

Kayleigh Bateman 0:00

Hello everyone. Thank you for tuning in. I am Kayleigh Bateman the Content Director at SheCanCode and today we're discussing equality and empowerment in the digital age. How innovation change in education hold the key. This year the United Nations 67th Commission on the Status of Women priority theme is innovation and technological change and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality in the empowerment of all women and girls. Quite a mouthful, but the idea is that by embracing new technologies and advancing women skills and knowledge in STEM, we can accelerate our progress towards gender equality. Today, I'm lucky enough to have three wonderful ladies from Capco joining me to discuss this with me from Capco. I have Kimberly Michaels, managing principal banking and payments technology, Meera Solanki, Senior Consultant technology, delivery, and Ineshka De Silva, senior design consultant Innovation and Design. Welcome, ladies. Thank you for having us. Thank you,

We've got so much to cover today. But can we start with a bit of a background about each of you, please? Kimberly, can we start with you? Sure. It's a pleasure to be here today for such an important conversation. I started my career a long time ago, in the late 90s. And I fell into technology with y2k.

Kimberley Michaels 1:31

So I have for most of my career, been in the banking space, either through consulting working for a software company or working for a bank, delivering operational technology change.

Kayleigh Bateman 1:44

And Meera?

Meera Solanki 1:45

Yeah, likewise, lovely to be here. Super excited for this conversation.

I have always lived and breathed stem. So I studied maths at school, I studied computer science and maths at university. And then I've worked for about 10 years all in financial services in technical roles.

And then I'm now at Capco also doing a technical role. And yeah, super excited for this conversation.

Kayleigh Bateman 2:10

Wonderful. And Ineshka yourself.

Ineshka De Silva 2:13

Yes, so I've been in the design and tech industry for about coming up to six years now. My study product design, I've always been a creative thinker with a bit of a technical side of thinking as well. And I actually only recently got into finance. So I started off my career with marketing background, had a small career shift, and then moved into product design where I could kind of get my teeth sunk into research, product design, and creating innovative digital experiences.

Kayleigh Bateman 2:50

So all slightly different routes in but all seem very happy that you're all working in technology. So that's good to hear. So we have so much to cover today on this topic. So we'd like to kick off with Why do you think it's important for girls to have access to education and clear routes into diverse workplaces? Meera, we start with you.

Meera Solanki 3:16

Yeah, I mean, I spoke briefly my intro about how I how I started with an education, a STEM related education starting in math, and I've kept that going. It's a current through everything I do in my professional career as an adult as well. I think that one of the most obvious answers is that we think about the industry today and the workforce today. But education is a great place for us to start preparing for the workforce tomorrow and of the future, if we can ensure that we're addressing, you know, girls interests and encouraging them at a school level and early education levels. It's one of the easiest and quickest wins to ensure that we can have a diverse workplace and workforce in the future as well.

You know, education is the start of a lot of people's careers and the decisions that they go on to make. And if we can have a huge impact at that level, it really will reap benefits for the whole, you know, for what for generations to come.

Kayleigh Bateman 4:19

Yeah. Yeah, and you're absolutely right. I think sometimes as well, if you don't get girls early, by the time they're picking their university topics to study, the moments already gone, hasn't it? It's kind of that that opportunity is gone?

Meera Solanki 4:33

Yeah, absolutely. And it's so interesting how different countries have different paths to education at different ages. But, you know, being brought up in the UK, and, and studying here, we have to make those choices quite young, I would say. So, you know, the option to change trajectory can be that much more daunting, if it happens later on in life and so you know, just puts even more importance on making sure that whatever age and wherever you are growing up, you have access to that information that encourage that encouraging nature, you know, that allows you to pursue whatever you're interested in at the right time to make the best decisions for yourself. Yeah, I do think that's through education.

Kayleigh Bateman 5:19

Yeah. Yeah. And you're right, I think having the choice to change paths as well, as is so important, and you're in you're right, you don't always know, at an early age. Anyway, what you want to do and let you know, the actual job or job title, for instance.

Ineshka, is that something that you would agree with, you know, having those clear routes into diverse workplaces? For girls?

Ineshka De Silva 5:46

Yeah, definitely. I mean, completely agree with everything Meera said, you know, education, it's obviously something that shapes students opinions, their thoughts, as they like, prepare for society, influences children on all kinds of things, you know, poverty, innovation, ethnic, racial inequalities, it really is a crossroad in a way where students start to, you know, interact, learn, dissect different ideas, and forge their own opinions.

