



Talent

RAHM

Human.

Global perspectives on diversity in tech



**“Stories are data with a soul.”**

Brené Brown





# FORE- WORD

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**By Richard Earl**

Founder & Executive Chairman // Talent

**I am extremely proud to introduce our inaugural global publication, Human, which features 25 individuals who are making great strides for diversity in tech around the world.**

This book is a collection of true-life experiences and presents the real faces transforming technology, shining a light on what we at Talent value most, the humanity of the people within our industry. We have deliberately not included statistics and figures, as we want to show the real stories that sometimes get lost in the data.

I am conscious that I will never fully understand many of the struggles and difficulties these inspiring people have experienced, but I do passionately believe that diversity should be celebrated in tech, the workplace, and life. One of the objectives of this book is to create greater awareness and understanding for people of all backgrounds and persuasions and challenge the perception of individuals, leaders, and organisations while encouraging them to create more inclusive work environments.

Another aim of this book is to celebrate differences rather than similarities and see each person for who they authentically are, not the label society has given them. Hopefully, people reading this will identify with some of the stories and know they are not alone.

As this industry evolves and recruitment becomes more automated, I believe it is essential for us to remember that the underlining element is human. Talent's vision, to redefine the world of recruitment, encompasses the tech industry we work alongside and the broader community. I hope this book reflects our true belief that embracing diversity is essential to the success and advancement of every organisation.

Finally, I want to thank the inspiring individuals who have shared their invaluable insights and often deeply personal experiences. They are truly transforming and reshaping the world in which we work.







# FORE- WORD

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**By Jane Tewson CBE**

Director // Talent RISE

**I am proud to be a Director of Talent RISE and passionately believe that diversity should be celebrated in the workplace and life.**

RISE was established to challenge perceptions, and this publication achieves exactly that. Readers are encouraged to open their minds to a wide range of people, experiences and backgrounds.

Talent RISE works with young people experiencing barriers to employment, supporting them through education and work readiness programs and helping their dreams come true by connecting them with job opportunities in the tech and digital sector.

In this book, you will hear from inspiring individuals such as Troi, a young Indigenous Australian who is one of the amazing young people Talent RISE has had the privilege to mentor and assist in securing employment. She is an example of the many benefits diverse young people can bring to a workplace.

The stereotypical view of workforces is also challenged by this publication. These stories demonstrate that people from all races, gender identities, ages, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic statuses can excel in the tech and digital sector and that the industry is strengthened when it embraces the benefits that diverse backgrounds, thoughts, and opinions can bring.

These human stories highlight people who have broken down barriers in society and the workplace. Some have struggled against odds that many of us will never understand and as a result bring unique strengths, experience, and resilience to their employers. These are stories to be shared and celebrated as we can all learn so much from them.

There is a saying; 'you get out much more than you put in' and I believe this true whenever diversity is embraced.

Talent



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# // Jem Henderson

## - Yorkshire



Jem Henderson // Entrepreneur Engagement Manager @ Tech Nation

**Jem Henderson is the Entrepreneur Engagement Manager for Tech Nation, a government funded organisation aimed at helping ambitious tech entrepreneurs as they start, scale and grow. She also works with leading names including Digital Catapult and Rolls Royce on strategy, content and community management. Jem is a social entrepreneur, passionate about tech for good and working-class voices in digital.**

I started out of home at 16 after being kicked out by my mother. I lived in a squat and in a homeless hostel before sofa surfing and being vulnerably housed on and off for a couple of years. I did a whole range of jobs; cheffing, hairdressing and decorating before I ended up signed off sick for a number of years due to PTSD caused by my upbringing. I was out of work for six years; too ill, insomniac and depressed to do a 'proper' job. However, I still tried to do what I could, managing to attend

***"I landed my first job in tech as a junior copywriter working for a data centre company."***

college and later university to get an art degree, and English Literature degree and then a creative writing masters.

I landed my first job in tech as a junior copywriter working for a data centre company. I was interested in how everything worked and so landed the job of technical writing - both for the main organisation and later the digital health organisation which started up while I was there.

Unfortunately, I was made redundant eight months in, but by this time I



had realised that corporate life wasn't for me. I would get all my work done by Tuesday lunchtime and struggled to look busy for the rest of the week.

I started my own copy-writing business and while I wrote about everything from hair loss treatment to digital marketing, I kept up my interest in tech.

The real turning point was landing a role where I was writing about cutting edge technology for the Head of IoT at Telefonica. This rapidly built my portfolio and gave me a mini apprenticeship in everything from corporate creativity to blockchain and AI. This led to a role as community manager at Digital Catapult which showed me my real passion was working with tech start-ups and now on to my awesome job as Entrepreneur Engagement Manager with Tech Nation.

It also inspired me to start a digital innovation hub in Harrogate called Indieworx Collective but unfortunately this recently closed due to cash

flow issues. It's pretty tough out there right now!

Taking the step into the life of a tech entrepreneur was difficult. I knew I wasn't the same as everyone else, which actually made the decision to work for myself much easier. I'm not cut out

for Monday to Friday, 9 to 5 - it's too constraining. What if I have insomnia and can't function the next day? It's also made me pretty fearless (which feels easy to say but I am not sure if it's true given the nights of lying awake worrying about stuff). I know I have developed a resilience because of my experience. I'm disgustingly optimistic, even in the face of debt and business closure because I know as long as I have a roof over my head and I can provide for my family, everything is okay really.

Because I have worked for myself for such a long time, I've carved out my own space for work. I have only taken jobs which suited me and learned how to fire clients that aren't worth working with along the way - a tough

*"I'm not cut out for Monday to Friday, 9 to 5 - it's too constraining. What if I have insomnia and can't function the next day?"*



lesson but one I wish I could teach all entrepreneurs! I haven't really revealed my mental health issues - I have kept my arms covered so employers couldn't see any scars until I'd proven my worth and then I don't feel too worried.

*"I mean, I do have ridiculous coloured hair and I am a bit eccentric but in Britain, this isn't viewed with too much wariness anymore."*

I mean, I do have ridiculous coloured hair and I am a bit eccentric

but in Britain, this isn't viewed with too much wariness anymore. I'm definitely the weird one on my team but that's pretty usual for me.

There are so many ways companies can better support people who are suffering from mental health issues. Downtime is so important. I know Elon Musk talks about his 100 hour weeks but that just isn't sustainable. Work should finish on time, not bleed into weekends and be well rewarded. This goes for anyone, not just those with mental health problems.



Neurodiversity should be celebrated. If we're only creating tech by and for white, male, mentally well people, we're cutting out swathes of society which can really add value to the things that we're developing. Tech

*"Degrees aren't important, people are."*

is supposed to make our lives easier so let's have tech created by those whose lives aren't always that easy, eh?

I would also like to see companies create more opportunities for young people from challenging social backgrounds.



Degrees aren't important, people are. I was lucky, I had understanding tutors and lecturers who got that while my attendance could be poor, my mind wasn't. I hid my age on my CVs and just allowed people to think I was just out of uni and a similar age to my peers and not an ex mature student. I don't know if this made a difference but I was ashamed of my work record.

Apprenticeships are the thing for me. Anyone can do them and if companies approach them from a respectful place, as in pay them a real living wage and listen to their insights, then a company can really flourish. They're an opportunity for everyone involved, although sometimes I think they're used to just get in cheap labour.

***“Apprenticeships are the thing for me. Anyone can do them and if companies approach them from a respectful place, as in pay them a real living wage and listen to their insights, then a company can really flourish.”***

Diversity should come right from the start. Don't just hire yourself over and over, but look for a different viewpoint. Let the interviewee interview you - let them share what they think you should be doing and what they want to be doing. Build roles around people and don't just hire people to fill roles prescriptively.

## **Jem's advice for people working in tech who may feel overlooked due to their background or experience:**

// Keep going. Keep learning. Talk about your experiences, take insights from them to help you grow.

// The most important thing is don't be afraid to admit you need help or you don't know something. Ego gets in the way of living a full life if you never admit you don't understand.

// Stand up for what you believe and let your morals be your guide. Don't do stuff that makes you feel bad but do try things that take you out of your comfort zone. You never know what your next talent could be.

# // Ashvin Govind

## - Wellington



Ashvin Govind // ICT Product Manager @ New Zealand's Ministry for Primary Industries // Chief Product & Technology Officer @ Collaborate.

**Ashvin Govind has two roles - ICT Product Manager (NZ Food Safety) at New Zealand's Ministry for Primary Industries, and Chief Product & Technology Officer at Collaborate. At MPI, he is responsible for the strategic development of a digital product roadmap that enables the outcomes for their food safety system. At Collaborate, he is responsible for creating the product and technology vision and the evolution of product ideas from ideation into actionable features.**

Throughout my career, I have put in every effort to obtain what I wanted to achieve. In the early stages this meant long hours, exceeding expectations and always saying yes to everything thrown my way. As I

climbed the corporate ladder, I soon started realising that I was a minority - generally the youngest member of the team. I believed I needed

to bridge the gap in my experience so I decided to spend three years obtaining a MBA. This has been quite fruitful, being able to study part-time

and apply my learnings directly to real world situations has helped me add value in different ways than before.

Being in senior roles at the ages I have been in them has definitely

been difficult for others to accept at first. It is only when people see outcomes I deliver that I have been able to earn the respect of my peers. Over the years, I have taken actions to be included. I've chosen to

dress for the job I want versus the job I have, I gave myself a nickname Ash instead of Ashvin and pushed myself to prove to my peers that I can deliver

***"As I climbed the corporate ladder, I soon started realising that I was a minority - generally the youngest member of the team."***

even though I'm a generation younger than them. Realising that I've taken such deliberate steps to fit in or be recognised helps me understand how important it is to be mindful of diversity and inclusion.

All the organisations I've worked with have supported diversity and inclusion from both an employee and a manager level. I think there is still more we can be doing to support each other. Whilst organisations are putting in more policies and programmes to help increase diversity and inclusion, there is a lot a manager must do to ensure the way we communicate, the way we leverage diversity and be inclusive is the best for everyone. I have found in organisations where the culture is diverse and inclusive by default (Housing New Zealand is a great example – it felt like a big family) it is much easier to keep it front of mind.

The first approach should be conscious decision making - decide to leverage diversity by creating teams that have a diverse range of people. We often believe the ideal

*“Being in senior roles at the ages I have been in them has definitely been difficult for others to accept at first. It is only when people see outcomes I deliver that I have been able to earn the respect of my peers.”*

candidate is the person that has the best experience and can articulate that through a series of interviews. I challenge employers/hiring managers to think about the other aspects that a candidate may bring to the organisation - multi-lingual, resilience (personal challenges can lead to very resilient people), younger or older generation perspectives, international experience or cultural influence. These are all things that can help an organisation in many ways.

A leadership team is fundamental in creating a culture of acceptance. Many replicate the values and culture of their leaders. When people see leaders supporting diversity and inclusiveness, not as a fad but at both a personal and an organisational level, the people below will adopt the same culture. I also think that it is everyone's responsibility, if leadership are not as supportive as they could be, then as an individual contributor or people manager - you can choose to make decisions that support diversity and inclusion.

## Ashvin's advice for people working in the tech industry who are feeling overlooked due to their background or experience:

// If you are feeling overlooked - first ask for critical feedback (it's a gift, although may not feel like it when received) and try to understand the decision making behind why you were overlooked. Think about what you can do differently to be the best candidate for the role - for example how can you leverage your diversity or experience?

// I've found it really effective to learn as much as you can about the organisation or team you're wanting to join; by talking to people, understanding the culture and matching those values and beliefs against your own, can help you assess whether it's a good fit.

// No matter what you do - never give up. Perseverance and commitment to your goals are crucial.



# // Daria Suvorova

## - Berlin



*Daria Suvorova // Legal consultant for cryptocurrencies, investing & trading*

**Daria Suvorova is a legal consultant in the field of cryptocurrencies investing and trading. In 2018, she co-created a series of blockchain conferences called moinblockchain, with a focus on inclusion and diversity. Her goal was to create access for women to learn about the tech foundations and to network with fellow attendees in a comfortable setting.**

Never could I have imagined I would one day be working in tech! I used to be a professional tennis player and

studied business and law as an undergraduate. It was during my master's program in Hamburg that I first dived into

tech. In 2016, I wrote my thesis on blockchain-based Smart Contracts in the form of a legal analysis, from then on I started researching various blockchain use cases and got into the nitty gritty of this new promising tech industry. I realised how powerful technology can be and how it can

affect the lives of millions. It is how the cards fell for me, and I am very thankful for that.

***“Never could I have imagined I would one day be working in tech!”***

I have found that to create the right business culture you must start with yourself - start by working on your own values, your own behaviour and attitude. You want to work with people you are most comfortable with, but you cannot create a diverse team if you personally don't find it valuable. Reflect and see how you can make diversity matter to you personally, only then can one understand the benefits of diversity and harvest the fruits, as diverse and

inclusive organizational cultures attract the best talent!

Moreover, to better support women in terms of progression into leadership roles, companies should be offering direct mentorship and match young women with women or men in leadership roles. Direct mentorship is one of the most effective ways to help young women find stable ground and learn from their senior colleagues in a tête-à-tête format. Also, companies must provide visibility and empowerment to their women employees internally and externally. Their voices should be heard externally by representing and speaking on behalf of their companies. This gives confidence to women and they will be more likely to envision themselves in leadership roles.

