

Hello, again! This is Heather Terry at Hurricane Labs—Welcome to our podcast! Today we'll be talking about the Women in Tech organization and what sort of issues they are working to address.

This episode is also an extra special Tech-quila Talk! What is a Tech-Quila Talk, you ask? Well, as anyone who knows me is fully aware, I absolutely hate recording myself. I get weird, jittery, incoherent. I obsess over inflection. I throw tantrums. So—tequila makes it easier for us to chat about technology.

Joining me today for this Tech-quila Talk is Hurricane Labs' Marketing Director, Kelsey Clark. Hi, Kelsey.

Hi everyone! I'm enjoying this Margaritaville vibe. I'm a little out of practice with this whole speaking thing, so this Tech-quila theme is really working wonders right now.

So, today we'll be talking about our experience attending the Women in Tech 24 hour virtual conference and how you can get involved—but before that, Kelsey I think it's time for a toast.

We clink. To awkwardness.

Anddd I need to put our disclaimer out there before we go on. Hurricane Labs **does** promote knowledge-sharing, but it does **not** endorse any of the views or activities taking place on this after hours podcasting session. So, now that we have that out of the way, Heather, will you tell our listeners a little bit more about the conference?

Last week, we attended the Women in Tech 24-hour virtual conference. Women in Tech is a non-profit organization. They're all about empowering women and girls for success in STEM career fields and are working to close the gender gap by focusing on education, entrepreneurialism, social inclusion, science and innovation. We were impressed with them—if you're looking for resources or a way to contribute to the tech community, I hope our conversation today encourages you to check them out.

I have to say I was smiling during the entire conference. I've had my own fair share of ups and downs throughout my career in the IT security field—from having a difficult time having my voice heard in meetings, to learning how to ask for a raise—so this conference gave me a nice boost of hope that there really are people out there working together to make a difference for women in STEM. Heather, you mentioned taking the next steps in becoming a member of the organization, what's been going on with that?

Something I've been really looking for since entering the world of technical writing and infosec has been a way to become more active in the community, so it's been cool to learn about this group and what they've been striving for—I think it's a great way to get involved, so I was really excited to find them and take the first steps to contribute to their work. Dr. Christyl Johnson

talked about trailblazing and making it easier for everyone who comes after her to have access to the same opportunities, and I think that is so, so important.

Absolutely, actually, even though I consider myself to be a pretty proficient Googler, it's tough sometimes to find solid resources out there. One of the talks I was really excited about during the conference introduced a program called the S.H.E. Strategy, which SHE stands for enabling women to be Seen.Heard.and Empowered. When I was listening to the founder, her name's Nima, I was thinking 'wow, finally, something for women that gives them the guidance, training, and the tools they need to learn how to make better decisions and encourage their own success, and not being stuck in a place where they don't go further.' One of the main parts of this talk that resonated with me, was when Nima said, "There's no point in telling women, put your hand up, step up, speak up, if women don't have the tools to be able to do it and do it comfortably, and effectively." And this is the reason Nima created this program SHE, to enable women to do this. We'll also have links for all this neat stuff in the show notes so you can check them out later.

Anyway, I was a little unsure at first about the phrasing of their theme—Women Taking Up Space—but I have to admit, it grew on me after I learned what it was all about. Heather what are your thoughts on this?

I thought it was a fun play on words, especially with the all female spacewalk that happened not too long ago. And I was enraptured with Christyl Johnson's talks. If you're unfamiliar with her, she's NASA Goddard's Deputy Director for Technology and Research Investments. She was so passionate about what she was talking about, and the way they're using AI to help support Covid testing and tracking was fascinating. She really spoke to me when she said, "Stop talking about it—What are you going to do about it?" in regards to addressing sexism and women's issues in STEM. I was like, "Yes! This. So much this." I try to follow up conversations about a problem by offering a solution—something to get the conversation off the issue and onto how to address it, so I love her "fix the problem" mentality.

Plus, I would drag my husband off for a space traveling adventure in a heartbeat, so anyone who is trying to get us closer to that reality I think is way cool.

I couldn't agree more, whether they were talking about NASA and AI to any of the other topics—these women were speaking so clearly about their careers and lives. I'm still trying to figure out what I want to do when I grow up, so it's incredible to me when others can talk about why and how they're doing what they do.

Yeah, like the speakers in the East Coast Chapter launch said one impact Covid has had that she hopes persists after the pandemic is this push into authenticity—authentically asking how people are, and answering authentically as we deal with the stress and fallout of life during a pandemic. I think that at the end of this conference, that authenticity and Dr. Johnson's get-it-done attitude are the things I most want to walk away with.

Before we sign off, I want to give a quick shout out to our blog page, and particularly Meredith's blog post about virtual conferences if you're looking to find out more about what those are like. That's [www.hurricanelabs.com/blog](http://www.hurricanelabs.com/blog) and her post is called "5 Things First-Time Virtual Conference Goers Should Know". Otherwise, thank you Heather for discovering this wonderful Women in Tech Virtual Conference and for having me on this podcast.

We thank you for tuning in to this very special Tech-quila Talk. See ya next time.