Meera Solanki 6:19

But as much as access to education is really important, I think there's also importance in acknowledging that the education system is broken in a lot of ways. You know, I think schools are still teaching in ways that are standardized, and I guess, the negative around that is that, you know, we have 20 to 30 kids in a class, meaning, you know, we can't cater as well for specific needs around children, and that sort of individualistic personalities and traits, that background, and that, in turn affects, you know, creating those future diverse workplaces, you know, so I think there's a lot, you know, I can appreciate the importance of access to education. 100%. But also, I think, there needs to be a lot of a lot more acknowledgement and action, I think, in improving the education system.

And I think a couple of examples of that are around, you know, even subjects like history, the curriculum doesn't, you know, sometimes it's, it's kind of known at the moment, at least in the UK for covering certain groups, for example, you know, a lot of the education system is around memorizing a repetition regurgitation, we teach kids how to answer questions, but not how to find

them. So I think there's a lot of things that we can change in education to kind of not only help access, but also to improve our prospects for diverse workplaces in the future.

Kayleigh Bateman 7:50

Yeah, definitely working in technology. That is a question that that comes up so often, isn't it just finding those questions, and always having that mindset of learning and moving forward? And you're right, that something that you're not really taught at school currently, it's like, why would you know, why would you be expected to follow that through into the workplace?

Ineshka De Silva 8:12

Yeah, yeah, exactly. And I think like growing up as well, just on a on a personal note, I think, even concepts around having a role model that looks like me, who is someone of an ethnic background, I never really understood the sort of the value of a role model until I really started my career. So, you know, role models that obviously people that can influence that can motivate. And I guess there's less opportunity for role models, at least in my education, my early education.

And, you know, there's plenty of reports that show that having a lack of a role model or a lack of someone that represents you, and the tech industry or the industry that you're interested in can be detrimental in deciding whether you even want to consider a career in tech, you know, so, yeah,

Kayleigh Bateman 9:02

Just seeing somebody you're absolutely right. Somebody coming into your school or seeing somebody on TV, I wanted to be Kate Adie, the news reporter because she was on TV. And that's how you see and think that's your job, isn't it? If you don't have access to those technology, role models, how do you know what you want to be? Exactly?

Meera, what benefits do you think diverse workplaces have? Are they good for business? Good for the team? Both? All of the above?

Meera Solanki 9:35

Yeah, I think I think there are some really obvious answers to that question. You know, they are good for the workplace. They're good for the team. Companies who focus on diversity have been shown to have, you know, above average returns in terms of a financial sense.

But we talk about the benefits. We can also maybe controversially talk about the detrimental impact of not doing it. So there are some really clear examples in like in the modern world, not even just in

technology where if you don't consider diversity, it really is limiting how innovative the products that we create are or how well they meet the market needs.

A really good example that isn't a new example is crash test dummies. So we know that when cars are manufactured, they go through rigorous testing, with crash test dummies to ensure that they meet certain safety guidelines. But historically, crash test dummies have always been modelled off of middle-aged men of a certain stature. And so we automatically take something as important as health safety risk in I mean, driving for a lot of people is an everyday thing. So you're exposed to it quite frequently. And we've automatically not considered implications for anyone that doesn't align with what that crash test dummy looks like.

There are lots of examples of this that pervade through society and our everyday use. Famously, most recently, Apple created a health app that was created once again, just by a team of men, and completely neglected the needs of women, or less able-bodied individuals. And I think it's fair to say, you know, all of us it, especially in the Western world, are using a mobile phone and are likely to be using that functionality. And so to have left a huge chunk of potential users out of consideration. It's just, it's nonsensical when you discuss it in retrospective, you know, and so there are benefits, but the cost of not doing it is significant. And it shouldn't really be optional anymore.

I also think that companies can talk about 'what is the business case for having diverse teams or diverse environments?' But once again, maybe controversially, the black and white of it is that there shouldn't really need to be a business case. Is this the right thing to do? Is this best for society and progression and the future? And if so, well, maybe finance or money isn't the only motivator for us increasing or introducing change?

It should be about how do we ensure that we are ethically conducting ourselves that as employers, we are taking on our social responsibility outside of just looking at profitability. And you know, even when employers don't prioritize profitability, the talent that you attract becomes considerably better, you know, you reap benefits in other ways.