***“Direct mentorship is one of the most effective ways to help young women find stable ground and learn from their senior colleagues in a tête-à-tête format.”***

## **Daria’s advice for young women starting out their careers in tech:**

// First of all, it’s important to understand that technology is the greatest equaliser, it makes many things possible: access to education e.g. online courses, remote working, and a global network of professionals at the palm of your hand - so leverage it and use it to your advantage!

// Start growing as a tech professional by using this valuable resource. Create and sustain your own professional life in a format of your preference - everything is in your hands.

// Tech is a wide topic and it’s easy to get lost. If you don’t know where to start learning and how to specify your focus, try first to expose yourself to a “tech environment” by going to events and meet-ups. Look for two things: topic that sparks your interest and role models that inspire you.

// Role models are crucial as you will have an opportunity to learn personal stories of actual women working in tech industries. You will hear their accomplishments as well as challenges, and you will have a chance to envision yourself in a role that was before unimaginable for you. And step by step you will start meeting individuals that will help you shape your career path!

# // Wayan Agoes Setiawan

## - Bali



Wayan Agoes Setiawan // Bali General Manager – Digital @ Ogilvy Australia.

**Wayan Agoes Setiawan is Bali General Manager – Digital for Ogilvy Australia. With over 14 years' experience in the tech and digital industry, Wayan has delivered technical solutions for a number of leading organisations around Asia Pacific.**

I started my career as a programmer. At one point, about six years ago, in an IT seminar where I was one of the speakers, I got a question from a young programmer. This question is the turning point in my career from a programmer to management. He asked about how he should interact with management and participate in developing the company. From there I started thinking about me being a programmer, I know how a programmer thinks, I know what the programmer needs, and

***“In a diverse workplace, employees are more likely to remain loyal when they feel respected and valued for their unique contribution.”***

I believe that I will be able to do a much bigger thing if I am in a management position. And I am very grateful that the opportunity finally came to me.

I work in an Australian company that values diversity very much, they have accepted me with open arms and even entrusted me with the operations of the company in Bali

regardless of my culture, race or even my religion. They have accepted me as a professional and I really appreciate that.

Diversity at work is very important for employees because it

manifests itself in building a great reputation for the company, which leads to increased profits and opportunities for job seekers. In a diverse workplace, employees are more likely to remain loyal when they feel respected and valued for their unique contribution.

Diversity is important in recruitment. There is no doubt that the company wants to recruit the best people. While skills are valuable assets in the workplace, diversity is also very important. Diversity in the company will enable productivity and employee involvement. By recruiting a diverse group of people, there will always be various talents and skills that work together. The success of a company's diverse employees creates a healthy environment and enhances the retention rate.

Leaders have a strong influence on organizational culture. They set the

tone for how employees perceive their work experience, so that leadership and culture go hand in hand. In many ways, I do believe that the success of leaders depends on their ability to help shape and enforce organizational culture.

Diversity is really needed to bring a more varied experience into a company. It is important in the workplace because it helps em-

ployees relate to a wider customer base and helps to create a fun and exciting environment in which to work together.

***“The success of a company's diverse employees creates a healthy environment and enhances the retention rate.”***

## **Wayan's advice for people working in tech who may feel overlooked due to their background or experience:**

// You don't want to work with anyone who doesn't want to work with you. Accept that it can happen and move on, putting yourself in a position to succeed.

// There are employers out there who would love to have you, they just don't know it yet and they might not even know how to find you, so you need to help them.



# // Jamshed Javed

## - Bristol



Jamshed Javed // Freelance enterprise level software engineer

**Jamshed Javed is a freelance enterprise level software engineer, focusing on web applications. He has also travelled the world as a volunteer speaker and trainer for the Islamic Education & Research Academy.**

I didn't want to be a software developer. Thanks to films like 'The Matrix', I had the notion that writing code was like looking at strange symbols on the screen.

However, due to an investment in a web-service gone bad, I was forced to take over the code and see what I got for my money, and to my surprise I was not only able to read the code but fix very clear issues and errors with it as well (after learning the syntax, of course). From there, I tried to rebuild the platform myself, and eventually fell into the software

industry, with the privilege of working for several big name clients.

*"Thanks to films like 'The Matrix', I had the notion that writing code was like looking at strange symbols on the screen."*

I have felt the impact of working in non-inclusive environments many times throughout my career. As a practising Muslim, I abstain from alcohol to the fullest extent possible (i.e. I won't even go to a pub). However, in one company I used to work for, the managers and developers would often go to the pub together, and essentially make all the business decisions there. Whilst we would have meetings in the office as well, somehow decisions would always be made down at the pub, and if you

wanted to gain favour, that's where you needed to be.

Of course, I never went, which meant I was then subjected to a lot of discrimination when decisions were made in my absence or without my input – decisions that would have an impact on me and thus my career path. Plus it also enforced the notion that I was an 'outsider', being as there was no reason the meetings should be at the pub and my restrictions were known, but everyone appeared to prefer the company of Jack Daniels to that of mine. How insignificant do you think it makes you feel to know a drink that causes a person to lose their senses is more popular than your own input?

I also have a dietary restriction, in that I cannot eat meat unless it's halal. Our company meetings were catered with a light lunch (sandwiches, etc.), and these would often be meat based (i.e. beef, chicken, ham, etc.). Of course, the company would also order a vegetarian selection for the small minority of vegetarians (which I would include myself in, as meat was effectively off the menu for me).

As it turns out, the catering company made an excellent range of vegetarian options, including pizza, etc. And these were more popular than the meat-based sandwiches. So, when each group was called to get lunch, invariably a lot of people would pick up the vegetarian options, not realising that they were diminishing what was left for the people who actually had restricted diets, which meant on occasion we get nothing because it's all gone.

On every single occasion, there was always meat sandwiches left over, and I appealed several times for the order to the catering company to be updated to include more vegetarian and less meat, being as the vegetarian is more inclusive (there isn't anyone who can't/ won't eat it), whereas the meat is restricted. And I always cited the evidence of meat being left over to make my point. But they refused to change it because there are less vegetarians in the office – ultimately

standing on a stupid principle they invented rather than using common sense to ensure everyone was fed.

The fact that this basic logic was lost on a company full of software developers (who are supposed to be logical and intelligent) made it worse.

*“Treat people like people. There's a lot of us, and we have different experiences, different ideas, different skills, etc. I believe it's dehumanising to believe that everyone has the same life-experience as oneself.”*

There's nothing that really comes to mind in terms of moments where I feel companies have actively supported my religious beliefs. I've been allowed to offer my prayers, etc., but no employer in my last 20 years has ever taken any specific steps to make me feel included from this perspective.

I think the first thing companies must do is recognise that everyone is a person, and people are different! Treat people like people. There's a lot of us, and we have different experiences, different ideas, different skills, etc. I believe it's dehumanising to believe that everyone has the same life-experience as oneself.

On some level, they need to get to know who each person is, what is important to them, and what they need.

It doesn't matter that they've got restrictions, etc., due to religious requirements, or even personal circumstances. Once we treat people like people and not commodities, everything sorts itself out.

It's also important to recognise that there are minorities who do not, and may not be able to, enjoy the same things as the general population. Of course, it makes sense to cater for the majority, but not at the expense of the minority – and that's the real trick.

If you want to go on a social outing, but some don't want to be around drink, do something else! You don't have to go to the pub, there's a number of different activities that can be done. But if the decision-maker decides "Nah, I want to go to the pub because it's what I and most others like", that's

*"Of course, it makes sense to cater for the majority, but not at the expense of the minority – and that's the real trick."*

the problem. Because then you're not being inclusive, but divisive in picking an option you know will exclude others. That's the attitude that needs to change.

It's hard to see past these kinds of barriers. We tend to gravitate towards those who are most like us, because we see differences as potentials for conflict, etc. We need to overcome that and recognise them as opportunities to grow. Rather than projecting our insecurities onto others, we need to resolve them within ourselves.



## **Jamshed's advice for fellow Muslim's working in the tech industry who are feeling overlooked due to their background or experience:**

// First and most important, being Muslim means place God in the number one spot. You will never be successful by abandoning God to appease people /creation. Stick to your principles – if you need to pray, go and pray. If you're prohibited, leave, and trust that God will open up other opportunities for you.

// Don't take the mick. When you need to pray, pray. But don't take 20 minutes about it. 5 minutes is sufficient. You're still employed and expected to fulfil your duties for which you're being paid a salary. Don't use your religious identity to weasel out of things, because that will cause you more harm overall.

// Learn about your own identity, because people will ask you. They'll have genuine curiosity, and if you can't explain what you're doing, or why it's important, etc., you're not helping yourself. How important can something really be to you, if you don't know why it's important? Why should anyone else have respect for it, if you don't?





**Be genuine, be confident. Apply for roles when you may not have all the skills, don't be afraid to ask for help, don't feel pressured into stereotypical situations or behaviours.**

- Melissa Brown



*Melissa Brown is Talent's first-ever Global Chief Marketing Officer. Based in San Francisco, Melissa has over 20 years' experience as a leader across the tech, travel and media industries.*

# Talent Take:

## Melissa Brown, USA

### Can you share a personal experience related to diversity and inclusion?

As I don't identify with any minority group I have been fortunate to avoid discrimination or bias on that account, however, I have certainly had some interesting experiences linked to gender. I think the key callouts for women in western society relate to challenging stereotypes around roles and pay inequality. Around the world, we still haven't achieved pay parity, and the pay gap is particularly pronounced in the technology industry.

### What's your opinion on quotas?

I wish we didn't need quotas and I look forward to a day where they are no longer required. However, there is still systemic bias and prejudice in our society, our institutions, and corporations, which means that promotion or appointment based on merit is often a choice made from an unequal pool. Change has to take place at home and in schools, in the foundations of our society, to ensure equal rights for everyone. It's also well reported that gender diverse boards and executive teams produce better results for companies so any programs to support women being promoted through the ranks can only be positive for business.

### **How have you supported other people from a diversity and inclusion perspective?**

I have been fortunate in a number of my roles to inherit reasonably diverse teams. When hiring, I am very much focused on the right person for the role and the business. Being in marketing and commercial roles, I am especially conscious of having a team that reflects the diversity of our customers. Throughout my career, there have been times where I felt the need to speak up from an inclusivity perspective. These have ranged from religious-based in relation to events I have managed, through to office design to accommodate physical challenges, and gender linked to pay discrepancies. These are reminders of how we can go about our day not necessarily thinking about the obstacles some of our colleagues have to go through.

### **What advice do you have for aspiring female leaders?**

Be genuine, be confident. Apply for roles when you may not have all the skills, don't be afraid to ask for help, don't feel pressured into stereotypical situations or behaviours.

### **What are some of the challenges you're seeing in terms of diversity in Silicon Valley?**

Silicon Valley has made great strides in the realm of gender diversity, but still has a long way to go before equality is achieved. Carta's recent study of more than 6,000 companies found that overall, men own 91 percent of employee and founder equity in Silicon Valley, leaving women a scant 9 percent. Despite this change is happening, women are making progress in Silicon Valley, securing more funding and leading more companies than ever before. In more ways than one, Silicon Valley has succeeded in making the world a better place, and I am confident it can succeed in making it a more equal one as well.

# // Takeem Owens

## - New York



Takeem Owens // UI Designer

**Takeem Owens is a User Interface Designer, currently working on a career-advice knowledge system for entry level scientists. His interest in experience and product design is driven by a passion for human behaviour and habit-forming technology.**

I've been designing since 2008, at first picking up freelance projects for mom and pop shops in my area. My work expanded online quickly where I had clients all over the US. I then attracted contracts from mid-sized to large-sized companies such as American Airlines, Incedo, etc.

***"I may or may not have faced discrimination but challenges are inevitable."***

I may or may not have faced discrimination but challenges are inevitable. I welcome all challenges in all forms, I've always been this way. I try to focus on things that are in my control and those things that aren't I give less emotion to. I'd encourage anyone in this

career field to practice embracing challenges and taking them head on. The biggest takeaway will always be "experience" which converts itself into confidence that you can carry onto your next role.

I'm always focused on the value I bring and selling myself rather than sitting back and being evaluated by people who don't know me.

It's bad enough that most companies use "design challenges" and "coding challenges" to evaluate talent. It's a bad way to start off a working relationship in my opinion. I just think it's not a fair shot for upcoming talent that's not familiar

with how this process works. They may have the skill and work into their confidence within a few weeks of on-boarding and learning about the company.

I've literally not shown up to interviews early in my career due to fear of rejection. Now I don't mind because I understand that this is where the industry is leaning towards.

***“I’ve literally not shown up to interviews early in my career due to fear of rejection.”***

## **Takeem’s advice for people working in tech who may feel overlooked due to their background or experience:**

// I would say, fear not... There is a place for everyone. I literally applied to over 200 companies and interviewed over 50 times before breaking through. And when I did it was the best fitting company for me at the time.

// I was so lost in the beginning but I bought books, found mentors, and continued building my visual UI and problem-solving skills until it became natural. Resources are all over the web. Take advantage and don't forget to sell yourself as a valuable prospect. Confidence will take you to the moon.

