IWD - Laura Smith

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Laura Smith is a Software Consultant in the Bespoke Software team.

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As part of International Women's Day 2023, we're sharing insights from our team about their experiences, their role models and their goals for inspiring others as, or about, women in tech and business.

How did you become a woman in tech?

I have always been interested in computing and tech. I still remember my dad showing me how to write a very simple piece of code for a BBC computer when I was about seven or eight. I was amazed when I typed in 'red', pressed enter, and the word 'red' appeared on the screen – in red!

Unfortunately, neither the school or college I attended offered any ICT or computing courses other than the basics of how to use a computer for day-to-day activities and general office work. I didn't really have a particular career in mind at the time so decided to focus on subjects I enjoyed.

After studying Archaeology at university, I decided a career in academic research (and sitting in muddy holes for weeks on end getting soaked to the skin by freezing-cold rain) was not for me, so applied for an administrative role in the NHS while I decided on my next step but ended up staying there for several years.

I felt very little job satisfaction so I decided to explore my career options. At the time Teesside University was running a part-time BSc Computing course with evening classes which allowed me to keep working while I studied, so I enrolled on the course and the rest is history.

What advice would you give to the next generation of women starting their careers?

Don't give in to imposter syndrome, have more confidence in yourself.

What is the best piece of advice you've been given by a female leader?

My first software development position was with Durham Constabulary. The development team was fantastic to work with and I was very lucky to work on projects with a female senior developer who was incredibly supportive and taught me a lot about all aspects of the role. She gave me a great piece of advice – believe in your own abilities.

If you've faced challenges, what were they and how have you overcome them?

I had enrolled on a part-time BSc Computing course. I was the oldest student there, and the only woman on the course. While I was doing my degree, someone told me that I was too old for a career change, another that I didn't look like a Computing student.

I laughed it off on both occasions, but the comments still rankled and made me more determined to succeed.

I graduated with first class honours.

[Find out more about Laura here.](#)

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