So, yes, diversity has great benefits to the workplace. It's wonderful for teams, it's wonderful for collaboration. But my two main points are the cost of not having diverse teams can be significantly detrimental. And also, we kind of need to take the money element out of it. And remember that we're talking about humans in a workplace as well. And really consider as a society, how we want to portray ourselves, what thoughts we want to encourage, and once again, shaping the future, what we want to go forward looking like and being proud of what we've achieved. And the inclusive aspect.

Kayleigh Bateman 13:22

Yeah, I remember years ago, when the conversation about diversity, it was just coming to light diversity in the workplace. And you're absolutely right. At the time it was it seemed like a no brainer. But it wasn't until companies started releasing reports about how much more you can make, if you have you know, just one female on your board of directors and your bottom line increases, then suddenly, you know, companies there is pricked up, and if so, why was this, you know, not listened to before? Because as you say, it is it's just kind of a known a non brainer anyway, the benefits that a diverse team brings, but I mean, those reports came out companies kind of started to see the light and changes is starting to happen, which is quite shame, because it's just down to a human level. To be fair, not the financial.

Meera Solanki 14:18

Yeah. And we know these things take time to trickle in. We know that if we say it today, FTSE 100 companies aren't going to change tomorrow.

But there was an article written in The Guardian, maybe a few years ago about how within FTSE 100 companies, there are more men named John, than women across the board when it came to these companies. And there's some element of being human you know, to look at that and saying, well, whether we benefit from it in a profit perspective or not. That is something we should look to address. That's an embarrassing statistic, you know.

And so, I completely agree business cases help and they can often, you know, get the ball rolling for companies. But part of the work around diversity and inclusion needs to involve the attitude towards and the openness towards that. And actually the motivation for it.

Kayleigh Bateman 15:13

Yes, and Ineshka in terms of what Capco doing. What, what is Capco doing to create a more diverse workforce?

Ineshka De Silva 15:24

Yeah, so I think there's a couple of things around this. And I think it really starts from attracting talent and the recruitment process. I can definitely draw from personal experience when I interviewed at Capco. Simply having someone represented from ethnic minority background in my interview process through the panel interviews, it was really refreshing. You know, it made me a lot more comfortable to be able to speak about diversity and ask questions about it.

So yeah, I think it starts from attracting talent recruitment process, and making sure that you embed diversity in that process itself. And also in terms of attracting talent as well, when it comes to things

like job postings. I think it's really important to be mentioning things around diversity and inclusion, you know, and that's something that Capco does, as well.

And then obviously, since I've been at Capco, I definitely feel like knowledge is power here. You know, we have plenty of training around important topics like unconscious bias, ethnicity, bias and discrimination. It's not just around knowledge and training. It's also about recognition and providing people recognition around culturally significant events. I think that's really important. Capco as an employer celebrates diversity through plenty of events, talks, clubs, and, you know, this podcast is a perfect example of being part of the women in tech group and having opportunities like this to be able to speak and share my opinion, is, is great, you know, there's plenty of employee led networks, which again, I think just, it's, it's simple, but it provides a platform where, you know, different groups of people from different backgrounds can actually have a safe space to be able to speak up, share their opinions and their experiences.

And then, I guess the final two that I wanted to mention as well is around providing a platform. So Capco does make the effort to you know, organize these groups to have a diversity and inclusion committee. But also it's about giving employees and empowering them to be able to have the freedom to educate others on what their passions are, no matter what they are. So you know, whether that's work or personal related, being able to share your passions, your culture, and things like that, I think is really important. It shouldn't just be employer led, employees should feel empowered and enabled to be able to share their opinions and to be able to drive the kind of diversity and inclusion that they'd like to see.

And then finally, one thing that I feel Capco does really well is, especially for me, I'm senior at the moment, but I'm looking to progress in my career of course, as many people are. And one of the things that I found really beneficial here is having different types of mentors, I have a coach as well.

And having those types of leadership relationships helps me to be able to push myself and understand what's expected of me so that I can progress. I think transparency as well as is another really important factor when it comes to progression. As an employee, I really want to know what is expected of everyone in order to progress. And I'd like to see a clear pathway that's defined for me. And that's something that Capco does really well. So we have specific levels. You know, there's guidance of what type of achievements or milestones or goals that you should be setting yourself. So there's plenty of support here, which is something that I really value. Again, by providing that transparency when it comes to progression, and promotions, etc. That in itself provides everyone a better platform in terms of diversity and inclusion to progress together.