# // Danielle Harmer

## - Canberra



Danielle Harmer - General Manager @ Allhomes

**Danielle Harmer is currently The General Manager of Allhomes (part of Domain Group and Canberra's main property destination). Her role includes driving the business strategy, setting business priorities and growing revenue for the Allhomes business. Danielle had previously held the role of Head of Product after recently being promoted to General Manager. She is also a working parent with three young children.**

I have always surprised people with my technical background, as I certainly don't look like the stereotype. I've used it as a major strength in my career.

One personal challenge I've had is returning to work after

children. I never realised the emotions and the impact it would have on my family and finding a place back in the office can often be harder than starting a new job. I now live in Canberra to be close

***"Being a working parent has made me stronger, more empathetic, and understanding of others in similar situations."***

to my family and have definitely felt like I've missed opportunities in Sydney, where a lot of the "action" takes place in the digital/tech space.

But I'm a big believer that if you've had an opportunity once it will come again, so I don't let it get me down. Being a working parent has made me stronger, more empathetic, and understanding of others in similar situations. It has added to my experience and helped me grow as a tech professional.

Throughout my career, I have worked for some incredibly sup-



portive male and female bosses, all of whom have been flexible and inclusive when it comes to being a mother. I've had bosses go out of their way to be flexible and support me with things like working from home and allowing me to join meetings remotely. I was lucky enough to be hired by Domain when I was two months pregnant with my second child. This speaks volumes for women having children who think they can't go for a job if they are pregnant.

Support comes in many ways. Little things like allowing employees to work from home (when it makes sense), leaving work a little early to pick up the kids or even just providing a place to 'pump' (breast milk) can all go a long way towards feeling supported and happy at work. I am a strong believer that success can often be based on output (results). If individuals are achieving the output required for their role, or above, things like flexible work hours can go a long

***"If individuals are achieving the output required for their role, flexible work hours can go a long way."***

way. It's important as managers to understand these 'little things' and work with individuals to find the right balance. This is what I have learned from my manager and I hope I can continue to be the same with those I lead.

The challenge when it comes to diversity is not necessarily that people are being overlooked, it's in having enough quality diverse applicants in the first place. I believe the best person for the job should be given the role, but I don't feel

like we have enough diversity in the people applying for technical positions. Unfortunately, I think this problem stems back to school and students often having that same 'stereotypical' view of people in technology. I've always encouraged the young women I know to think about careers in technology but it will take a lot more than that. We must start by targeting a diverse range of people from very early on.

## **Danielle's advice for people working in the tech industry who are feeling overlooked due to their background or experience:**

// Put yourself out there and put your hand up for opportunities - I always say, 'You've got to be in it to win it!'

// Focus on your results and outputs, not on being like everyone else.

// Be proud of your difference and don't try to hide it. If you're not working for an employer who embraces that difference then you're not working at the right place.

// If you're thinking about children but think it might interfere with job opportunities, just know that if you've had an opportunity once, it will come around again.

// For mums, find a support network both in and out of work. What you're going through, lots of other people are experiencing as well.



# // Anne-Marie Calderone

## - San Francisco



Anne-Marie Calderone // Quality Control  
Immunohistochemistry Manager @ Biocare Medical.

**With a career spanning over 20 years, Anne-Marie is the Quality Control Immunohistochemistry Manager at Biocare Medical, a Biotechnology company based in California. She manages the Immunohistochemistry Quality department, responsible for ensuring product samples are of the highest quality for use in cancer genetic testing.**

While hospitalized with pneumonia at age 10, I met many nice hospital workers and was grateful for their kindness and how they helped

me become healthy again. I believe that was the defining moment for me to later pursue a career in the medical technology profession to help patients in their journey to recovery.

Over the years I specialised in Histology / IHC / Quality and moved

into leadership roles where I have had the opportunity to support aspiring talents to progress in their careers.

***“While hospitalized with pneumonia at age 10, I met many nice hospital workers and was grateful for their kindness and how they helped me become healthy again.”***

In my career, I have been supported by other laboratory professionals, managers and top leaders, men and women. Thinking back to the 90's, there was a lot of discriminatory challenges happening in the workplace. Gender jokes and displays of inappropriate pictures were quite common and tolerated, so was age discrimination toward the younger generation.

I myself, have encouraged, mentored and supported many lab professionals in achieving certifications or higher education

and progressing their careers, on the technical side or in leadership roles. Being a hiring manager, I always look for that special and positive part of

a candidate, regardless of their ethnicity, age or gender. It is about hiring the right personality and talent to fit your current team and/or your vision of how your team will be.

I have hired people from various professional backgrounds with very little experience and taken chances on people. Many of them succeeded, and they very much appreciated my support.

The future workforce should consist of a blend of generations (at least three) with people from various different ethnic backgrounds, all different genders

and a wide variety of experience levels. In my opinion, it is the responsibility of the leadership team to create a culture of

acceptance and set a positive example for the rest of the company. Focus on building a unique and intelligent team that will define the workforce for the future.

***“Being a hiring manager, I always look for that special and positive part of a candidate, regardless of their ethnicity, age or gender.”***

## **Anne-Marie’s advice for people working in tech or science who are feeling overlooked due to their background or experience:**

// Find a company that has a better appreciation for your talents and look for opportunities to shine and show your skills.

// Always push yourself harder and don’t let others define you or limit you in your career growth. This can sometimes be difficult as we all have to earn an income, but at least make a plan for yourself with a timeline and try to stick to it.

# // Kerstin Oberprieler

## - Canberra



Kerstin Oberprieler // Lead Gamification Designer @ PentaQuest

**Kerstin Oberprieler is the Co-Founder and Lead Gamification Designer of PentaQuest, a behavioural gamification company helping organisations globally build productive, engaging, and thriving workplaces.**

I've been fortunate in my career to have been surrounded by supportive colleagues and leaders in my workplaces. I've had good support from female managers and leaders who have given me a role model to look up to. More importantly though, they gave me permission for me to be who I am. It's so important to see yourself reflected in others and to see that there is a place for someone like you.

One example of this from early in my career was after a difficult client meeting. I was getting teary in the bathroom afterwards and berating myself for getting upset. My female manager let me know that it is OK to cry and she shared some strategies she has used in her career for similar situations. Her non-judgemental reaction and shared experience meant a lot.

Having said that, I do occasionally experience discrimination by male peers. This comes in the form of patronising

***"I've been fortunate in my career to have been surrounded by supportive colleagues and leaders in my workplaces."***

comments or 'mansplaining' about technology and about my business. I'm always open to learning and hearing other people's perspectives from peers and those with more experience, but I see

an interesting contrast when I speak with female leaders versus male leaders. Female leaders, even those with much more experience than me, tend to come from a place of listening and caring, whereas as some (not all) male leaders come with the assumption that they know better than me about my business or product. Gender definitely plays a role and affects my experience in the industry, as does my age.

Stereotypes serve the evolutionary purpose to help our brains navigate our world with less cognitive energy, so unfortunately they will also play a role in how we interact with others. The danger of stereotypes is that they blind you to potential and talent and over time build up biases in your team. Whether it be gender, age, ethnicity, lifestyle or education, employers need to be aware of how stereotypes are affecting their recruitment processes and decision making when it comes to hiring candidates. When hiring a new candidate, employers should focus on alignment with company values and vision and the employee's potential.

I think part of the diversity problem stems from our dichotomous view of work and life. In many workplaces we are treated like numbers and told to put on a professional mask. This stifles individuality and forces normative thinking and behaviour. If we viewed employees more as individual people with lives, hobbies, histories and quirks, not only would our experience of the workplace be more holistic, but workplaces themselves would be more fun, fulfilling and diverse.

Diverse perspectives lead to better problem solving and more innovative solutions. To ensure diversity, organisations need to be aware of their unconscious biases in hiring and retaining staff.

***“If we viewed employees more as individual people with lives, hobbies, histories and quirks, not only would our experience of the workplace be more holistic, but workplaces themselves would be more fun, fulfilling and diverse.”***

It's easy to like people who are like you, and it takes conscious effort to overcome your own biases. Organisations need to value diversity at a strategic level and build a culture that appreciates and celebrates individual differences. One example is looking for quirky ways of thinking. Rather than viewing idiosyncrasies as weird or negative, these should be viewed as fun, interesting and a great way to add colour to the workplace.

Leadership and senior management is very important in setting the values and norms in a team. Having said that, leadership in building a culture of acceptance is everyone's responsibility. Everyone should take a stand against intolerance and demonstrate acceptance and appreciation for diversity. I see the younger generations in particular be a lot more open and accepting of other points of view, which is really fantastic. And the change that this generation can and is bringing to the rest of the society in this aspect is excellent.

## **Kerstin's advice for people working in the tech industry who are feeling overlooked due to their background or experience:**

// Remember that you have something no one else has and this uniqueness is precisely what makes you able to succeed in your field.

// You need to find, acknowledge and share your uniqueness because this is directly linked to the value you can provide to the world. That which makes you different makes you great. Own it! And share it with the world!



# // Nick Collins

## - San Francisco



Nick Collins // President (USA) @ Telstra

**Nick Collins is President of the Americas for Telstra. Based in San Francisco, Nick is responsible for Telstra's business across the region. Previously, Nick was based in Hong Kong where he held the role of worldwide head of Customer & Sales Operations for Telstra's Enterprise Division.**

My career journey has enabled me to live and work across the world, and 13 cities across four continents later, I currently call San Francisco home.

As I have travelled the world, whether it be for vacation or work, every country is different which can be particularly profound when it comes to LGBTI inclusion both in society and the workplace.

As a leader who identifies as LGBTI, I made a commitment to myself long ago that I wouldn't hide who I was or pretend to be someone that I wasn't. I have carried this commitment throughout my career and across the many countries I have lived and worked.

***"As a leader who identifies as LGBTI, I made a commitment to myself long ago that I wouldn't hide who I was or pretend to be someone that I wasn't."***

The main challenges I have experienced are less related to being a leader, but more about the challenges that present themselves to individuals in countries where same-sex relationships may not be recognised or illegal. This can cause complications with visa arrangements, partner work entitlements, health care and other practicalities.

It is imperative to take time to understand the local circumstances and be respectful of the host country you may find yourself in.

One of the most rewarding periods of my career was six years in Asia where I led teams across ten Asian countries. The tapestry of cultures, languages, religion,



ways of working and progress on social issues such as LGBTI was incredibly complex yet fascinating at the same time. I never felt for a moment that being an LGBTI leader held me back.

No one in this world can go it alone. If I talk to any of my colleagues about what support has helped their career journey you would hear: spouse, family, friends, work colleagues, their professional network and also the organization they work in. I don't believe for LGBTI people or other minority groups it is any different. All of these play an incredibly important role.

If I reflect on this support ecosystem from my own personal experience this would also be true. For the past 20 years I have been incredibly fortunate to work for an organization that embraces diversity and has a formidable track record of inclusive leadership, policies and behaviours. This creates an environment where everyone can feel safe to express themselves, but also safe in terms of an ability to call-out those occasions when we don't get things right.

Perhaps one of the most important support systems you have is that of your spouse. Quite often career growth can be accelerated through international assignments, and for same-sex couples this can see the advancement of one person's career over the other. While this can change over time, it goes without saying that personal sacrifices go

a long way to supporting and opening up career opportunities.

I think it is fair to say that tech companies are often at the forefront of creating inclusive workplaces. The early-stage and millennial workforce has had a material impact on driving inclusive cultures in the workplace. For many, their choice of an employer will be influenced by an organization's values, its participation in 'just-causes' and the contribution it makes to society.

Creating an environment where LGBTI employees can truly thrive is a top-down movement and supporting initiatives as an 'ally' or 'champion of change' can have a profound impact within the business.

Secondly, the existence of an LGBTI staff network is incredibly important. Creating an affinity group for staff members that allows people to 'opt in' and participate in a way they are comfortable with provides a tremendous platform of support and comradery for LGBTI employees. This network can also be a great source of input on D&I training, college recruitment, establishing inclusive HR policies and creating partnerships in the community.

I would encourage leaders in the workforce who are 'out' to become active and approachable role models. Sometimes 'it's hard to

be what you can't see', and the presence of LGBTI leaders and executives both in the workplace and the community can have an incredibly positive impact.

Like many organizations, Telstra has a number of values that every employee lives by. In fact, they are listed on our identification cards and appear throughout our workplace as a reminder.

The value that I am drawn to, and the one that celebrates the diversity of our workforce and the community we are part of, is 'show you care'. The emphasis being on the 'show' and the deliberate actions we take individually and collectively to contribute to an open, safe, respectful and supportive environment.

As an international business we operate in 20 markets in addition to our home in Australia. Importantly, our values are global and extend to every corner of the world where we have Telstra employees. Our LGBTI affinity network called Spectrum which is supported by the business, also operates across all of our international locations. Local chapters organize events and activities relevant to their location and this is entirely staff led.

I am big believer that diversity translates to better decisions. And better decisions mean increased probability of business success. Like many large organizations, Telstra is

***"I am big believer that diversity translates to better decisions. And better decisions mean increased probability of business success."***

going through a significant transformation as we evolve to support new technologies and respond to changing customer needs. This means our workforce of the future will look different to today, and arguably the workforce of the future will be a journey and not a destination in itself.

