



**Session Title: What Power, Women? Asia's Productivity Goldmine**

**Date & Time:** 5 April, 13:30am – 14:30pm

**Moderator:** Lin Neumann, AmCham Indonesia

**Speakers:** **Tan Sri Dr Rebecca Fatima Sta Maria**, Senior Policy Fellow of ERIA (Economic Research Institute of ASEAN and East Asia)  
**Min Chang**, President, Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa, DAS Group of Companies, Omnicom Group  
**Lovella Adams**, ASEAN Business Unit Technical Director, Coca-Cola, Thailand  
**Ratih Neumann**, Head of Regional Regulatory Affairs India, ASEAN and Australia-New Zealand, Cargill  
**Josephine Hadikusumo**, Senior Counsel (Asia), Texas Instruments and Director, Singapore International Mediation Institute  
**Karen Saunders**, Senior Director, Pharmaceuticals, Johnson & Johnson South East Asia

### **Introduction & Purpose:**

Five women from the corporate sector discuss the opportunities digital economy will open up for women that were previously inaccessible, sharing their perspective on how the digital economy or technology has made a difference in their lives and how they have contributed to productivity.

## **Summary of the session**

*Moderator: Please share a bit on your background and the company you are from.*

### **Speaker: Min Chang**

Taiwan-born Min, who has lived in Africa, Europe, Singapore and the US, said she is with an advertising marketing communication holding company with revenue of about US\$15 billion. Her company owns 170+ agencies globally.

### **Speaker: Karen Saunders**

English born Karen, who lived in New Zealand and had worked in Sydney for three years, said she moved recently to Singapore to take up her current new position.

### **Speaker: Lovella Adams**

From West Virginia, Lovella has been with Coca-Cola Company since 2006, of which five years were spent in Atlanta and eight years in the Philippines. She will be moving to Thailand in mid-2018. She said her views are her own and does not represent that of her company.

### **Speaker: Josephine Hadikusumo**

Female attorney, Josephine sees herself as part of the top exports of her state, Sabah. She's passionate about exploring different methods of dispute resolution besides advancing the cause and empowerment of women in the workforce. Her views are also that of her own.

### **Speaker: Ratih Neumann**

Indonesian Ratih, who works with Cargill in Singapore, said she is trapped by her country's traditional culture and modern day's expectations of a woman having to fight her way in a male-dominated working environment.

*Moderator: What difference has technology made to you personally, in your work life and within your organization?*

**Speaker: Karen Saunders**

Karen said technology enabled her to have my own consumption business in Auckland and have a work-life balance when her children were small. Later in her career, when she had to manage the Southeast Asian and New Zealand operations from Auckland, **technology played a very active part again in her work and family life.**

Like other US corporations, she said Johnson & Johnson was no exception to having advanced processes and policies around **diversity and inclusion**. The **commitment came from the very top** level to have a strategy to hold all its leaders accountable to ensure an inclusive workplace.

Confronting one of the barriers they faced, **unconscious bias**, Karen said the company educated their employees globally about it and required that their leaders be mindful of their own conscious bias and take actions to overcome them. **“It’s not easy cultivating that into our talents but we know with diversity, we are going to get improved business outcomes and engagements across the organization.”**

**Speaker: Josephine Hadikusumo**

Contrasting her early life as a village lass where there is no regular supply of utilities versus the present fast-moving world where she could get access to information at her finger tips, Josephine said one of the **three big areas of changes is speed**, including **the acquisition of vast information which leads to rapid learning.**

The second thing technology has impacted me is **efficiency**. With tools like conference or video calls, we are able to work remotely and fit more into a day, prioritize things and organize our schedule more effectively.

The third area is **engagement**. **Technology has enable us to overcome barriers of time, and time zones.** Being able to engage with others in different ways and have them feel that we are there. Although engagement doesn’t replace physical presence, it has gone a long way to bridge that gap. We are able to reach a wider audience and our roles therefore have expanded the physical aspect.

*Moderator: Technology works against women precisely because of what you said. More is demanded of us and we have to fit more into a day. With technology, we have less of an excuse to not include that much.*

**Speaker: Lovella Adams**

We are so connected today that it's so difficult to unplug and turn off. However, **the capability to connect is much more valuable than the drawbacks.** Personally, the move towards **digitalization has helped me to become more mobile.**

When I moved from Michigan to Atlanta, I hated it. What's the difference today and 15 years ago? With the Startac mobile phone, Instagram and Facebook, I'm connected with my family. **Technology has brought in the beauty and the chaos.**

Covering multiple markets and 13 countries, being physically connected and present with my team daily is very difficult. **Technology has allowed us to have that engagement and much more effectively.** The speed and quality of information flow is unreal and changing at the speed of light.

I cannot imagine the day where you would go to a country where they don't accept American Express, Visa or MasterCard but that day is here and it has a huge impact on how we operate as organizations moving forward.