So yeah, I think that summarizes it in a nutshell.

Kayleigh Bateman 19:35

Loads going on at Capco - one thing you said, to completely agree with I love the fact that you pointed out that when you interviewed there was somebody on the panel that reminded you that you had somebody that you could connect with. You hear so often, that you don't get that technology and when I started in tech I remember my boss, I've shared this story before, but she was drunk at a Christmas party. And she said, I hired you because you reminded me of me. And I thought fab, because she'd had quite a few to drink. And but I remember thinking at the time, we can't move forward as an industry, if you just coincidentally happen to have somebody on the hiring panel that you remind them of them, and how hard that must be for some people to be able to connect with somebody in and a do you think that's one of the things that's putting women off from the tech sector and lots of other things?

Ineshka De Silva 20:36

Definitely, I think I think sort of that lack of representation sometimes can definitely sway women around joining, you know, joining a new company. I think, for me, the recruitment process is so vital, because it really is not only the applicant's chance to have a first impression, but also the employers opportunity to make a first impression, you know, and for me, I was surprised, honestly, during my interview process to immediately feel like a sense of belonging already.

I hadn't even started but just simply having someone who represented an ethnic minority was so important for me, and I was actually able to identify that, like, wow, you know, I haven't had many interviews where there has been someone who represented me, you know, so that was really important for me, and definitely influenced my decision to join Capco. 100%. Yeah.

Kayleigh Bateman 21:42

And Meera yourself, where do you think girls are turned off by STEM subjects? Because that School University first job, you mentioned a little bit about that earlier about, you know, getting girls nice and early to ensure that they're encouraged into tech. But would you agree that more needs to be done earlier in that study?

Meera Solanki 22:05

Yeah. I think the harsh truth of it is that, we're failing girls at every level. I do think that if we consider the journey that somebody who ends up in a technology role might go through throughout their lifetime, right from the beginning, the kinds of toys that the young children are gifted, you know, a boy might get a dentist, or a doctor set or set, you know, something like that. Whereas girls toys are often geared around a kitchen or something like that, so I think that might traditionally be seen as you know, like a pink toy, the whole pink and blue bias comes in at such an early age.

If we then talk about during school, the UK obviously we have key stages. And so Key Stage 4 is around 15-16. And surveys have been conducted where girls are far less interested in STEM subjects

compared to their male counterparts. But then the same group when asked what they think high paid jobs are, they all acknowledge - girls and boys acknowledge that we believe STEM jobs are where you can have the most earning potential, yet that's not reflected in what their desire is, in terms of okay, what are you going on to study and further education?

So it's not the girls don't know, it's that they are stifled at some point very early on. They're at the ages of 15-16. So young, they already have the impression that actually, STEM is not for me.

And they've conducted further quick surveys and further studies to understand okay, well, why is that? Is there actually a difference in the way that girls and boys think? And so maybe they're not tailored well for STEM environment. But then, I think girls in those developmental years experience the 'stereotype fear', which is essentially when a group of people are told, actually, the stereotype is that you're not going to be good at this. And then the fear sits, it affects their confidence, and then it goes on to affect their ability, and then they perform in line with those stereotypes and then they end up actually not being great at those things.

What I'm trying to get at is, this is a hugely confidence related issue. We know that when girls that go through education in a single sex environment, so like girls schools, they develop much more confidence. They don't have the experience of a glass ceiling. They don't have the experience of people saying, why would you study engineering? That's typically a boys subject, they don't face any of those confidence shattering commentary and also beliefs.

And it allows them to build themselves as their most natural and authentic selves, to then proceed into whatever career choice that they've made. We know that girls who aren't stifled at that school levels, and then their developmental years, can go on into those careers with much more confidence. And they can make the most of their natural ability.

But it is about ensuring at every stage, we're removing those biases that they're taught and that are pushed on them. Because you know, the statistics show that more girls actually do a levels than boys more girls perform well, when they do choose stem A levels compared to boys. So it's not that they're not capable. It we obviously acknowledge every individual has different skills. But on maths, girls aren't incapable. They're not differently wired. They're not disadvantaged in terms of their capabilities. It's the environment around them that influences them. And so we can do so much about that.

I personally mentioned I studied maths all the way through my education. And all of the STEM subjects except maths were taught by a man at my school, it's because I had a female teacher who was so passionate about her subject, and taught us that it's okay to be passionate about maths. If you love this, go and do it, run with it.