As an example, our policy on 50/50 gender mix for recruitment at the shortlist stage is one of the big commitments we have made to increase female representation in our workforce. Our engineering heritage has meant that women have been under represented in parts of our business, however as technology changes so do the skill sets we need in our business. This provides enormous opportunity for us to transform our gender mix.

Without doubt, leadership is the most important contributor to driving a culture of acceptance. Establishing a culture that enshrines respect, dignity and kindness inside an organization starts at the very top. Research tells us that attracting and retaining talent is increasingly linked to organizational culture.

We also have to acknowledge that leaders need support when it comes to playing their part, particularly for new managers and leaders. Diversity is a broad topic encompassing among other things: gender, age, ethnicity, beliefs, language, culture, disability and LGBTI. Leadership needs to acknowledge that diversity is a broad school and it is not a matter of prioritizing one aspect over another. A culture of acceptance in the workplace only exists when no one feels marginalized.

*“As an example, our policy on 50/50 gender mix for recruitment at the shortlist stage is one of the big commitments we have made to increase female representation in our workforce.”*

## Nick's advice for people working in tech who are feeling overlooked due to their background or experience:

// First-up I would advise people to believe in themselves, and this means taking personal accountability for charting a new course. The tech industry is one of the most diverse industries with enormous opportunities for people, so know with confidence that there will be a company that is right for you.

// Drawing on my own experiences, you can only be at your very best when you feel included and can bring all of your talent, energy and personality into the workplace. I made deliberate choices in the early stages of my career to find a place where I could be myself, and what I learned was that showing the 'authentic you' will earn the respect of your colleagues.

// I have the great pleasure of mentoring a number of LGBTI individuals and while there is no one right way to navigate this course, a number of options are available.

// Seek out a role model or mentor, someone who could offer guidance and support.

// Talk with your HR team who are well equipped to provide support, including wellness advice.

// Join an LGBTI tech industry community group that exist in many larger cities. These groups provide a great way of meeting like-minded professionals.

// Look for ways to be involved in internal staff groups, such as the D&I committee or community volunteering groups.

// Reach out to an LGBTI community center which are great sources of information, support and advice.



**As a leader I encourage my team to bring their whole self to work. We have an inclusive culture here that thrives on diverse personalities. I have found that diversity policies can bring diverse people into your workplace but it's the inclusive practices that will keep them there. An organisation needs both.**

- Bianca Jones



*Bianca Jones is Talent's New Zealand Country Manager. She is of Māori and NZ European heritage and is one of three female Māori leaders in Talent NZ. Bianca has been a key driver in the establishment of Talent RISE in Wellington, empowering rangatahi (young people) in need to find meaningful employment.*

# Talent Take:

## Bianca Jones, New Zealand

### What is your perspective on the current state of diversity in tech in New Zealand?

Diversity in the tech workforce in NZ is still a significant problem, particularly when it comes to those of Māori and Pasifika heritage and women.

Māori and Pasifika have never really been part of the tech community nor have they been encouraged to transition into tech. Our Government and society have traditionally pushed us towards other types of trades, in particular, labour-based trades.

The tech sector in NZ has historically been male-dominated. When I was growing up, engineering and coding was targeted towards boys. We are starting to see a shift now, however, we still have a long way to go.

There are still many organisations who talk the talk but don't walk the walk. It's a

tough journey for someone coming into the industry from an under-represented group, so we need to work towards ensuring that as a community we are truly open and inclusive.

### What diversity questions do you get asked by clients?

As a recruiter, I've had many clients reach out over the past few years around their need for more women in their teams in order to balance out their environment – it's a huge frustration across both the public and private sector. Often people are cautious about driving this type of conversation because asking straight out for a woman as opposed to asking for a person could be perceived as being discriminatory. I believe a company's focus on creating a more gender-balanced workplace shows that the company has recognised the benefits this will bring to their team.

### **Have you ever experienced discrimination in your career?**

Yes. Actually, I have several times. When I first started my career, I was working in a fast-paced corporate environment alongside people with impressive CV's and university qualifications. Because I did not have the same background, I struggled to have my voice heard amongst these people. The person I directly reported to liked to keep me in my place. Despite the fact that I exceeded expectations in my role, this person used the fact that I did not have the educational qualifications as an excuse to not increase my salary to match that of my colleagues, who did the same role but less effectively. Despite women now entering high-level technology roles, they are still a minority in this sector. There has been an emergence of female role models within the sector of late, however, women are yet to reach their full potential within the tech space in NZ and globally.

### **Have you ever had to work with a client who was displaying bias in their recruitment process? How do you overcome that?**

Almost every day, personal preference often dictates what someone is looking for and quite often they are looking for someone who ticks every single box on their wish list. Our clients want a combination of the right

technical skills combined with the right soft skills and for someone who will be the right cultural fit. Having a full view of the market allows me to provide some insight to clients around the benefits of diversity in the workplace. These incredible benefits include varied experience, innovation and the ability to work with a broader client base. Some clients don't often get the chance to come up for air so they tend to stick with what they know and what they believe works. By working with them and presenting real examples that show the positive impact diversity has had on many workplaces, we can hopefully start to shift the mindset to one of inclusiveness of community.

### **What advice do you have for people who may feel overlooked because of their background or experience?**

If you feel you are being overlooked because of your background my advice is to reassess where you are working and the values of that company. When you are overlooked because of something you cannot necessarily control all sorts of doubt can sprout inside you, and that doubt can grow if you stay in those environments. Back yourself, your career and your happiness and do what's best for you. If you need more formal support then you can contact the Human Rights Commission who can provide help and advice.

### **Statistics show that diverse teams are more successful. In your opinion, what are some of the approaches businesses should be taking to build a better workforce for the future?**

At Talent, diversity and inclusiveness are at the core of our values – getting to this point has been a journey for us, and something that we continually work hard at each and every day. We practice what we preach and have hired people from under-represented groups into our business. We look beyond backgrounds, bias, and prejudices to see the potential of each individual, for who they are and what they aspire to be.

**Talent**



# // Julie Moon

## - London



Julie Moon // Global Head of Communications  
@ Dimension Data

**Julie Moon is the Global Head of Communications for Dimension Data. She is responsible for content strategy, media relations, analyst relations, internal communications, thought leadership and events. Julie is also involved with programmes such as Connected Conservation, which utilises technology to protect endangered species and Tour de France, an event which Dimension Data is the technology partner for the A.S.O. helping to transform the viewing experience, using real-time data analytics to bring fans closer to the race.**

The technology industry continues to be a male dominated environment. Gaining recognition in this environment or progressing can be a challenge. The gender pay gap is prevalent, but I believe as an industry that we are increasingly steering towards supporting more females entering the industry. Whilst the pay gap between men and women continues to be rectified, many large tech companies are investing in and implementing targeted initiatives that can drive a measurable decrease in gender pay gaps. At Dimension Data, the recruitment and current gender split now represents 30%

females, which demonstrates the results of positive action, when compared to our industry averages.

I have three children and worked with Telstra and Dimension Data at the time of having all of them. I have been extremely fortunate to have very supportive

***"I have been extremely fortunate to have very supportive bosses throughout my pregnancies that have enabled flexible models for me to work whilst pregnant."***

bosses throughout my pregnancies that have enabled flexible models for me to work whilst pregnant. Both companies have maternity leave structures that support engagement

throughout and return to work with the support required to be a working mother.

Attending important social occasions like parents' evenings and sports days are really important to me and with the support of management and the ability to work anywhere through the use of technology, I have not experienced a negative impact from being a working mother.

Global companies have workforces that are a mix of different cultures, races, lifestyles, ages, and genders. Creating a diverse and inclusive culture, where we foster innovation and embrace all our people's unique abilities is so important.

Dimension Data is a good example of a company that recognises and celebrates its people's individuality and strives to be a great place to work for all our people.

Some initiatives include leveraging the HeForShe movement, and our Leading Excellence and Accelerating Diversity (LEAD) programme, which focuses on the changing world of work and the mindsets that will be required to thrive in the

global market. It also offers female leaders the opportunity to further develop the leadership skills required to thrive as women at senior levels in the organisation. Each year we send between five and seven senior leaders to the four-day event in Switzerland.

***"Culture change comes from concrete changes in leadership behaviour – what they do, who they hire, who they listen to, how they spend their time, what they measure and how they invest."***

We have company wide development programmes for those early in their career to advanced leaders. Our teams and diversity champions proactively engage in STEM initiatives, Women in Tech initiatives and net-working events to accelerate change. Across all of these development programmes, we ensure we have strong gender diversity in the cohorts.

We also have a group within our organisation called Inclusion@Work, which builds awareness, drives action, and maintains accountability for inclusion in all spheres in the workplace. The group's purpose is to create a diverse and inclusive environment and culture, to foster innovative thinking and career advancement.

Culture starts from the top. Culture change comes from concrete changes in leadership behaviour – what they do, who they hire, who they listen to, how they spend their time, what they measure and how they invest. The leaders of global businesses I most admire are David Thodey (ex-CEO for Telstra) and Jason Goodall (current CEO for Dimension Data) who both drive a culture of acceptance. Without a strong leader at the top, the culture will not thrive.

## **Julie's advice for people working in tech who are feeling overlooked due to their background or experience:**

// For working mums, stay in touch and stay relevant. If you are on maternity leave, continue to keep up-to-date with the industry and connected to your team. The technology industry moves so fast, so returning to work can be daunting. But with a supportive environment, you will thrive.

# // Kendall Flutey

## - Christchurch



Kendall Flutey // Co-Founder & CEO @ Banqer

**Kendall Flutey is the co-founder and CEO of Banqer, an online tool which teaches financial literacy in classrooms across New Zealand and Australia. She has been recognised by The University of Auckland as Young New Zealander of the Year 2019 and Young Māori Business Leader of the Year 2018.**

I've faced a number of challenges being heard throughout my journey, less than those who've walked before me in similar shoes, but hopefully more than those who come after me.

I was extremely fortunate that my first job in tech was at a company called Abletech, where diversity and inclusion is baked into their culture. This was a landing pad for me and has shaped my views as to what sort of employer I wanted to be. I've been supported by wonderful women in Women in Tech groups I'm a part of, as well as felt like I've had the wider Māori community behind my efforts.

*"I was extremely fortunate that my first job in tech was at a company called Abletech, where diversity and inclusion is baked into their culture."*

At times, getting a seat at the right table has been tricky, and then again ensuring my voice was heard was just as difficult. But at the same time, I've had people who have got up so I could have their "seat at the table". I personally think it comes down to deciding which "tables" you think are worth fighting for. Sometimes I've found it's been easier to create my own tables and set the example that I want to persist in the future.

Being named Young Māori Business Leader of the Year was really big for me, perhaps more on a personal level. I'm still discovering who I am, and the timing of this award was interesting - there certainly was some imposter syndrome as it's a huge honour in my

eyes. I'm just hoping I can do it justice and through the actions I take encourage our rangatahi (young people) to aim high, and not give up.

Statistics show that diverse teams perform better, but this kind of thinking has to be ingrained in your culture. I almost think that doing it

because of research is too late, you have to want to do it because it makes intrinsic sense to you. I simply try and lead by example, and keep diversity as part of my everyday thought process.

The leadership team is perhaps the most important. I'm reminded of the fact "a fish rots from the head down", and leadership has so much influence over the tone and culture of an entire team or workplace. I very much believe that people do not do what they're told, but what they see. Any leadership team wanting to improve their culture needs to become that culture they aspire to be. Demonstrate acceptance, and you'll see this mirrored back.

For a business, there is a commercial benefit to improving diversity. If you just want to build solutions for yourself, that's fine. But if your market aspirations

are bigger, then diverse thinking breeds diverse solutions, which leads to innovation, better product-market fit, and a raft of other positive business outcomes. All of these lead to stronger financial performance.

***"Statistics show that diverse teams perform better, but this kind of thinking has to be ingrained in your culture."***

## **Kendall's advice for people working in the tech industry who are feeling overlooked due to their background or experience:**

// I live by the saying "be so good they can't ignore you."

// People will overlook you, for reasons completely out of your control. The wrong age, the wrong gender, the wrong colour. This isn't fair, but it's something you can't control. What you can control is how you perform. If that's what you focus on there will come a point where people will start looking at you, despite any preconceptions they hold.

// When you get to the point of being seen, and you will, then decide whether you still want to be seen by those people. Or perhaps there might be another place in the tech industry who would accept you as you are, as well as appreciate your talent.



# // Joseph Webber

## - Adelaide



Joseph Webber // Lead Java Developer  
@ Department of Human Services.

**Joseph Webber is a Lead Java Developer for the Department of Human Services. Currently focused on Case Management solutions, he works closely with all levels of ICT providing knowledge sharing with new staff and helping executives with strategic planning.**

I have always had a passion for mathematics and science, so it is no surprise that I ended up becoming a Computer Scientist. I am sure it had a lot to do with enjoying mathematics from the age of four, I enjoyed playing with blocks and learning my times tables.

When I was thirteen I found out I had Retinitis Pigmentosa and was told I would be

blind by twenty or thirty years old. My eyesight was never good and I had night blindness, but still this news was difficult.