**Speaker: Min Chang**

Concurring with Lovella, Min said she travels a month to a month and a half in her job and thus doesn't get to see her family during that duration but points out that this is not a challenge that's specific to women alone. With so much information out there, she finds that it could pose as a drawback to technology as organizations and individuals of brands try to decipher them.

**Speaker: Ratih Neumann**

Agreeing with other panelists on the advantages of technology, she said using digital technology, our organization has helped to develop women or wives of smallholders in the rural areas, connecting them to the outside world where

they get to learn skills to help them earn extra income and also gain self-confidence.

*Moderator: Do we have the necessary infrastructure to facilitate these rural women come onboard to interact with the rest of the world? If you are not working in a formal setting, there is the implication that you are not then doing something that's significant. Therefore, we must connect you. There's that argument about women who work from or at home taking care of children and managing the home that gets negated by many, including economists. We don't factor them in. That's why we need to tell women who are working, housewives and home makers, here's a tool that will get you connected and you can do more. Is that the message you want to set with the use of technology?*

**Speaker: Ratih Neumann**

Yes, but Ratih noticed that **women have different aspirations**. Some just want to have a happy family, raise their kids to be someone. Being at home doesn't mean she can't be someone. Having an option is important too.

**Speaker: Josephine Hadikusumo**

**Empowering women** is not about putting a higher value on working women than those who chose not to. It **is about giving a women options** and if they choose to advance in the corporate world, they should be given a level playing field, supported by the policies or the corporate culture of their bosses, the environment and by the law.

**In Singapore, women** make up about 45% of the workforce and 10%-12% of board representation. There is a famous saying that women hold up half the sky. Personally, I think we do a little more than half. The data also show that **they are paid 70-80% to the dollar to what men are paid. These are the risks and challenges we still need to face in the digital or non-digital world.**

*Moderator: Anyone wants to weigh in on that? Is the technology we have access to going to help women in the workplace, at home or is it going to add more burden as the expectations become higher?*

**Speaker: Karen Saunders**

Digital technology has helped women to be educated much easier than in the past. **In future, we might need different skills that women are stronger at like social skills.**

**Speaker: Lovella Adams**

**Technology is a tool in driving change** and how women are incorporated in corporate America and at home. What will drive the change is people and acknowledging there are some gaps we need to address. A tool is just a tool. It won't make the change. **It will be the people behind the tools that make the change.**

**Speaker: Min Chang**

Women at home have access to education online and more access to data. They and mothers in general are incredible consumers and powerful key decision makers at home when we talk to our clients and brands.

**Speaker: Ratih Neumann**

Ratih, who's active in empowering women in her company, said she has been asked her male colleagues why they have to work double. Her reply is, "It's not about your gender, it's about your competency," stressing that the opportunity should be the same for everyone based on the same competency.

**Speaker: Lovella Adams**

Agreeing with her, Lovella said it's **time to start shifting the conversation from the overused term diversity to inclusion.** Diversity by the nature of the word is division. It's focusing on the differences. You are sitting in a group filled with men and you are talking about diversity and that excludes the people who are sitting at the table.

As women, we have to change the dialogue that needs to have inclusion and ensuring that it has adequate representation regardless of background, gender. **It's about including people, not dividing them.**

**Speaker: Karen Saunders**

Karen, who totally agrees about inclusiveness, believes that with equality, you will see 15%-20% in profitability.

*Moderator: Any final words from the panelists?*

**Speaker: Ratih Neumann**

For women and mothers returning to work after their maternity leave is quite tough. She said her organisation has created a new mum's group to help them return to the working world.

"I still emphasize on the competency between males and females," adding that sometimes she organizes events for males to enrich their knowledge but find their response to be less engaging.

**Speaker: Josephine Hadikusumo**

I truly believe in continuous learning and one of the biggest contributions of technology is allowing us to keep learning no matter where we are. **You can learn wherever you are whenever you like at the click of a button.**

**Speaker: Lovella Adams**

I would like everyone to walk away from this room with a very **open mind, take the time to learn about your peers, the differences they bring to the table and what you can learn from it.**

Male and female mentors have been a valuable part of my career's journey and helping me in my personal development. I would challenge the audience to **take the time to reach out to others you can connect with. You can be a mentor too. You can inspire them to be their best self.**

**Speaker: Karen Saunders**

On gender inequality, I noticed there have not been many **women** sitting up on the stage. Let it be a challenge to all of us **to be a volunteer for such opportunities in future.**

**Speaker: Min Chang**

Don't forget the offline. **The personal relationship and face-to-face encounters are really important.**

**Takeaway from the session**

- Be aware of the unconscious bias when we are dealing with inclusions in an organization.
- Deliberately include conversations around inclusion. However, when we talk about inclusion, it's not just about women but also minorities and people with different abilities like those who are autistic.
- While technology can impact the lives of women, it's also an option.
- Changing the conversation is more than just about diversity and inclusion.