**Codess: A Day At Microsoft**

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Globally, only 16% of women graduate with STEM degrees – this is an astonishing statistic that I learnt during the Codess event conducted by Microsoft at their Hyderabad campus this Women's Day. This made me realize why there has been so much focus on encouraging women to take up technology. I was never subjected to gender bias but I did encounter people saying how women just do not get technology. This is funny considering that Ada Lovelace, a woman, is the world's first programmer. There are so many more women who contributed a lot to their respective fields but did not receive as much recognition as their male counterparts.   
  
Codess is an initiative by Microsoft to inspire female coders and to help them achieve their professional goals through various events and workshops worldwide. This particular event was organized by the University Recruitment Team of Hyderabad and no one could have done the job any better. About 45 women from all over India attended the event and the team took care of the travel and accommodation. They had a fun yet productive and engaging day planned for us. We were also joined by the women working there who mentored us diligently.  
  
The event started off with a timed quiz just to break the ice and then we had Charumathy Srinivasan, Partner Group Engineer Manager in Microsoft India Development Center, deliver a very inspiring speech on her journey since she started working at Microsoft in 1992. She spoke about the principles that helped her reach where she is now and the technologies she works with. She also talked about the growth mindset they embrace and their mission to empower every person and organization on the planet to achieve more. We were then briefed about the group activity that will be going on for the rest of the day – each group was supposed to design and present a product based on two keywords related to Internet of Things.

Each group was assigned a mentor and the discussion went on for about three hours. It was a great opportunity to interact with others and the working lunch we had gave a taste of how things work in the office. Then each group presented their product and the creativity and ideas that went into their presentation show why we need more women in technology. The judges helped us introspect regarding any improvements that could be made.   
  
In the end, each participant was awarded a certificate and received amazing goodies. The winners in the quiz and the activity received great prizes, and then it was time to leave. The really hospitable people and the impressive infrastructure of their campus made it even harder to leave. It left us looking forward to attending more such events in the future.