***“When I was thirteen I found out I had Retinitis Pigmentosa and was told I would be blind by twenty or thirty years old.”***

At this point in my life it was clear to me I would be better off thinking about university and study rather than cars and sports. Lucky I had a knack for mathematics because I was going to need any advantage I could get.

I grew up in a wonderful time for computers. Our family's first computer was an Apple Macintosh in 1986, I was six years old. I was interested in programming from five years old but it was not easy to find people that even knew how to program in the 1980's. By 1995 I became obsessed with making electronic music on my computer after seeing what a friend of mine was doing on his Amiga 1200.



My original plan was to study music and software programming at university and follow my passion for electronic music. Unfortunately, I missed out on enrolling in the music classes I wanted, so I actually ended up doing only math and computer science subjects. After my fair share of procrastinating I accepted that maybe programming software would be my best option, again I was lucky I was pretty good at computers and also had a strong interest in business application databases specifically.

I worked as a sound engineer for an Australian made arcade game and volunteered in Radio but my focus was taken away with a number of small businesses my friend and I started, we provided hosting, websites and built e-commerce solutions using PHP and MySQL.

Since graduating, I have worked for Fuji Xerox, also known as Salmat in Adelaide at the time. Even with my failing eye sight I setup letter

***“Building my career with a visual impairment has been very difficult to be honest. I have absolutely had my fair share of battles, discrimination, and judgemental behaviour and have had to accept it.”***

text with a programming language similar to C, that would get distributed by Australia Post for many of the top 200 ASX companies.

I then got a Java development job writing an environmental software package for the largest mining companies in Australia. In 2013, with the decline in mining, I moved positions and started contracting for the State Government, Department of Treasury and Finance.

By this stage, I was thirty three years old, and remember I was going to be blind by twenty or thirty. I must admit going from a permanent job to contracting was a challenge. My eyesight had become more challenging than ever before. I am now almost forty years old and get to work on the highest profile jobs in the country in the largest team of software developers in the Southern hemisphere.

Building my career with a visual impairment has been very difficult to be honest.

***“In the early days I had more trouble competing with other people that could work faster than me.”***

I have absolutely had my fair share of battles, discrimination, and judgemental behaviour and have had to accept it. I actually struggle to walk to work many mornings. I don't feel comfortable with public transport anymore and even walking around the office I need to be extra careful not to bump into

people. Job interviews are very hard when even just finding the job interview is a challenge. I find it hard to participate in training events and any work that requires lots of travel.

In the early days I had more trouble competing with other people that could work faster than me.

There are all those physical things but also the emotional side of it is a challenge too. When you lose your vision it can be easy to be emotional, it can make you grumpy, tired, upset, demotivated and can even make you an easy target for other people with emotional issues.

Support has come through a number of sources. Through the Royal Society for the Blind and the Department of Human Services I could basically get

any help I wanted. I have trialled and used many different aids from electronic magnifiers to even trialling augmented reality devices. These days all the LCD screens at work are good and I primarily use the same software I have always used, ZoomText by AiSquared. Although I would prefer a few less desks and whiteboards around work I do generally find myself comfortable at work with very few modifications.

Right now I am looking at the option to work remotely some weeks so I can see my family more often. I work a long distance away from my wife and daughter and this will make the world of difference to me. I noticed other staff that fly in and fly out have this option and there has been no hesitation to allow me to have the same opportunity when I asked.

I feel like I have made of each opportunity what I could, but I have never relied on others if I could help it. In

*“I do think the more I come to terms with my strengths and weaknesses the easier it is for people to include me.”*

general, I have felt supported, but there were certain times I did not feel supported. I do think the more I come to terms with my strengths and weaknesses the easier it is for people to include me. I am grateful for the people I work with. The people I have worked within the State and Federal Government are fantastic people always willing to support me. I have awesome friends in my workplace that will go out of their way for me and that includes all of the executives in my department.

When you work with people, the attitudes they have make all the dif-

ference. I like people that realise that I do things differently, which means some things are harder for me but some things are much easier. I like a workplace that gives me opportunities

that they thought might be too hard for me. I like workplaces that focus on teamwork, deliverables, outcomes and are not worried about preconceptions

*“I like a workplace that gives me opportunities that they thought might be too hard for me.”*

about how it could be done, or how a few people think it should be done.

A lot of what empowers people, not only people with disabilities, is attitude. Attitude can't be fixed with a magic wand. I do think there are workplaces that are better than others, these workplaces are the ones that support diversity and inclusion. I do feel at my current work if there was anything someone could do they would.

One thing I think would help businesses support those with disabilities is a focus on keeping up to date with technology and making internal networks as user friendly as possible.

It is hard in enterprise situations to always use the latest software technology but heavy reliance on virtual machines for example, being used for development can make it hard to write code for me. Also, it is hard to avoid but software that only runs on Windows can annoy me as I find the accessibility software on

Apple computers is better at home than ZoomText on Windows at work. It can't be said for all people with a vision impairment one technology is better than another it depends on the situation and person.

These days I do appreciate what a lucky person I am and what wonderful people I work with. I don't know what I would do without my career.

## **Joseph's advice for people working in tech who may feel overlooked by the background or experience:**

// What makes you successful in the tech industry is passion and knowledge. Both passion and knowledge are helped by study, even if it is an online course but preferably TAFE or University. It may not turn out to be what you thought it was but if you can persevere, it will most likely make a world of difference.

// Do not worry if you fail, or if you need to do it part-time. Do not give up, keep going back to it, keep doing a little bit at a time but never stop. Literally, even if you are doing one subject a year towards some qualification, it will help.

// For a person with a disability, having qualifications means people have to help you get a job because you are trained for it. Training gives you confidence that you can do a job and will teach you your limits.

// It pays to be somewhat realistic as being vision impaired can slow you down. Technology has its challenges, a lot of technology is fast and small and hard to see but you need to find how to leverage what technology can do to give you an edge in your career. Working in the tech industry learning how to code well will teach you how to get around any problem.

# // Mahsa Mohaghegh

## - Auckland



Mahsa Mohaghegh // Senior Lecturer @ AUT

**Mahsa Mohaghegh is a Senior Lecturer at AUT, in the School of Engineering, Computer and Mathematical Sciences. She is also the founder and director of She#, a networking and development group which encourages women in computer science, computer engineering, IT, and tech-related fields to develop academically and professionally.**

I have always had a fascination for technology, and by the time I was ready for university, I had developed a significant interest in computer engineering due to the practical challenges it offered. In 2000 I began study in computer engineering. During this time, I was the only girl in classes of 50-60 students.

After graduating, I had many opportunities in front of me to join the industry, but I chose instead to study a Master of Computer Engineering. During my Masters, I taught several Bachelor-level papers part-time, and quickly found that the ability and responsibility to share and impart skills and knowledge to others appealed to me.

After graduating my Masters, I applied to study PhD at a number of universities worldwide, and eventually chose to study at Massey University in Auckland. I graduated in 2013 with a Doctor of Philosophy in Computer Engineering, and a thesis in Natural Language Processing, a branch of Artificial Intelligence. It was during my PhD study that I took up a part-time lecturing role, and once graduating I entered academia full time.

***“Ever since I began studying technology, I was part of a minority of women in this field.”***

Ever since I began studying technology, I was part of a minority of women in this field. Even now in my role as a

lecturer, I see the same gender imbalance that I did when I was studying. Today I consistently have only 5 – 10% females in

the classes I teach. Some women manage well despite this, but the reality is that a lot of them can feel almost inferior, simply because they're part of this minority. Since I've experienced this situation myself, I understand the challenges faced by young women in this area. After an inspirational trip to Google in Sydney in 2012, I was determined to do my part to reverse this trend.

Five years ago I founded She# ([www.shesharp.co.nz](http://www.shesharp.co.nz)), a non-profit networking and learning group for high school girls, female tertiary students and women working in the tech industry. The objective of the group is to address the gender imbalance in tech, to remove virtual barriers and stereotypes, and provide equal opportunities for all genders to study tech. As a group we hold about 6-8 events each year, usually hosted at ICT companies. The events help promote STEM fields to high school girls, helping them to make contact with female role models in the industry. They show students the reality of day-to-day operations in an ICT company, what kind of people are really there (as opposed to who they might think is there by stereotype), and overall encourage young women to consider possible future study options and career paths in tech.

So far through my career, I have been very thankful to be part of organisations that value diversity, and recognise the importance of maintaining diverse teams and environment. My current workplace – AUT University – is exemplary in this regard.

For companies looking to create a more inclusive workplace, the first step is to make sure they realise the enormous benefits of having diverse and inclusive teams and working environments.

No one can really deny the evidence of the benefits that a balanced, diverse workplace brings – increased productivity and efficiency, enhanced innovation, to name a couple. It's been shown that companies with gender diverse teams constantly outperform those with gender imbalance. This is because diverse teams are more adaptable, and they have a broader spectrum of experience and mentality. There has to be an appreciation of this value to motivate steps and approaches for building a better workforce.

One step is to make a conscious effort to hire balanced teams, remembering that diversity isn't just about gender – it includes ethnicity, background, experience, and character – to name just a few.

Another step is to educate, and if necessary reshape, the culture in the business: make employees aware of unconscious bias – how to recognise it in themselves and others. Identify environments that create imposter syndrome, and educate teams about the importance of inclusion.

## **Mahsa's advice for people working in the tech industry who are feeling overlooked due to their background or experience:**

// Individuals in this situation need to take every opportunity to upskill by engaging in professional development activities, which they can then use to leverage better opportunities or promotion.

// Another vital thing to do is to find a mentor. There are numerous significant benefits of having a good mentor. There will always be times when it is necessary to ask for advice or opinion, and many times this will be regarding sensitive matters. Speaking to a trusted mentor allows individuals to confidently ask open questions, present ideas, or bring up concerns, and know that they will receive honest and unaffected answers.

// Lastly, if you are not getting the support you need to grow as a professional in your field – you need to move! Too many people waste too much time waiting for things to change, instead of being the change themselves.



# // David Tawhai-Bodsworth

## - Wellington



David Tawhai-Bodsworth // Programme Manager  
@ Te Uru Rākau

**David Tawhai-Bodsworth is a Programme Manager for Te Uru Rākau (Forestry New Zealand) within the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI). His focus is on ensuring successful project delivery across Te Uru Rākau especially in regards to customer and business facing technology initiatives. He lives in Wellington with his partner Ruth and children Taare, Ngahina and Tawhai.**

I'm a 60-year-old Māori with Australian, English and Irish decent thrown into the mix. Born in Raetihi, Aotearoa (New Zealand) in 1959, my father - an Australian and my mother - a Māori from Taranaki, uplifted the whanau (family) and took us by ship to Melbourne, Victoria in 1964 or there about.

Growing up in Australia in the 60s and 70s, a brown kid like me tended to stand out as did my mother and siblings. There was far less tolerance towards people of colour in those times. A dysfunctional family driven by alcohol fuelled increasing domestic violence towards my mother meant at some stage I disengaged from secondary education and left early without qualifications.

I subsequently worked as a panel beater/spray painter but headed to outback Australia at around age 18. By the time I met my life partner (a New Zealander) I was in an iron ore mine in Northwest, Western Australia. I had been a labourer, railway fettler on the Nullarbor Plains, mine machinery operator, truck driver and mine senior powder monkey (explosives). Prior to leaving for New Zealand in 1982 I slipped in pizza cook, cleaner and veterinary general hand.

My partner and I arrived back in New Zealand in 1982 at a time of high unemployment and both of us without qualifications or careers in mind. Encouraged and supported by my partner I enrolled at Lincoln University in 1984 joining her as an adult student.

University was a journey in itself. A steep learning curve in terms of academia but also my own enlightenment to the colonisation of Māori and subsequent land alienation, deprivation, near extinction, resilience and ongoing institutionalised racism in New Zealand. I encountered racist lecturers and students however I also encountered great lecturers. I was elected the first Lincoln University Māori Students Association President. The association became a support environment for Māori students and pakeha students that wished to connect. To give you a flavour of the times I remember we posted hui (meeting) notices around the campus only to see “Laugh now N word, KKK is bigger” graffiti’d across the notices.

I graduated with diplomas in Horticulture, Horticultural Management and a bachelor degree of Business and Commerce finance and accountancy. I had a fire burning within to advance Māori development and participated in a number of Māori trusts in Christchurch working with Māori unemployed youth. I went on to begin a career in accountancy as an auditor with Audit New Zealand based in Nelson eventually gaining my Chartered Accountant qualification.

*“I had a fire burning within to advance Māori development and participated in a number of Māori trusts in Christchurch working with Māori unemployed youth.”*

We moved to Wellington in 1994 when I became the Financial Accountant for the Māori Trust Office within Te Puni Kōkiri. I went on to deliver projects across the government sector in New Zealand and in Australia with some short stints in the private sector. 19 years and many contracts later my journey has me here in the newly formed branded business unit Te Uru Rākau (Forestry New Zealand) as a Programme Manager.

My professional career in New Zealand has spanned 27 years. Discrimination over this time has varied from subtle racism to explicit in your face racism. It’s hard to explain how this presents itself and whether it has prevented opportunities or not. I remember post University applying

for 90 accountancy roles and being interviewed for perhaps 15 and every time feeling like I didn’t quite meet the profile required.

