

Article

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IWD - Jenn Brown

Jenn is our PR and content marketing executive working in our Brand Experience 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.

Who are the women who have inspired you throughout your career so far?

I've been very fortunate to work with a lot of women who have inspired me and shaped who I am professionally. But that wasn't always because I wanted to emulate what they did - in some cases it has shown me who I don't want to be as a leader.

For example, a previous manager used physical cues to exert authority and power - grasping hands while shaking, conducting important conversations stood while I was sat.

Those who helped me to learn, used their skills and experience to bolster mine, and are their true, authentic selves are who I've gained most from.

And several of those are in Waterstons. Clair Hillier's direct nature means you always know where you stand. Nadine Musgrave has faced so much, but she's still gregarious, passionate and knows her clients backwards. Becky Tucker is at the start of her career, but I've never met someone at the same stage with such skill, determination, and passion for learning, who isn't arrogant.

Inspiration comes in different forms; you never know who, or how, you are inspiring when.

What is the best piece of advice you've been given as a woman in the workplace?

Stop using the word 'just' unnecessarily.

Working with words, I know how important language and words are, and this is my least favourite one.

It is used to soften messaging, to avoid causing offence and appear less pushy. None of which, I imagine would be said to a man.

So, you're not 'just calling', it's not 'just me', you are not 'just checking on a piece of work over a deadline'. You're calling, it's you, you want to know where the project is.

Spoken, written and body language are all vital in being successful in whichever way you choose, as women we need to be more big and bold, and less timid and soft.

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

Choose who you want to be, but keep learning who you are.

I chose to be successful and authentically me, but I learned that I couldn't do that by storming in. I needed to understand more, learn more, and experience more to achieve that.

As someone who wanted to be a musical theatre star I was never going to be a wallflower, but after feeling like I knew everything in my early-20s, I've spent over a decade learning from others who actually do (within their field). I've learned where my skills lie, who I want to be at work, and how I want to support those around me. In another decade that might have changed again!

What are some things you never expected about being a woman in a workplace?

That sexism is so fundamentally ingrained.

I was recently told that my direct nature leads me to lose softness. Which was surprising as my intention has never been to appear soft, but to be confident in my ability and clear in my communication – and I bet that's never been said to a man.

In a previous role, a supplier would only communicate with my male, temporary assistant, despite being the overall event manager as 'it's alright love, the men will sort it'.

Despite being educated, in senior positions, and with proven, varied experience, I have continually been referred to as 'the marketing girl' who 'just messes about' and can 'sort the meeting notes/drinks/room booking'.

Sometimes you have to be much tougher than you feel, but it's important to ensure that this strength is shown, encouraged and celebrated so that one day, we won't need an International Women's Day.

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

Read more IWD stories from our team at the following links.

[Michael Stirrup](#)

Keira Hall

Julie Swinbank

Annabell Frewin-Wood

Clair Hillier

Andrew Buckingham

Claudia Oprya

Rhianne Short

Leanne Cullen

Catriona Crowe

Lora Barclay

Jagoda Sulikowska

Laura Smith

Sally Waterston
