



Background

The Girl Geek Dinners were founded on the 16th August 2005 as a result of one girl geek who got annoyed and frustrated about being one of the only females attending technical events. She was tired of being assumed to be marketing, tired of constantly having to prove herself and decided that she just wanted a change and to be treated just the same as any other geek out there, gender and age aside.

After all to be geeky is to be intelligent, have passion for a subject and to know that subject in depth. It's not at all about being better than others, or about gender, race, religion or anything else. Those things just detract from the real fun stuff, the technology, the innovation and the spread of new ideas.

So what did this geeky girl do to change the world of geeks and girl geeks everywhere... well she got in touch with a few well known bloggers, posted online about her idea of getting geeks to educate one another over dinner and then arranged the first girl geek dinner event with a little help from her friends. The first event had 35 people at it all from London and the surrounding area, shortly after people started to hear about the events and companies started sponsoring them to cover the food and drinks cost.

Then they started popping up in other UK cities as she trained others up in how to run the events, spreading the formula for them... so they then started popping up in Europe... and shortly after that over in Canada... Now they are starting to pop up in New Zealand and Australia. Who knows where will be next

Past Events

Where have the past events been, what is the format and why?

If we start with London, the birth home for the girl geek dinners, they started their life at the Texas Embassy over in Trafalgar Square, and soon decided to move about a bit and have since been found in bars such as Balls Brothers and offices such as Google, Saatchi & Saatchi and Skype.

The format of the events is to be informal, buffet dinner style with finger foods and wine as well as soft drinks for those who are driving. We have a speaker or three on a subject of choice either based on a technical subject area or business area, or even on women and tech issues (such as mentoring). The events are varied and the reach vast.

We keep the events informal and outside of lecture theatres or offices where possible solely to take the women (and the men... oh yes men are allowed to come, however they must have an invitation from a female attending the event!) into an informal and relaxed environment where they feel comfortable talking and interacting. We limit the number of male attendees by putting the balance of men to women in the hands of the attendees. This means that there can be a 50:50 split or anything up to that on the male side. Generally the more men in attendance, the more the dynamics of the event change. It is a learning experience for both the men and the women as men in tech aren't used to interacting with women in tech on a technical level. Technical women are also not used to being technical with other women either... it's a learning curve on all sides.

The Vision

The long term vision of these events is to bring Geek (or if necessary Girl Geek) Dinners into schools, colleges and universities around the world to encourage people to embrace their passion for something like technology and to explore what they can do with it. Even better will be doing this in countries where computers are scarce but valuable. Imagine groups of children around a laptop learning about the technology, getting all excited by it no matter what country they are in.

Why should you care?

The UK population of software engineers and technical expertise is diminishing; the amount of work in the UK for skilled technical staff is on the rise. The amount of women in the technical industry is less than 10% and the number of young women (and in fact men) applying to university for a technical degree course is dwindling. This pattern however is not just occurring in the UK but around the world. Why? This is partly due to social stereotypes (see work from Saatchi & Saatchi on Lady Geek), partly to do with university entry requirements (many which require A level maths as standard), and sometimes just in lack of self belief that people can do these roles successfully. Looking at a younger age group they see technology as dull and about sitting looking at a computer all day! We want to break down these myths about technology and the industry at large!

Technology has been one of those black arts for so many years and we think that it's about time that these myths were broken down and the truth about them brought to light. Social stereotypes damaging the industry will be broken down, and it's all about educating the media, the people and attracting social change. Along with this is the opportunity to make changes that can affect everyone, even those in the third world. It is an opportunity and one that I think would be well worth anyone who is up for a challenge to consider.

Sarah Blow

Girl Geek Dinners Founder

E-mail: sarah@sarahblow.com

Web: <http://girlgeekdinners.com>

Blog: <http://girlygeekdom.blogspot.com>