Whether that was due to my ethnicity or age it’s hard to confirm. My university grades were excellent so it wasn’t that.

Once on a career path it became apparent that I was different to the norm among my colleagues. There were very few Māori in accounting circles or in

non- Māori government agency management roles. Pakeha managers and team leads didn’t seem to really take a Māori manager seriously.

Sensitivity was lacking, whether in a meeting of colleagues where a news item relating to a Māori having committed a crime is discussed centred on this being a “Māori problem” by the non-Māori in the room or a non-Māori colleague likening a situation being discussed to it being like “a N word in the woodpile” or jokingly complaining that “You Māori want everything handed to you on a plate”. It seemed so many loved imitating Māori street lingo you know the “hey bro broken English” lingo. I guess over time it builds up and one just deals with it and moves on.

*“As a Māori manager, I believed I had to do better than other non-Māori and that I was often being stereotyped or profiled.”*

As a Māori manager, I believed I had to do better than other non-Māori and that I was often being stereotyped or profiled. I grew a “thick skin” in regards to

subtle racism and discrimination however I would call it out when I witnessed it overtly being directed at other ethnicities, women and other minority groups.

In non-Māori government organisations during the 1990s diversity tolerance and inclusion varied. Working within predominantly IT business units there was not a lot

of support from a diversity and inclusion perspective.

At one organisation I held a Powhiri (welcome meeting) for a new Māori staff member. Most non-Māori within the IT business unit had not witnessed something Māori previously and some commented on this. Some also had little tolerance with the introduction of something Māori into their workplace.

Things moved on during the new millennium with government organisations becoming proactive in terms of diversity and inclusion. After being away in Australia from 2006 to 2011 I was blown away in my first government contract on returning to New Zealand, within a fairly conservative government agency to hear Māori waiata (song) being practiced by non-Māori as part of their weekly regular routine and the embracement of things Māori. The world had moved it seemed.

Inclusion starts with leadership. I always have a look at an organisation's senior leadership team and if what I see back is

predominantly white middle class male faces looking back at me then I wonder about diversity and inclusion in that organisation.

We must recognise subconscious bias when it comes to diversity and inclusion. Leave your subconscious bias at the door when building teams. Proactively take steps to balance and blend teams. Try to understand what a diverse balanced blended team can bring to an organisation

***“Leave your subconscious bias at the door when building teams. Proactively take steps to balance and blend teams. Try to understand what a diverse balanced blended team can bring to an organisation.”***

and incorporate that approach in your recruitment strategies throughout the organisation.

Forget the stereotypical images. A technical professional need not be the stereotypical geek. Times have changed, diversity rules amongst our young. Focus on

what advantages, what innovation, what sharing of ideas and values a blended team of diverse technical professionals could bring to the mix. Dropping one's own subconscious bias is a first step. The ability to be able to blend a mix of expertise and experience, and being given the mandate to do this is critical. Try to understand diversity and its benefits.

## David's advice for people working in the tech industry:

// Be open to diversity and inclusion. Drop your own unconscious bias and get to understand a person from a human perspective. At heart we all have basic values and principles that we all can share, find these out with your team members, embrace ones right to be different, embrace others right to their culture and be inquisitive, try and find the bridges across the gaps of diversity to the benefit of the whole.



**Leaders need to create an environment where all people feel included. Differences must be acknowledged, considered and respected in all situations. Organisations in all industries need to stay competitive, and I believe that a diverse workforce and inclusive environment is a huge advantage to any organisation.**

- Mark Nielsen



*Mark Nielsen is Talent's Asia Pacific CEO. Winner of CEO Magazine's 2018 CEO of the Year Award, Mark is a champion of inclusivity in the workplace and a supporter of The Pinnacle Foundation, which provides educational scholarships to LGBT+ youth.*

# Talent Take:

## Mark Nielsen, Australia

**Do you have any insights about diversity in the Australian market that you could share?**

In the Australian market and, anywhere in the world – diversity is good for business. Companies with a diverse workforce will have lower attrition rates, increased profitability, and a more engaged workforce. There are countless studies that back this up, and we have experienced it ourselves at Talent.

I sense some people still feel a societal stigma around them, and it makes them feel uncomfortable about being who they are at work and worried about the consequences of revealing their whole selves. I'm a big believer that being able to be authentic is critical to your success and happiness

at work. This is why embracing diversity has emerged as such an important issue in recent times, and after 20 years in Australia, it's encouraging to see the impact that business leaders can make in this area.

**Have you ever experienced difficulty or discrimination in your career?**

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, working for a large investment bank, social bias and therefore discrimination was a real thing. Being a gay man was extremely difficult and at that time I was still closeted at work. The fear of being exposed definitely impacted my ability to be the best I could, and the maximum positive impact I could have on the organisation.



**How have you been supported and/or supported other people from a diversity and inclusion perspective?**

A huge part of my role is to build a team of open, embracing and genuinely caring individuals. This is something I am passionate about.

Taking a stand on social issues is also very important for me, personally. I publicly supported the Australian Marriage Equality campaign and Talent also supported the movement at a company level - we were one of the first businesses to financially back the marriage equality campaign. It was really important to demonstrate to our clients and team that we do more than state our values, we live them and we practice what we preach!

**What advice do you have for people who may feel overlooked because of their background or experience?**

I would tell them to keep going. There are groups of people who will discriminate against you. Don't worry about them, work hard, be authentic and look for the people and the organisations that are open and encouraging. The world is a big place and it's changing for the better.

**Statistics show that diverse teams are more successful. In your opinion, what are some of the approaches businesses should be taking to build a better workforce for the future?**

Businesses must define their core values to establish what the company stands for. These values need to be bigger than what their product or service delivers – they should define the way they want to treat their people and the world they operate in.

Building a better more diverse workforce requires an organisation to not merely tolerate but embrace different races, gender identities, ages, sexual orientation, religions, and socioeconomic statuses. By recognising and embracing the benefits that diverse backgrounds, thoughts, and opinions bring to an organisation, it is strengthened.

# // Maisie Lam

## - Sydney



Maisie Lam // Head of Greenlight Operations (ANZ)  
@ Uber

**Maisie Lam is the Head of Greenlight Operations ANZ for Uber. She manages the in-person support operations for Uber across Australia, New Zealand and North Asia. The team helps to onboard driver and delivery partners onto the Uber platform and support with any other customer service issues they may have.**

My career has been a very interesting journey - more by chance than planned! I started in Heritage Management, having completed an Arts degree and post grad in Museum Management. Very quickly I realised this was going to be a personal interest rather than a profession. Not knowing what to do, I headed to London.

Once there, I needed to find a job - and did so as a software tester at an IT consultancy focused in the mobile services sector emerging at the time. I was hired for my communication and interpersonal skills rather than for technical ability (we went through SQL and UNIX training once on board). That led to a career in Telco with stints in three

different mobile start-ups, in different operational and business roles, and across Europe, Asia and Australia.

I haven't experienced any direct discrimination based on my gender, ethnicity or cultural background. However there have been times, particularly early in my career in IT, where I have been the only female in the room or the only Asian person in the room (particularly when I was working in Europe). When I was younger, it made me feel uncomfortable and less likely to speak up if I did not know the people in the room. Building confidence and finding my voice in unfamiliar situations was a key development focus early in my career.

***"Building confidence and finding my voice in unfamiliar situations was a key development focus early in my career."***

Mostly, I've received support from individual mentors or managers who have helped develop my career or skills, rather than be supported by organisation-wide policies. Taking accountability for my own development and progression, I actively sought out mentors within the company or externally within my professional network. I think most organisations globally are only just really starting to effectively embed policies, processes and training to foster diversity and inclusion so that it is part of everyday cultural norms rather than a 'bolt-on' process.

At Uber, we changed our recruitment strategy from targeting predominantly university students to include a range of candidates of different experiences and social-cultural backgrounds. For example, mums wanting to return to work part time, experienced customer service professionals, ex-Uber drivers. In particular, we are keen to ensure our team reflects the diversity of the driver and delivery partners whom we support on the Uber platform. I'm proud to say that our team across the region can collectively speak at least 16 different

***"I'm proud to say that our team across the region can collectively speak at least 16 different languages and is gender balanced."***

languages and is gender balanced. Diversity in thought and opinion is also important to get the best outcomes for the business and the partners we support. Creating environments where people feel safe to speak up

and taking into account different personal working styles develops a more engaged and effective team.

Cultural change across an organisation has to begin with leadership. Leaders need to demonstrate through congruent words and actions that increasing diversity across all dimensions (thought, background, gender, age, cultural) drives employee engagement and trust. A powerful message could be delaying the hiring of roles to ensure there is a balanced representation of diverse candidates in the recruitment funnel, even if there is an impact to operations by doing so.

Research shows that companies that have gender diversity across senior leadership roles and/or at the Board level, are more successful financially and for their shareholders.

Uber is actively working on increasing the diversity of the employee base through the recruitment process (broader range of candidates in funnel, diversity in the interview panels); fostering cultural change through rolling out Driving Inclusion training globally to staff; and providing support through groups set

up by employees that promotes greater understanding and inclusion of diverse groups such as Women of Uber, UberAble (Disabilities), UberPride (LGBTQ), UberEqual (socio-economic).

## **Maisie's advice for people working in tech who are feeling overlooked due to their background or experience:**

// I would say, the first step is to reach out to someone within the industry or company who doesn't fit the 'usual mould' and get them to share their career story with you. Sometimes it's uplifting to just hear how someone has managed to navigate themselves through biases and obstacles, and gain some insight.

// Seeking support from a mentor or a professional network that understands these challenges is great for both career progression and for those initial hurdles. During my time in Hong Kong, I volunteered as a mentor at The Women's Foundation which is focused on the professional development of women (including those of lower socio-economic backgrounds) across different industries. I also drew upon the support, guidance and humour from my Lean In group in Hong Kong, very much looking forward to these discussions every month.

# // Maliha Khan

## - Sydney



Maliha Khan // Product Manager

**Maliha Khan is a Product Manager with over 15 years' experience in the tech industry. After beginning her career in Pakistan, her most recent role was at a martech company as a Senior Product Manager.**

I graduated with a degree in Computer Science and shortly after started my career as a QA/test engineer at a start-up in Karachi, Pakistan. Less than a year later I was promoted to the Product Manager role because of my keen eye for detail, problem-solving, and passion to build good products. Since then I've worked with several companies through the discovery, ideation, prototyping and development of their app ideas. I moved to Sydney in late 2015 amidst its rapidly growing tech industry and have worked with two companies since then.

I've had to work extra hard to make my colleagues look beyond my

***"I was the only female manager for many years. But I managed to hold my own."***

gender and focus on my expertise, to value me as a skilled contributor. This was true more so in Pakistan, but somewhat in Sydney as well. In Folio3, with a boardroom dominated by a dozen male middle-managers, I was the only female manager for many years. But I managed to hold my own.

One of the companies I worked at was quite infamous for having a boys' club culture. Women and those who they did not work with in the past were always undervalued or kept a peg or two below others.

While I've faced gender discrimination for most of my career, I've had a lot of support for my religious beliefs.



During both my employments in Sydney, I was able to comfortably take a 10 minute break to pray in an unoccupied meeting room. It was never an issue that I needed that time or space for a personal matter.

When it comes to creating more diverse workplaces, remember that all great minds don't think alike. I'm a big believer in that. Hire people who have a different opinion than yours. Some traits are a must-have when hiring people, like attitude and respect for others. But it's okay (in fact, it's a good thing!) if they have a different opinion. Having a constructive debate forces a group to focus on the "why" rather than "what". They're forced to think through facts and remain objective. This leads to better, more innovative outcomes.

Not only is it important to hire people who are different from you, once they are hired it is important to ensure that they have an environment in which they feel com-

fortable voicing that contradictory perspective.

The leadership team creates and drives culture in a company. If they see a culture of unfair treatment because of gender, religion, ethnicity, etc., it is their responsibility to ensure that behaviour comes to a stop and not tolerated. If the leaders of a company choose to stay quiet and look the other way, to ignore

things and avoid conflict, it sends a message to bullies that it's okay to behave that way.

***"When it comes to creating more diverse workplaces, remember that all great minds don't think alike."***

## **Maliha's advice for people working in the tech industry who are feeling overlooked due to their background or experience:**

// Sometimes you just have to work a bit more, push a little harder to force people to look beyond your race, religion, and gender, and value you for your skills and contributions.

// Do not be afraid to raise your concerns (to the right forum) pointing out any discrimination you face.



# // Mina Turnbull

## - Brisbane



Mina Turnbull // Software Engineer @ Virgin Australia

**Mina Turnbull is a Software Engineer at Virgin Australia and a member of the Virgin Australia Pride Network. The founder of Transparency Australia, Mina is focused on supporting transgender youth through a number of programs, internships and sponsorships.**

As a child I never dreamed of being a man.

When puberty hit, it didn't feel right. I knew I wasn't who I was meant to be but through fear, I hid that part of myself. I didn't know what trans was, I had no personal exposure to it and from what I saw trans people were the subject of joke and ridicule.