So it's the role model thing that Ineshka's has been talking about. And I completely agree with it starting that off very young. We know that in school, everyone is largely subjected to the same information or can get the same foundations. Whereas at home, you might have different experiences between you know, the four of us, all of our mums versus our dads might do very different jobs. So we kind of have a responsibility to our education to lay that, even groundwork and that even foundation so that even when we go out of the school place, when we're around our peers, when we subscribe to popular culture, all of those influences don't detrimentally impact us, because we have this strong foundation, where someone has repeatedly told us consistently women can do whatever they want to do.

And it's, for me, it's that kind of messaging that just needs to continually exist in order to stop failing women. I think there are some other aspects to it. So, we've talked about, you know, making sure that they can feel confident or authentic wherever they go.

Something Ineshka spoke about, which I feel really passionate about, it's ensuring that you have a network as well. So, ensuring there are people around you who you can see - so when you want to progress your career, there is a woman there who's already done it, it's worked out for her, she has some learnings and she has some knowledge to share.

It's also about things that often happen in the workplace for women around their voice and their purpose. So, you know, I have a very good friend who works in diversity and inclusion. And she said, when she started out her career, she noticed that she was on a grad scheme, where men were being given projects and opportunities that were much more data related, more like what we would come to consider to be traditionally STEM encouraging projects, whereas she was given projects more associated with, like the human touch, or, you know, working with other skills, which are equally as important, don't get me wrong, but opportunities were stripped from her because of her gender. Continuing on that trajectory, even in the workplace, we obviously recently went through a pandemic, and there was a time when PPE wasn't hijab friendly and had to be adjusted. At every step, there is always a hurdle, and that hurdle was slightly larger for women or for anyone who might identify within, you know, a trait of diversity.

We just need to make sure that the people making these decisions represent us. If we're represented by a diverse decision making group, they're much more likely to be considerate, and that helps ensure that at every stage and every decision women have a fair opportunity, and we're not failing them at every one of those steps.

Kayleigh Bateman 29:39

Yes, into everything and diversity should be built into everything along the way, and everybody wins every stage instead of having you know that that embarrassing PR moment. You mentioned Apple earlier, you know, if you just naturally build that into your processes anyway you can avoid things like that.

Ineshka De Silva 30:00

If you just naturally build that into your processes, you can avoid things like that. Absolutely, I just wanted to mention and mirror this. I completely relate to everything that you're saying, especially when it comes to early age and that confidence level and stuff like that, then that then translates into when women go into their careers. So sorry, I'm bringing it back to you, what's putting women off the tech sector? I think it comes down to three things, you know; low pay, low position, and then the lack of inclusion as well. So again, the confidence the role models from an early age, having, having that lack of those really important things, then kind of makes women kind of start on a sort of a less advantaged position in a way. And then when they start in those tech careers, they're facing things like, you know, a lack of representation, etc. You know, some statistics have been saying that, you know, 77% of tech leaders are men, which is just, you know, crazy.

And then, you know, being a woman itself, you know, they're not only having to deal with the fact that they're simply a woman, but then also dealing with the fact that there are women of colour as well. And then there's things around gender pay gap, even at this day and age, you know, the wage gap is larger, for marginalized populations. And there's plenty of reports that say that women are being paid less than their male counterparts, the senior positions.

So for me when it comes to looking at employers, salary, transparency, equal pay, you know, not being penalized for being a mother, those types of things are what I would want to hear from an employer, you know.

Meera Solanki 31:46

Yes, yeah. I think just to add on to your comments around the workplace, I can really agree with you that all these measurables and these, you know, these things that we look for in prospective employers us are, are far more attractive when they're visible, and when they're transparent.

I also think employers can go that one step further, from a culture perspective. So, you know, the first role I had since graduating in, in finance, I was in an environment where there was one woman in leadership in this company, and great we there was a woman in leadership and, and that was good to see there's obviously lots more work to be done. But they've got the ball rolling. But they had a cultural problem of how people talked about that one woman in leadership. So I completely agree with you that there's lots to be done in terms of getting women there. There's lots to be addressed in terms of culture and ensuring that as a young, naive, first role within my career very impressionable, I want to be hearing people saying the right things and talking about leadership in the right way. I think that they were very discouraging or discrediting things being said, purely because this person was a woman. And it's really unfair and like dehumanizing to be like, oh well, well, let's discredit everything she could have possibly achieved and only attributed to her gender, or to her ethnicity. And I think there really needs to be cultural work done, where, you know, across many sectors, and how we talk about women and their successes as well.

