

Women's pay remark trails Microsoft chief to the cloud

October 21 2014, by Glenn Chapman



Microsoft chief executive Satya Nadella discusses Microsoft's platform for businesses to tap into the US software titan's computing platform in the Internet "cloud" in San Francisco, California, on October 20, 2014

Even as Microsoft ramped up Internet "cloud" offerings for businesses, its chief continued to be dogged by a comment that women should not ask for pay raises.

Satya Nadella hosted a press gathering Monday in San Francisco, where the US software titan detailed its strategy and latest moves for helping businesses tap into the power of colossal online data centers as needed.

Nadella found himself fielding questions about a gaffe that has been hounding him since early this month when he contended that women should forego asking for pay raises, and instead trust that good karma will result in just rewards at work.

"The last week and a half or so have been a humbling and learning experience for me," Nadella said at the cloud computing presentation.

"The audience wanted to see that a CEO like myself understood the challenges of women in the work force."

He admitted he erred by not seeing the issue as one of equal pay for equal work, and that a check had determined Microsoft is "in good shape" in that regard but, like other technology firms, could use more women in its engineering ranks.

Nadella was speaking during an on-stage discussion at the Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing conference in Arizona, when he provoked a fierce debate on equal treatment for women in tech industry jobs.

Asked about advice for women interested in advancing careers but uncomfortable asking for pay increases, Nadella reasoned that they should just trust "that the system will actually give you the right raises as you go along."

He reportedly went on to contend that women who don't ask for pay raises have a "superpower" in the form of "good karma, that'll come back."

Studies have consistently shown [women](#) get paid less than men doing the same jobs.

'Insensitive' reply

Nadella has apologized for his remarks.

"I was wrong in the way I answered that one question, which was insensitive," Nadella said on Monday.

Microsoft's event on Monday was held to spotlight how the company is playing on its strengths with software used by businesses to capitalize on a trend toward renting computing power, storage, or software as services hosted at data-centers in the Internet cloud.

"The Microsoft cloud is the most complete cloud offering that empowers every business across every industry in every geography," Nadella boasted.

Microsoft is on track to bring in \$4.4 billion this year from [cloud services](#), but is spending about \$4.5 billion annually on major investments such as huge data centers packed with computing equipment, executives said at the briefing.

Microsoft sees its main rivals in the cloud computing space as Google and Amazon Web Services.

"Obviously, the cloud market is red hot right now," said Scott Guthrie, executive vice president of Microsoft's cloud and enterprise group.

Microsoft has cloud [data centers](#) in 19 regions around the world, and some of the facilities are large enough to hold a pair of jumbo jets, according to Guthrie.

He announced enhancements to Microsoft's "cloud" that will handle demanding computing loads for businesses and let them better extract valuable insights from their data, along with "public" cloud power augment "private" in-house systems.

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