As an adult, I took on a lot of ultra-masculine behaviours to pass in society. I was hyper critical of behaviour to ensure I stayed under the radar. At my manliest I had a beard, muscles, I was a father and husband, but I was also my saddest. I couldn't look at myself in the mirror. I had Gender Dysphoria and I felt I couldn't tell anyone.

I came out as trans in June 2017, started hormone replacement therapy in October of that year and I can say that I am finally living as my authentic self. It was at a cost though. I've lost friends, family, I've faced

discrimination, marriage breakdown, homelessness but through that I've not only survived, but thrived! I am a strong, proud, and confident transwoman.

While I haven't experienced discrimination in my current role at Virgin Australia, sadly I have indeed faced judgement in my earlier career whilst being a trans-person.

I've had recruiters hang up on me after I explained why my name had changed. I've been the subject of jokes by colleagues. I found I've had to work harder as a woman to be respected whereas it was easier as a male. I've faced sexual harassment. But I address all these things directly. I'm trying to educate through positive means.

I was fortunate that when I came out I was working at a Government Department, the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Association. They had never

had a trans-person as an employee so prior to transitioning I worked with their human resources to ensure that the

process was comfortable for everyone involved. I initially refused to use the ladies or men's toilets because I didn't want them to experience discomfort I worked with the organisation to promote acceptance and understanding, and since I transitioned another two trans-people have been employed there. I truly commend them.

Organisations can better support their LGBTI staff via providing exposure to diversity, by engaging with the community as a whole. I'm talking about having a presence in LGBTI events, women's events, indigenous events etc. Based on personal experience being trans there is strong benefit to policy around bathrooms, whether they will be gender-neutral bathrooms (which isn't a new concept, see plane bathrooms), whether they have male and female bathrooms but also unisex on the floor. This will alleviate anxiety and stress for trans and cisgender people alike.

I am of the view that every employee of an organisation can be influential on an organisation's culture and driving positive change, but, for this to work, employees need to be empowered by the organisation. It is the responsibility of leaders to enable this empowerment. Without it, the culture will remain as per the status quo,

***“since I transitioned another two trans-people have been employed there. I truly commend them.”***

which reminds me of Ronald Reagan's quote: “status quo, you know, is latin for the mess we're in.”

I would advise employers that it is their duty to be proactive in ensuring that a person is not overlooked on discriminatory grounds and actively look towards inclusion. A study published in 2017 highlighted that women make up only 16% of Australia's STEM fields, and that's without considering race, gender-identity etc.

Virgin Australia has a number of initiatives which focus on improving diversity and inclusion. Our strategy is focused on three primary objectives: an inclusive and representative workforce at all levels of the organisation; visible leadership and sustained commitment to fostering an inclusive culture free from unlawful discrimination, sexual harassment, workplace bullying or victimisation; and support for team members with differing needs as a result of their caring responsibilities.

The Virgin Australia Group Pride Network, of which I am a member, involves a committee of team members from across the country, coming together to share information, raise awareness and ideas and build community engagement. The peer support network provides a platform for team members to come together and support each other.

There are also wonderful organisations such as Muses JS which are actively working on raising diversity in STEM by holding JavaScript and Node.js workshops for women, non-binary and trans folk around Australia.

## **Mina's advice for people working in the tech industry who are feeling overlooked due to their background or experience:**

// I can't comment globally, but I can advise that in Australia, national and state laws cover equal employment opportunity and anti-discrimination in the workplace. If you feel you are a subject of discrimination, I advise you to seek Legal Advice.

// There are also a number of services that provide free legal assistance for LGBTI+ people, and those financially underprivileged

# // Sapna Saxena

## - Singapore



Sapna Saxena // Senior Director HR APAC  
@ Tableau Software

**Sapna Saxena is Senior Director HR APAC for Tableau Software, which produces interactive data visualization products focused on business intelligence. Prior to this she was HR Director for PayPal APAC.**

Early in my career, I was very fortunate to find very strong sponsorship and mentorship. My sponsors and mentors were both women and men who provided timely guidance, constructive criticism and helped me expand my network to execute in a smart and focused way.

They were my go-to people when I faced challenges, they were the people who were my advocates/champions in a visible way – out in front and behind-the-scenes. They had skin in the game when it came to my development, and I always relied on them to define the way forward and shape my leadership journey.

Throughout my career, I have had the privilege of working for a number of

companies where I had a seat at the table and could speak up freely – where diversity of thought was celebrated.

While I have had my fair share of challenges operating as a female leader in Asia, these challenges have helped me grow as a leader and be a role model for the next generation of women. When

***“While I have had my fair share of challenges operating as a female leader in Asia, these challenges have helped me grow as a leader and be a role model for the next generation of women.”***

I reflect on my years of experience, I absolutely feel that the last few years have been a turning point where diversity and inclusion is now top of mind

for many companies. Today, people think about what diversity means in a whole different light. I’m grateful for the direction we are heading.

There's a lack of women in technology around the world and this creates an opportunity for all of us – women and men – to create a more balanced and diverse tech sector.

What motivates me as an HR leader is the ability to create a meaningful impact for both Tableau's business and our employees.

Singapore is a vibrant place and thus I always find a great balance at the manager level and below in terms of gender balance. However, the moment we go a level above it, the decline is sharp. Thus there is a big opportunity to grow female talent – as a community – so that we can create a robust pipeline of talent. This is not just for Tableau but as a community of leadership across the sectors.

We value a diverse workforce at Tableau. We believe that having diverse teams helps us better serve our customers around the world who come from a wide variety of backgrounds and ethnicities. Also, diverse teams bring different perspectives that enable us to make better decisions, be more inclusive in our thinking and actions, and attract world-class talent to drive innovation that delights Tableau customers. With 4,100+ employees across the globe

***“There's a lack of women in technology around the world and this creates an opportunity for all of us.”***

we are able to cultivate a broad mix of employees that bring highly diverse backgrounds ranging from culture and mindset to age, experience, gender and ethnicity. It is this

rich tapestry of talent that makes our differences a competitive asset.

I cannot emphasise enough how important the leadership team is in creating a culture of acceptance. I am a strong believer of “fishbowl” phenomenon. When you are representing the leadership team, every action is seen and heard by several others. As leaders we are all role models and how you show up day to day is critical in setting the tone for the entire organisation.

At a regional level, the regional leadership team takes a very active role in creating a culture of inclusion and acceptance. Asia-Pacific is a complex region, we have a wide spectrum of cultures and beliefs that make operating in this region unique. Some countries deal with gender issues in a very different way than others in the Asia-Pacific region due to the history and traditions.

## **Sapna's advice for people working in the tech industry who are feeling overlooked due to their background or experience:**

// My number one piece of advice is to build a network of support – people who you can turn to for advice and guidance. Identify a diverse set of people that you can collaborate with and learn from. Your network will enable you to keep going even when the work is challenging.

// Second, I advise people in tech to constantly learn and grow – challenge yourself to think differently and try new things. Don't be shy, ask for help and leverage your network. We all need that support, we all need that encouragement.

// Third, embrace failure and rejection and learn from them.

// My final piece of advice is to never give up on being your true self. If you give up and pretend to be somebody else you will never be at home with yourself. Our identity is defined by our values and the actions we take. This will ultimately result in the brand we create for ourselves and the legacy we leave behind.



# // Stuart B Cameron

## - Berlin



Stuart B Cameron // Founder & CEO  
@ UHLALA Group

**Stuart B Cameron is the founder and CEO of the UHLALA Group, one of the leading LGBT+ Social Businesses in Germany. With brands and projects such as STICKS & STONES, UNICORNS IN TECH and PANDA, the UHLALA Group works to connect, further educate and empower LGBT+ People worldwide in their working life and to bring them together with LGBT+ friendly companies and organisations.**

I started my company because I wanted to find out which companies are open and truly inclusive of people who are LGBT+. When I started, there was no place online or offline to find this information about potential employers. This has changed a lot in the last 10 years, and we helped to make this change happen a bit faster.

In over 70 countries it is still illegal to be openly gay and there are currently eight countries in the world in which homosexuality is punishable by death, as in Iran or

***“In over 70 countries it is still illegal to be openly gay and there are currently eight countries in the world in which homosexuality is punishable by death.”***

Saudi Arabia. But in more progressive regions of the world you also face challenges as an openly LGBT+ person. In the USA for example, you can get fired in 30 states just for being gay or trans. However, on the bright side every year the conditions and regularities improve and the global LGBT+ leadership community

is growing, getting connected and is making an impact on society, politics & the economy.

In my career, it was only in my last job where I could be open and tell the



truth about who I was. This was the best time I ever had working for a company which was not mine. Being able to be yourself at work and not to hide is the best feeling and makes you faster and better at work. Only people who have been in the closet can understand that completely. Next to having a great time and becoming a better employee, I was getting much more confident to start my own company and trust in my abilities.

There are more than 100 things you can do in your company to be more open and inclusive not only for LGBT+ but for everyone e.g. you can participate in Pride events with your company, work on your company culture, update your company policy, get certified as an LGBT+ friendly company and of course host UNICORNS IN TECH in your company - the largest LGBT+ Tech Community in Germany.

Businesses need to walk the talk! Almost every company these

days is saying that they are open and welcome but most of the time this is not completely true. If you really are an open company, then show it and prove it.

A good opportunity therefore would be the PRIDE 500 Seal - the Employer Seal for LGBT+ Diversity Champions in Germany. Employers take part in an audit focused on LGBT+ diversity management through which processes, requirements and company regulations are examined.

The best and most successful companies around the world - which don't have a monopoly position - are taking diversity very seriously and investing millions in this topic. Most startups don't care about diversity and inclusion at the beginning. They say we

will do it later when we have more "resources". But by then it might be too late.

You already created a company culture which is very

***"If you really are an open company, then show it and prove it."***



difficult to change. Startups have the best chance to be very successful when they take diversity and inclusion seriously right from the start.

Leadership is not only important – it is vital. It has been shown that employees work more efficiently when they feel comfortable. Therefore, it is

nice to offer them offices with sport facilities, slides or similar options, like Google or Facebook do but the most important for the employees' motivation is appreciation for their commitment and work.



### **Stuart's advice for people working in the tech industry who are feeling overlooked due to their background or experience:**

// **Change your job.** There are companies and organisations out there that will care about you. Do not hide yourself or who you are. Why should you work for a company which does not appreciate you? Our motto at STICKS & STONES this year sums it up pretty well "work where you are celebrated, not where you are tolerated."



**You're who you are, and that's okay - be proud of what makes you different! Too many people focus on what they can't do and beat themselves up, but don't focus enough on their strengths. That's the beauty of diversity: everyone brings different skills to the table.**

- James Davies



*James Davies is Regional Director of Talent's Manchester office. Around the age of eight, he was diagnosed with dyslexia. He talks about his experience with the learning difficulty and the ways tech companies can better support employees with different learning styles.*

# Talent Take:

## James Davies, UK

### What is your perspective on the current state of diversity in tech in the UK?

In general, the tech industry has a little way to go to when it comes to diversity and inclusion. That's something that has to change. In my opinion, there isn't enough being done at the entry level. Tech companies should work with schools or offer work placements to open doors for young people from all backgrounds. Making sure we create a pipeline of talented, diverse individuals ready to enter the workforce would allow for more diversity in our industry from the get-go.

### Have you ever experienced difficulty or discrimination in your career?

While I haven't experienced direct discrimination, I've definitely struggled in my career because of my dyslexia. A lot of my work requires written communication, and it often takes me three to four

times as long to do these tasks than other people. Because of this, I often find myself avoiding these tasks to spare myself the stress.

My first few years in recruitment were especially tough. The early support of my manager was crucial: rather than see dyslexia as something that was negative, he put processes in place to support it, which allowed me to play to my strengths. It helped me take ownership of my dyslexia and not see it as a weakness. In fact, I was proud of it - and it hasn't stopped me getting to where I am now.

### Have you ever had to work with a client who was displaying bias in their recruitment process? How do you overcome that?

Yes, unfortunately, back in the day it used to be very evident. I'd regularly get asked how old candidates were, or whether they had children, etc. As times have moved on,

it's not as prevalent, but I do still think there is a lot of unconscious bias driving people's decisions of who to hire. It's especially apparent when it comes to a candidate's educational background. I've had clients who said they'd only hire people from red brick universities, for example.

At Talent, our clients are partners, and that means sometimes challenging their opinions and working with them to tackle a lack of diversity in their workforce. What I usually try to do is talk to them about the importance of bringing new ideas into their business, which will in turn allow them to keep pushing forward and grow.

**Statistics show that diverse teams are more successful. In your opinion, what are some of the approaches businesses should be taking to build a better workforce for the future?**

We need to cultivate and promote a culture of acceptance for all differences, and put measures in place to support all employees. Instead of focusing on what employees can't do, organisations should focus on their strengths and empower them to work in a way that suits them. People can still have great talent and bring so much value to a company, but they might just work in a different way from everyone else!

I personally think tech companies are missing a massive trick when it comes to working parents, especially mums. By not putting enough measures to support flexible or part-time work, they're missing out on a highly skilled workforce that is really driven and could bring so much to the table.

**What advice do you have for people who may be facing unique challenges at work?**

You need to understand what makes you unique, and what you're good at. Focus on your strengths rather than your weaknesses, and don't listen to other people if they say you can't do something - especially when it comes to different learning styles. Focus on improving the bits you can improve, not the bits you can't.

