

# IN BETWEEN

**Often taken for granted, control and support functions play a vital role for organizational success. With automation and digital solutions, the roles of finance, HR or customer support will change dramatically. Will support functions become less human? Is it all about costs? At EY's event "Women In Industries" executives discussed risks and opportunities.**

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ADVICE

WOMEN IN INDUSTRIES

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You could call them "The Invisibles". Or "The Invincibles". For us, they're "The In-betweeners". Across the world, support and control functions guarantee the smooth functioning of organizations. They're the ones that make sure that companies hire the right people, have a good overview of their finances, a functioning IT setup and customers that are taken care of and happy. But while their functions are often taken for granted, people in such roles have challenges ahead: They're in between analogue and digital world, in between customers and colleagues, in between processes.

Still, their significance cannot be stressed enough: In the United States and Europe alone, roughly 25 million people work in control and support functions. What's even more important: Estimates say that improved productivity in these areas could reduce costs by about \$1 trillion in the US and Europe.

So it's a relevant discussion to have. Especially, as control and support functions were always heavily dominated by human labor. Now, however, technology automates

more and more such services. CV's can be pre-selected using artificial intelligence, customer support can be handled with robocallers and chatbots. About time to discuss the topic in the right setting: The third part of EY's "Women In Industries" event series did just that. And asked if the digital transformation will actually make humans disappear from such positions ...

**The answer is a** clear "No", according to the panelists at EY's "Women In Industries" event. They discussed how to modify control and support functions within the digital transformation. And agreed that while the future will definitely be more digital, it could also be more human.

But this will need outstanding leadership qualities. Because support workers are frustrated and afraid - to be downgraded or replaced by a machine altogether. Jane Griffiths, Global Head of Swiss biotech company Actellon, said that leaders have to bring their employees on board: "You're not going to get anything done unless you bring the people

with you. That's the most challenging thing of them all."

Andreea Popescu, Digital Finance Manager at EY Switzerland, agreed: "If you don't set up the right environment, the most talented people won't come join your team. You need continuous learning and a clear purpose for innovation to thrive." This all shows that the speed with which change is happening around us is increasing. So companies have to make sure they're able to adapt, because what we consider normal changes fast, as Sandy Oppliger, CEO of Bauknecht Switzerland, emphasized with an example from our private lives: "In 30 or 40 years, people will find it completely normal that robots are looking after their kids."

The good news: While there are some obstacles to overcome, opportunities arise by the minute. But leaders have to make sure they seize them, as Carole Ackermann, CEO of Diamondscull said. "The price for innovation is uncertainty. But if no one is ready to take a risk, companies won't succeed."





Together with the other panelists, Carole Ackermann (CEO of Diamondscull) discussed how companies can modify support functions within their digital transformation.



**"In 30 or 40 years, people could find it completely normal that robots are looking after their kids. Perceptions change fast."**

**SANDY OPPLIGER,  
CEO, BAUKNECHT SWITZERLAND  
(LEFT PICTURE)**

**“The price for innovation is uncertainty. This has to be balanced by a courageous board. If no one is ready to take a risk, companies won’t be able to innovate and succeed.”**

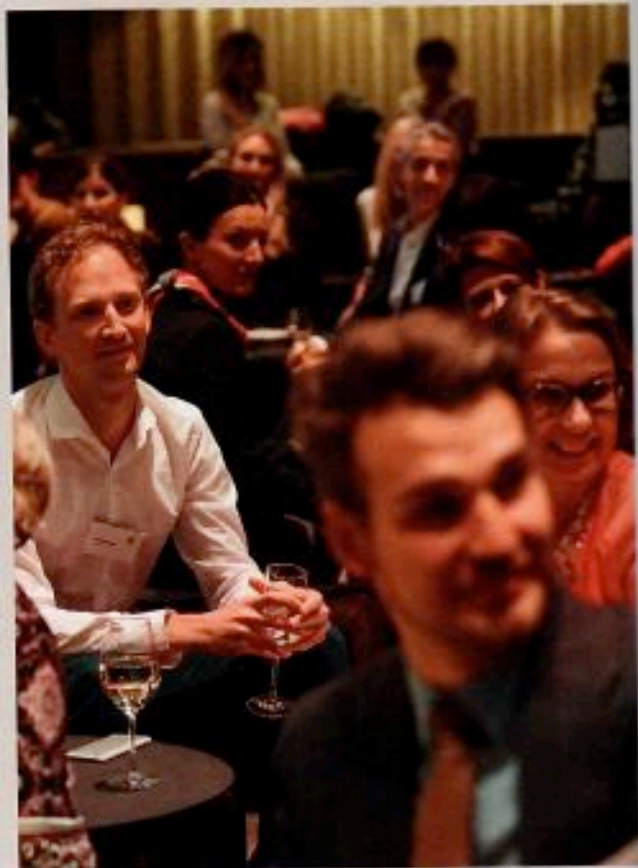
**CAROLE ACKERMANN,  
CEO, DIAMONDSCULL  
(RIGHT PICTURE)**



It seems as if there's already a community forming: Alanna Abrahamson, CFO of ABB's Industrial Automation Division and a speaker at the first installment of the "Women in Industries" series, came back again – this time, as a guest.







The graphic recorder (Philipp Schneider, see interview on the right) was kept very busy – a testament to how many interesting aspects were discussed!



Melanie Kovacs, founder of Zurich-based coding school Master 21.

## RECODE

Not everyone "speaks tech". Thankfully, Melanie Kovacs teaches people.

### What do you do at Master21?

At Master21, we create joyful learning experiences for digital leaders and their teams, so they can make a difference in our increasingly digitized world. In our coding bootcamps we teach business people to "speak tech", so they can communicate and collaborate better with software engineers.

### What's your vision?

We want people to learn all the relevant skills they'll need in the 21st century.



Philipp Schneider, Director eSolutions Development at Sonova.

## RECONNECT

Still, after 15 years at Sonova, Philipp Schneider wants to help customers reconnect with the people they love.

### What's your relationship with technology?

I'm an engineer and a geek. What I used to play with has now become mainstream. The possibilities we have to connect people are fascinating.

### What do you do at Sonova?

We cover the full range of hearing solutions, from hearing instruments to cochlear implants and connectivity solutions. In a way, we allow people to reconnect with the people they love.

### What will be possible in the future?

The body is an amazing machine. Cochlear implants are just the first glimpse of how we can connect new technology to this "natural machine".

### What do you hope to get out of the event?

I was invited as a cartoonist. I want to listen, learn and then reflect that in a graphical recording - as an alternative way of communication.