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Using Intention To Overcome Intimidation In The Board Room



[Amy Blankson](#), CONTRIBUTOR

Amy Blankson is a speaker/author on happiness and technology. Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.

This is the fourth article in a [series of posts](#) that aims to expand the conversation on women's leadership in technology to explore current challenges in the field and to highlight best practices for employers and emerging leaders.

Robin Chase is a self-proclaimed transportation entrepreneur and activist. She co-founded both Zipcar, which became the largest car-sharing company in the world, and Veniam, a network company that mobilizes vehicle data.



(Cambridge, MA - October 5, 2004) - Robin Chase is the Founder and former CEO of Zipcar, a company that rents cars by the day or hour, using a totally innovative business model that may help revolutionize transportation. Staff

Photo Phoebe Sexton/Harvard University News Office

Although Robin's experience in tech is vast, admittedly, her transition into tech was incidental rather than intentional. She had a vision (for Zipcar) to create a reliable, convenient, on-demand mode of transportation — and for that she needed technology. As the spouse of an engineer, she had no fear of technology but was blissfully unaware of the realities that she would face as she stepped into the technology sector. In looking back on her journey, she attributes much of her success to this ignorance, as it allowed her to move forward rather than focusing on the many difficulties that would lie in her path.

Despite her lack of knowledge of the tech industry itself, Robin knew enough to know that regardless of whether she stepped into boardrooms, 'expert' roundtables, or operational strategy meetings, she would likely be the only woman in the room. Although women are widely underrepresented at the leadership level in many industries, Robin faced the unique challenge of having absolutely no female peers in the transportation and wireless device space. But, rather than letting the men in the room intimidate her, Robin pushed forward, intent on making Zipcar a success.

When we asked Robin what unique attributes women bring to tech, she found it difficult to discuss without reminding that stereotypes are generalizations for which there are many exceptions. Nonetheless, she praised women's tendency to be more inclusive. In her experience, women care more about getting the job done than about whom actually does it, because "our ego is subservient to a good outcome". She also notes that perhaps due to centuries of experience, women are better at multi-tasking, organizing, ensuring every aspect of a job is completed, and wringing every penny out of the budget at hand.

She attributes much of her success to four key factors: her unwavering self-confidence derived from her prestigious educational background, the support of her husband's engineering expertise, her 'genetic immunity' to intimidation, and perhaps most interestingly, her white privilege. While Robin's journey to become the co-Founder of Zipcar and Veniam was anything but easy, she admits that it would have been much more difficult had she been a woman of color.

In 2015, inspired by the premise behind Zipcar, Robin published Peers Inc. to explore the future of the collaborative economy. Her latest project involves assisting cities in getting the most out of the introduction and implementation of self-driving cars. Robin has not only been able to

forge a path few women have travelled, but she continues to delve into parts unknown, by women and men alike.

[Amy Blankson](#) is co-founder of the positive psychology consulting firm GoodThink and the author of [The Future of Happiness](#).



AN INTERVIEW WITH

Robin Chase

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