feedback so far, I have become an active member of Zoopla's engineering community and have brought value with my work, organised company events and taken part in many initiatives. I have already built a new service that generates value for Zoopla, as well as taken part in a few major projects! In the next 12 months I hope to make even more impact and work on improving our systems."

Another learner, Louise Gilligan, explains how the apprenticeship has helped her career: "The apprenticeship is an amazing experience and one I am very grateful for. Learning everything on the job is challenging so it is important to be open minded and get comfortable with being uncomfortable. I use the skills I learned to complete tickets that range from building front-end interfaces through to connecting code to databases. The level of support I have received from my peers and stakeholders has been incredible. It is great to work with people who remember what it was like at the beginning of their careers and are happy to share their knowledge. I am proud of every time I solve a problem/get something working on my own - it's not easy! Over the next 12 months, I hope to continue to help Zoopla reach its commercial goals. I am in a small team contributing across the full stack which adds a lot of value and support for other colleagues."

Shared by Rachael Gordon, Marketing Manager at Corndel.