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"Don't shy away from tech roles because you don't feel like you check all the boxes."

Gia Barnwell
Elite I&D Sourcing Recruiter



My advice to students @ NSBE47: The future is tech

 **Gia Barnwell**
People Leader | Bridging Operational Excellence with Creative Vision




April 15, 2021

I had the honor of being the Accenture **National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) Recruiting Lead** at last week's event, which means I got to have a hand in all things [NSBE47](#). Whether it was planning the events we'd participate in, identifying speakers or connecting with all the great talent that comes from the conference—I had a front row seat and got to play an integral role in it all.

I joined Accenture's **Inclusion and Diversity** team last year, and I manage the recruitment relationship with NSBE. I'm always excited to work with NSBE because their members are hungry for opportunities, and I feel privileged to help provide them with [limitless career opportunities](#) at Accenture. It is amazing to see how some students can transform their NSBE background into such a multifaceted career at Accenture.


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This year, we really wanted to focus on being **“truly human.”** We prioritized NSBE members, but we also showcased our people in ways you’d never guess. Students may have seen a managing director pop on screen wearing a hoodie, or a senior manager wearing a baseball cap.

This was intentional, to show our people as—well, people. This is one of the reasons I was drawn to Accenture: It’s so reassuring to know that it doesn’t matter what I’m wearing or how I look, but instead, the spotlight is on the work I produce. I wanted each NSBE student to walk away from this conference with that same reassurance.

My advice for a future in tech

I offered these tips to the students I met with, to help them prepare for a future career in tech:

1. Don’t underestimate your soft skills. Often, students shy away from tech roles because they feel like they don’t check off all the boxes or aren’t as technical as some of their peers. But keep in mind that you have the ability to learn those technologies, and Accenture is committed to growing your skillset. The one thing Accenture can’t necessarily teach is soft skills, like being personable.

2. Stay interested and curious, in your interview and in your actual career. When a student lights up talking about technology and how they’ve taken the initiative to learn more about it, it sets them apart from the pack. You’d be surprised at how many nontraditional students outperform individuals with traditional technology backgrounds that lack the passion.

3. Ask questions! Often, students feel intimidated because they feel like they don’t know everything. The truth of the matter is, you don’t—and, frankly, you never will. My advice is to get comfortable asking questions and identifying the right audience to answer them.

4. Do a skill check. Check out our latest [Technology Vision](#) report to help you understand how your skillset sets you up for success and the areas you may need to strengthen.

I'm free to be me

I always have ideas on how to make things better—it's just how my brain works. But I haven't always worked in environments that welcomed that mindset. My first week in the Accenture office, I participated in a strategy session to brainstorm ideas for improving projects for our top-tier clients. I must admit, I was first scared to speak up and even told them, "I'm just a recruiter; what do I know?" But they all reassured me that what I thought mattered, regardless of what my title was. That broke the self-imposed glass ceiling in my mind. Since then, I've been offering solutions to whomever will listen.

More importantly, I realized that Accenture saw me in a fresh way—they saw all of me, including the experiences I brought in with me. I wasn't limited to my day job; instead, I've been challenged to think beyond that. You'll often hear me say that recruiting is what I do, but it doesn't even scratch the surface of who I am. I'm proud to say that Accenture sparked that sentiment.

I&D is in my DNA—and Accenture's

The importance of [inclusion and diversity](#) is not a trending topic for me; it's part of my DNA. It's a value I share with Accenture. It's important for us to align with organizations like NSBE because we want to nurture, cultivate and hire diverse talent on an ongoing basis.

We've been partnering with NSBE for over a decade because we see the value in their members and want to be part of furthering their development while also helping provide them with equitable [career opportunities](#). The event was virtual this year, but the talent was just as strong as ever—if not stronger.

We made some amazing memories, and I can't wait for next year!