Kayleigh Bateman 33:25

Yes, and exactly how we talk about that. And, Kimberly, I wanted to ask you about the small steps that individuals can take to champion women in tech, what do you think they are?

Kimberley Michaels 33:38

So there are three things that you know, when I was reflecting on this, I'm listening to these young women here. And it's really focusing on mentoring programs. I'm joining today on this podcast in the United States. So your perspective that you shared around education and how you have you're kind of locked into your career path at a certain point is very different than my experience on the other side of the pond.

It's much more entrepreneurial in terms of how you determine your path in life. And if you decide that you want to go in engineering, you're not stuck there, you can switch to healthcare. It's not so predetermined.

So mentoring programs, they help young girls and young women who are in school to identify that they can make a change, they may have thought that they want to be a teacher, and there's nothing wrong with being a teacher. But when you give them the art of the possible of hey, you know that that iPad that you're using, and these are the cool things you can do with it. And there's after school programs that we can invest in it, it sparks a thought and that spark then gives them an opportunity to kind of explore something new. So mentoring programs are huge.

I would also say like in the workplace, giving individuals stretch assignments, meaning that you may not have a technical background but you have technical acumen, which in many cases is way more important, because you can study to learn something. But if you don't have the acumen to know what to listen for in your clients and your day-to-day life, you're not as relatable to, you know, in our world, we're dealing with clients. So you can't just talk all code, you have to relate that to a business kind of perspective.

And then lastly, it's really making sure that we are hiring people for their skills, not the job titles that they had in the past.

So many times when people apply for a job, you know, there have been studies where women read the details of the job requirements, and a man reads it. And, you know, perhaps when a man sees it, he thinks, oh, I can do half of this I'm applying, we're women, we have a tendency where we feel like it's all or nothing.

And it goes to same as somebody that's looking to interview someone you don't just look at, you know, if you are interested in delivering technology, and you did project management, and something not entirely technology related, but you have all of the core project management skills, you probably could do a very introductory levels, that you learn kind of the nuances of technology and not just not give that person an opportunity, because they don't have the title there.

Kayleigh Bateman 36:21

Yes. And some of us as well, we're not great at selling ourselves on our CV anyway, so you know, your job titles, and they're only going by that, then, you know, obviously, you're not going to get chosen for jobs that you think you can do. But as you said, it's, it's making sure that you dig a little bit further into that.

Kimberley Michaels 36:44

And yeah, and then one other thing I wanted to add is, there's a book that I read by Alexandra Carter, which I recommend any woman to read, it's called ask for more.

And something that I really learned through this was the concept of amplification. And amplification is when you know when you're in a realm and speaking from a predominantly male dominated industry that my whole career has been in, women have a tendency to wait their turn. And even though you may have been very critical in solving for a challenge for a particular project, or you did a lot of the research, you're kind of waiting for your turn to speak. And the concept of amplification is let's say that I'm working with Meera or Ineshka on a project. And we're all in the same room working with a group of people. And I know that they did a lot of research. It's, say her name, give her credit. And basically, the concept is to call her out and say, Ineshka did a lot of research on this particular segment of the business. And, Ineshka you had some great ideas, why don't you share them with the group, you're basically elevating someone and giving them a platform so that they have a voice.

Because a lot of times, you know, you can look around meeting room. And when we used to be more in person, the body language is even different sometimes with how women take up space versus men. And this isn't negative towards men. I think it's just, unfortunately, how women subconsciously we carry ourselves to kind of make ourselves smaller, and you have to remember that you need to speak up you can, you know, be used body language and all those other things that show that you're there.

Kayleigh Bateman 38:32

Yeah, which can be harder, remotely as well on there with lots of guys, how do you show that body language? When you're not in a room of everybody?

Kimberly, how has the industry changed for women? Since you started in tech, do you think?

Kimberley Michaels 38:50

Yeah, it has changed, so much. Like I said earlier, I started in the finance industry in 1995, which probably makes me sound ancient. And I fell into technology with y2k planning. Kind of, I guess you could say a stereotype. The whole reason why I fell into it is because the men that I worked with said it was really organized. And I should get involved in planning out how we prep for y2k, so just didn't want to deal with it.

