Women Engineers Show New Confidence About the C Word

I've been spending quite a few evenings of late at the [Girl Geek Dinners](#), the [Women in Technology](#) events and various women leaders in technology things. The generation gap between the older girl geeks who fought for equal treatment and the girl geeks coming through now who thankfully don't have to see or do the things we oldies saw or did back in the day is fascinating to me, and worth a post in its own right, but today I'm excited about something else: the 'C' word.

Until relatively recently, the women engineers that I've worked with have been very careful about mentioning their children (the 'c' word in question, in case any of you thought it might abbreviate something else). As a general rule, I've seen secretaries and PAs put pictures of their children on their desks, chat openly about their children's development, take time out to look after them as a right. But female engineers. Photos were rare, talking about kids restricted only to close friends, time off always accompanied by embarassment. And never, and I mean *never*, did anyone have that conversation about relative priorities, about the real work-life balance. And even considering it in front of the men? Noooo.

But this week I've seen a senior woman engineer do just that: tell everyone that her priorities shifted for a while when her kids were young. And she did this in front of her (male) boss. And nothing exploded. This past year, I've seen several women presenters list their children amongst their significant achievements (and we are talking some very senior women indeed), and professional women out and proud of their side-by-side roles as both professionals and mothers. And this is so wonderfully refreshing. I never became a mother myself, but I am proud that we have grown up so much as a profession that women don't have to choose between images any more. I couldn't be part of this particular movement myself, but to those women who did have the courage to say "I'm a mother too", I salute you.

Meanwhile, on a slightly less historical note, I've found and signed up with an interesting volunteer effort - [IT 4 Communities](#). It's a place that puts geek and charities that need geek skills together, and as such it's much to be encouraged.