Part 3 – Fill in the details

Title
(Working) What if we could change how women view what it's like to be a developer in Industry?

a brief description of the topic
At last years Grace Hopper Celebration, while manning a recruiting booth, I chatted to lots of students. Many of these girls had degrees, masters' and doctorates in Computer Science. When I asked what role they were looking for most said Business Analyst. This really surprised me. With that many years of development behind them, why didn't they want to be developers? The more I dug I was horrified to learn that still the stereotype of what being a developer is, even after 5 years of Computer Science was STILL putting girls off being developers. How can we hope to inspire younger girls to take up IT, when even at this level girls still have the wrong impression?

I was in this exact position 3 years ago when I graduated, and it was only when I met women who were 'real' developers in 'real' jobs, did I realise that being a developer is so much more than the stereotype leads us to believe.

In this Birds of a Feather session I will start by talking about some of these questions:
• When you picture a Software Developer what is the first image that comes to mind? Is it an unwashed guy wearing a band t-shirt who communicates in grunts living in a basement with no windows? Or is it Software Engineer Barbie? Or is it somewhere in between?
• Where did this stereotype come from? Movies and TV? The Gaming industry? Hackers? Media? School - It's just not cool to be a nerd.... Even during your Computer Science degree you are outnumbered by men.
• What is it REALLY like to be a software developer in industry? I will share some of the aspects that make me love my role as a developer. It's fun! It's collaborative! We pair! There is constant feedback and self development. Continuous learning. There is actually real respect for me from my male counterparts BECAUSE I'm a female developer. The support that we can give each other. Being part of building something that will make other's live better and more efficient. The list goes on...

For the remainder of the session (30 mins) I want to facilitate an interactive, informal sharing and brainstorming activity to answer two main questions.
• What information and at what point, might of changed my initial impression ?
• What can we do to change this? There are lots of initiatives that women are already doing in this space that are really inspiring. Let's share what they

are so that we can leave inspired and able to do something to help.

The aim of this session is raise awareness that this problem still exists. I want people to leave inspired with ideas that they can do tomorrow to help the situation. From something as (seemingly) small as mentoring another female in your school/organisation to creating a whole company that is devoted to training women in new technologies, every little bit helps. Wouldn't it be great if we could start to change what a girl thinks when she thinks "Software Developer"?

<u>a description of the expected audience</u>
The session is aimed at two groups.
• Those who are embarking on a career in Computer Science.
• People who already are software developers who can contribute their
    experiences and help change the stereotype/impression.

<u>a description of the format of the BOF</u>
Assuming a session length of 60 mins.
20 mins - Introduction to the topic, exploring the stereotype and my experience.
30 mins - Facilitated Brainstorming session. Perhaps using the Fishbowl technique to answer the two above questions, capturing key realizations and/or ideas as we go along.
10 mins - recapping the things that have come and and leaving us inspired with things that we can do tomorrow to help the situation.

<u>and a summary of the qualifications of the session leader(s).</u>
Miss Simmons is a Developer at ThoughtWorks Inc. A Global IT Software Consultancy. She joined ThoughtWorks 3 years ago as a graduate developer and has been helping clients all over the world create top quality software. Anne is passionate about creating well functioning teams that can produce quality results, she believes that mentoring and encouraging other women into development roles, she believes that women have a huge amount to contribute to a development team and doesn't want the ~~that the~~ stereotypical view of what it means to be a developer to keep~~s~~ women away.
Anne loves that Grace Hopper is full of inspirational, well experienced women but there is a lack of 2-5 years of experience speakers, she would love to fill that gap of "Well how do I go from Student to That?!!"

Some references (More to follow)
• When I googled for "programmer" this is the first image that I
    got:http://www.funnyjunksite.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/08/programmer.jpg
• Study done with kids on role models and gender stereotyping. Do something similar to open
    and close the session: http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2010/07/07/role-models-
    and-gender-stereotyping/
• Some cool things that people are doing that I came across

http://techfemme.wordpress.com/2011/01/05/vanessa-hurst/

http://girldevelopit.tumblr.com/
- Fishbowl Technique - http://www.activetraining.com/facil_consult/tool_fishbowl.htm
- Girls only Computing lessons at High School -
  http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/technology/girls-only-computer-class-hits-refresh-on-its-geeky-male-image/article1857933/