Since that time, I could say happily that there are definitely way more women that are in the technology field. When I went to college, I didn't even know that it was an option to study technology. There were no speakers that came to my high school. I didn't know that that was an option.

Now, you know, one of the biggest changes I would say is that with women and university levels and also having outreach programs to let girls know about these opportunities or the wide variety of disciplines, so before technology may have been very focused on the engineering aspect, whereas now it's a more broader umbrella from UI UX, you know, you could do testing, like there's all these little nuances of technology on what types of roles you can have.

I also think that some of the additional responsibilities that women may predominantly take on in their personal life as they advance in their careers, you know, things like having children caring for aging parents, technology, typically even before COVID was more remote friendly. So if you were trying to balance being a mother, or taking care of someone, you could navigate your personal life, and the demands a little easier because of that flexibility in your career.

So I would say there's still a long way to go. But we have definitely made significant strides. And even with these two young women that have joined here today from Capco, like that's proof of that.

Kayleigh Bateman 40:55

Yes. Would you say? Do you have any advice for women considering a career in the industry?

Kimberley Michaels 41:03

I would say that you have to never stop learning. So the one negative and positive regard to technology is you always have to stay on top of the latest thing, you are always a student. And it's very important that you have to balance don't try and learn every new thing, you want to focus on something that gives you expertise, so that you're a subject matter expert in a certain theme of technology.

So there's this thing someone once told me, you want to be the Purple Cows, when you're driving down the road, and you see the brown cows and the white cows, like, you want to be the cow that really stands out, because you really have you have proven that you know what you're doing in your craft, you have the right certifications to stand behind it. And you also have like empathy and good people skills.

So I would say all of those things are very, very important. And most importantly, if you have those skills, if you aren't working on only just building the relationships, but knowing how to leverage them, that that will be an impediment to your career. In the past 15 years, I've had various roles and it was all through people that I knew or I was introduced to. Your network is your goldmine.

Kayleigh Bateman 41:51

Yes, I completely agree with growing your network. I love that. That's going to stay with me. You want to be the Purple Cow, though?

Ineshka so any advice that you would give women? A career in tech?

Ineshka De Silva 42:39

Yes definitely, I completely agree with the things that Kimberly has said around employing a beginner's mindset, I think that's really important, always having the willingness to learn. If you do have an interest in technology, then really kind of get to know yourself, practice self-awareness, and start to ask yourself honest questions and answer them honestly. What is it that you love about the tech industry? What do you not love? What are your kind of affinities within tech? I guess, just trying to enrich your understanding of the tech industry, and then try to find what's unique to you? What do you feel you have more of an affinity towards?

I think passion is the most important thing as well. As long as you're passionate about what you're doing within the tech centre. I think you can go really far. For me personally, design and doing creative work has been an absolute passion of mine, it's really, truly an extension of my hobby. And that's why I feel like I've been successful so far in my career, you know.

It's also around community. There's lots of opportunities out there. And I think sometimes it's just a case of trying to, as Kimberly said, trying to leverage the right people, trying to leverage and build a network, trying to make use of the communities that are available to you and the opportunities that are available to you. I think that's really important as well.

And also being able to find mentors. Mentoring is always something that I wish I did earlier, because I only really started doing it once I was already in a tech career. I do feel like having a mentor earlier would have really helped me would have helped guide so many different kinds of decisions that I was going through, even when I was deciding what exactly I wanted to do within the tech industry.

And also once I actually got into the tech industry, all kinds of things around what sort of companies to apply to, what sort of subjects are really at the forefront in terms of trends, staying up to date etc. People who are mentors are highly influential people and obviously, they're people who have a number of years of experience, much like Kimberly does. So me being able to learn from someone like her is really going to be beneficial, whether I'm considering a career in tech, or whether you're already in a career in tech.

So yeah, that would be my three key points.

Kayleigh Bateman 45:27

Yeah, and actually, just growing that network and finding those mentors, is a lovely place to leave it today because ladies, we're already out of time.

But Kimberly, Meera, and Ineshka, thank you so much for joining us today. It's been an absolute pleasure to have you.

Kimberley Michaels 45:44

Thank you for having us.

Ineshka De Silva 45:45

Thank you so much. Yes, it's been brilliant, great conversation.

Kayleigh Bateman 45:49

Thank you and to everybody listening. As always, thank you for joining us and we hope to see you again next time.