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Mar 2023

IWD - Julie Swinbank

Julie Swinbank is our Higher Education Practice Lead in the Business Consulting 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?

My degree is in Physics and Astronomy, and my graduate role was as a physicist and engineer; I did a bit of programming, FEA and I also gained my six sigma qualifications. I went on to be a consultant engineer working with lots of manufacturing

companies on lean implementation. My next move was in to project management within a university and fast forward through 18 years in a variety of roles across North East universities.

My last job was Head of Partnerships and Engagement at Durham University, I left this to join Waterstones which combines my passion for building partnerships, as well as my interest in universities and tech.

What is the best piece of advice you've been given?

It's probably building on a quote by Sheryl Sandberg: "We've got to get women to sit at the table". Universities are very hierarchical, and this is a quote that resonated with me.

When I was invited to meetings with the university exec, I always made sure I took a seat at the table, and in a good place, if possible - not in a corner. I always made sure I contributed something, however hard it sometimes was to be invited into the conversation.

It's something I would encourage everyone to do, get a seat – a good one – at the table. We can all play a role in making sure everyone is invited to take a seat and contribute.

Who is your professional female role model?

Professor Sue Black, OBE is both a role model and a friend. The most determined person I have ever met, her life and work are absolutely inspirational.

Before Sue joined Durham University, she got in touch with me with an idea for a new project to provide skills training to women, to enable them to develop careers in tech. The time for the bid was short (very very short) and everyone around me questioned the sanity of trying to pull a proposal together within two weeks. Sue's unwavering confidence that we could do it, was a complete inspiration. Spoiler alert: we won and [TechUp](#) has gone from strength to strength.

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

[Find out more about TechUp, an initiative that specialises in running blended learning training programmes which train individuals from minority groups into entry level tech roles, \[here\]\(#\).](#)

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