Also, for anyone with dyslexia or any other issue preventing them from working to the best of their ability, don't be afraid to ask for help. If those requests fall on deaf ears, it's time to find yourself a company that puts you first.



# // Tim Koehler

## - Perth



*Tim Koehler // Innovation Specialist*

**Tim Koehler is currently working as an Innovation Specialist for a major mining company. Employed lately on short contracts as a technical writer, Tim has over 40 years' experience in the mining sector and has held roles in several countries around the world.**

I have had a career in the mining sector. During and after my university studies in geology, I spent about 12 years in mineral exploration and resource evaluation in Canada and Western Australia, finishing as Mine Manager for two mines. During a downturn, I moved into designing and delivering technical training for mine managers, mine surveyors, plant operators and field hands in the Western Australian Technical and Further Education system (WA TAFE).

Next were three years as senior geologist for a large mine, with complex, low grade ore, strict environmental constraints, and a complex mix of mining methods by in-house and contract teams. With 120 ore characteristics, and low overall grade, maintaining optimum feed to three complex plants was critical.

After the GFC, I changed course again, and as specialist technical writer, wrote and

supervised complex feasibility studies and EPCMs for major mining companies, in Australia, Cameroon and Tanzania.

The next step was as Senior Geologist, Resource Evaluation, revising field procedures for resource evaluation geologists with one of the major mining companies. Another downturn, and I was over to the feasibility studies on short term contracts.

Then I was head-hunted for a major porphyry copper project in Kazakhstan, as Training Manager and part time Commissioning Manager for the \$2.2B project, with a construction workforce of 3,500. The price of copper fell, and I was back in Australia, on a series of short term (1 to 6 month) contracts as specialist technical writer, geotechnical engineer or specialist innovation. Hopefully, my current contract in Agile mining app development, will lead to a more permanent position.

I haven't experienced any direct discrimination, however several periods of two or three months looking for a new job in a time of improving employment levels, indicate that my age is not assisting me.

People are very careful about the reasons for not "progressing" you in the "selection process". The only feedback I have ever had was along the lines of "we had so many excellent candidates, and the person we chose was closer to our specific requirements in skills and experience." This is a piece of "boiler plate text" that can be deployed with a single key stroke.

There have been times when I have received gestures that could relate to my age and experience. I have noticed that professionals (particularly metallurgists or supervisors) in Kazakhstan and Africa, would realise from talking to me that they could consult with me for a "second opinion". Although experts in their field, they would confer with me when they had issues outside their experience.

In other cases, I was included in meetings with national organisations responsible for railways, safety, training or mining regulation, partly for my managerial level and partly

for my age, both of which added "gravitas" or weight to the emphasis the company was putting on the negotiations.

Training on-the-job is key for support of any employee. It is sometimes thought that the older employees do not need as much training because they already know the stuff, they are not going to last very long, and it is uneconomic to train them. These arguments are weak. The older employee is likely to need different training, or updates in particular disciplines. The older employee is likely to stay longer with an employer than a younger employee.

***"The older employee is likely to stay longer with an employer than a younger employee."***

Businesses should certainly consider having some older people in their workforce. People with a sparkle in their eyes, interest in new ideas and innovation, and a history of applying their knowledge and experience to solve problems and make money are the ones to seek out. A good representation of these benefits was displayed in the 2015 film "The Intern". Robert De Niro plays a 70-year-old retired manager, joining a growing online fashion house start-up.

## **Tim's advice for people working in tech who may feel overlooked due to their background or experience:**

// Join groups that incubate start-ups and run hackathons (Unearthed, Ministry of Data, Spacecubed, Flux, Core are some I work with in Perth). You can network, keep abreast of developments in technology and add your expertise to teams made up mostly of younger people. If you have a day job, many of the events are in the evenings and on weekends. When unemployed they are a very good place to network. They often have shared office space that you can rent cheaply to have a presence daily or weekly in the CBD.

// Join support groups for particular apps. Although many of their meetings cover higher level use of the apps, they will also run introductory courses and workshops. Unless you have used fairly recent versions of apps, you cannot expect to become an expert unless you can use them daily. However, you can at least gain an appreciation of their capabilities in these short courses. There will usually be a good supply of mostly younger users and developers. The older workers are more useful as managers, planners and marketers.

// Apply for jobs in tech companies in your own discipline - management, accounting, finance, engineering, science, geology, technical writing, marketing, sales or trades. They will be looking for some more experienced people with these specialties. You can pick up the tech as you go.

# // Nick Whitehouse

## - Auckland



Nick Whitehouse // Co-Founder & CEO  
@ McCarthyFinch

**Nick Whitehouse is the co-founder and CEO of McCarthyFinch, a highly advanced legal AI platform changing how law works. He was recognised as Best Tech Leader at the Talent Unleashed Awards, as judged by Sir Richard Branson and Steve Wozniak.**

I grew up in Porirua, one of the poorest and most violent areas in New Zealand (at the time). Crime, drugs and gang violence were very common. Success in life looked like staying off the streets. We couldn't

afford a computer growing up, so at the age of eight I started scavenging parts to build my own, then I started writing my own games. At 11, I was selected as one of the first

New Zealanders to get access to the internet through a programme at my school - I immediately started skipping classes to explore the endless knowledge available on the

web. At 16, I was wagging college to sneak into university lectures. I found school too slow, formulaic and uninspiring. I rebelled against the system because I never really fit into the system.

***"Success in life looked like staying off the streets. We couldn't afford a computer growing up, so at the age of eight I started scavenging parts to build my own."***

Needless to say, I didn't do amazing things academically! My entire career has been centered on disruption. I was drawn to work in industries that were

being disrupted, I was intrigued by the challenge disruption brought about, the discomfort and mainly how it forced change to systems that hadn't changed for a long time.

My recent career experience in law is where I found the most resistance to change and the greatest intolerance of diversity. It's an industry steeped in both meaningful and irrelevant tradition, with the latter stubbornly defended. Where the majority of lawyers in firms are female but the majority of Partners are white and male. Where the perspectives of those who are different are alien, and considered inconsequential, where the entire system, from education to practice, is geared towards maintaining the status quo. Far more concerning is how this lack of diversity plays out in the justice system. 650,000 Australians and New Zealanders are denied access to justice every year. Cost, complexity, language and the innate and ingrained intimidation of the system are all elements that exclude people, particularly minorities, from access to justice.

I'm now onto my fourth career, and I am specifically working to disrupt the legal industry, to change how law works and ultimately improve access to justice. We are unashamedly commercial because this is the most effective way of disrupting the status quo.

Make no mistake, my success has been, in part, the result of privilege. Despite any hardship I've faced, at the end of the day, I am a white male and this has afforded me a level of tolerance, acceptance and ease that I've rarely seen extended to women or minorities. I know that I wouldn't have been able to push people as hard as I have, been as trusted, listened to, or had as many doors opened for me if I were not a white male. I think the first step to real diversity is becoming aware of your own privilege, irrespective of how confronting that can be. Once you do this, you will see how insidious inequality can be.

I'm not a fan of relying on policy to influence culture, the more you prescribe things, the less people think for themselves, diversity should be conscious and natural, not a set of rules people must follow, so it must be more than policy.

"Naku te rourou nau te rourou ka ora ai te iwi" means with your basket and my basket the people live. This proverb signifies the

***"Diversity should be conscious and natural, not a set of rules people must follow."***

importance of working together. 85% of McCarthyFinch people were born outside of New Zealand, we are 44% female, all our journeys have been vastly different, by bringing diverse people together, we are a far more successful business, we are far more adaptable, much more disruptive and more representative of the world around us.

All industries will be disrupted at some stage, this disruption is accelerating and the advent of automation will impact all of us. There is no qualification for adaptability, but adaptability is a core skill that all people need to learn if they are to have successful careers. I look at diversity and the acceptance thereof as a foundation of adaptability.

75% of the companies in S&P 500 are expected to disappear over the next nine years, a business's ability to adapt will be the difference between them staying relevant or becoming irrelevant. Countless studies have proven that diverse teams are more innovative than homogenous teams, it should be obvious to businesses by now that diversity is critical to their long term survival.



At McCarthyFinch, we purposely seek difference and other ways of thinking. Unless you actively seek diversity you are complicity maintaining a lack of diversity. Confirmation bias and unconscious bias mean people are more likely to hire those who are similar to them, breaking these biases has to be deliberate. It's been easy for tech companies to say it's hard to find female engineers for example, but what are they actually doing about it?

We've worked hard on diversity and making our environment inclusive, and I don't expect this work to end. Yet simple things can make a big difference. Never hiring for a role unless you see a diverse candidate pool creates opportunity to find and support difference. Not having Friday night "drinks" and limiting alcohol at social events restricts the creation of "boys clubs" or "in-groups" and allows those who are shy, or don't drink to participate. Celebrating people's difference and letting them share their stories builds

***"We've worked hard on diversity and making our environment inclusive, and I don't expect this work to end."***

inclusiveness, sharing leadership with others helps break down innately privileged hierarchies. But ultimately, being open to listen to the needs of your people (be it prayer rooms, flexible hours for mothers or fathers, leave for religious holidays, accessible facilities, the removal of pronouns in internal comms etc) and making these changes quickly builds confidence in your support of diversity amongst people.

One of the things we do that best represents our approach to diversity has been our internship and development programme. Over the last two years, we've brought on 20 diverse students and placed 12 of them into roles. We've worked closely with student organisations to attract people and create roles which don't exist today. I refer to this as building the future with the future. Law firms look for students with top grades, who look and talk like them. We look for curiosity, diligence, and passion. Our students

***"Over the last two years, we've brought on 20 diverse students and placed 12 of them into roles."***

have often been overlooked by top law firms, for nothing more than the fact that they don't "fit with the firm's culture". It's arguable as to what that phrase means, but more often than not, those who are affected by "not fitting in with the firm's culture" are minorities. This is incredibly discouraging, but in many ways, I am glad our students choose us and not law firms. We're inclusive, we don't expect people to look or act a certain way, we offer challenging work and the development of skills that transcend the legal domain. In the end, it's entirely the law firm's loss not bringing on these students, who are adaptable, incredibly good at problem solving, self-sufficient and not afraid of big challenges. In the end, I believe our thesis of diversity will win out over the thesis of "cultural fit".

Leadership is critical in fostering and creating acceptance of diversity. Sadly, at both the executive level and board levels, there is a severe lack of diversity. In NZ, in our top companies, there are more CEOs named John than



Female CEOs. Women make up just 24% of NZ Boards. Hardly representative, and definitely not diverse. How can we expect diversity to be accepted in businesses when most business leaders are white males? Myself included.

## **Nick's advice for people working in the tech industry who are feeling overlooked due to their background or experience:**

// Whāia te iti kahurangi ki te tūohu koe me he maunga teitei means “Seek the treasure you value most dearly; if you bow your head, let it be to a lofty mountain”. The idea being that you should aim high and for what you truly believe in, be persistent and don't let obstacles deter you. There are many small and narrow minded people in positions of power and these people can be incredible obstacles in your way, they can also be detrimental to your wellbeing. Always remember you have worth and that your job should never make you question this, you should always err on the side of your wellbeing, unfortunately it's rare for narrow minded individuals or for cultures to change quickly.

// You, and only you, own your purpose and your purpose is not the job you have, it is what inspires you, what gets you out of bed in the morning, what balances your life. If you haven't found your purpose yet, start there, think long and hard about your purpose, get wider than just your job. Let your purpose guide you, not your job or your qualifications. Understand what your lofty mountain is.

// Next, and most importantly find mentors. Mentors help you reflect on where you can improve, identify opportunities for career growth, and support you through difficult situations. If you can articulate your purpose, you will spark excitement in others, and you will find people who want to invest their time in you. In my personal experience, it hasn't been the jobs or qualifications on my CV that have made the difference in my career, it's been the mentors I've had.

// Finally, do things explicitly. Don't be afraid to work your ass off, do extra work or solve a problem for someone if it gets you noticed but make sure you're doing so explicitly. I have seen so many people work themselves to exhaustion trying to get noticed and failing. The simple fact is, even in a perfect world, people don't notice solved problems unless you tell them, and people definitely don't know what you want unless you tell them. I know how hard it can be, but force these conversations, even if for your own sanity.

# // Troi Ilsley

## - Melbourne



Troi Ilsley // Graduate User Experience Designer  
@ Isobar

**Troi Ilsley is a Graduate User Experience Designer at global digital agency Isobar. In addition to creating products that provide users with meaningful experiences, Troi is an artist and Aboriginal Youth activist.**

I was born in Bendigo, a rural city in the centre of Victoria. After completing high school, I moved to Melbourne, where I connected with Talent RISE.

They were looking for applicants for the Founding Futures Scholarship, which is a collaboration between Isobar and Academy Xi to fund a UX course for one Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. I ultimately was awarded the scholarship, graduated from the UX course and was offered a graduate position at Isobar.

Transitioning from a grassroots environment into an agency setting was a challenge. Coming from a community and hospitality background, entering the UX field was daunting, mostly because initially I didn't see my own people in

similar roles as me. I went from an environment where I saw my people every day to seeing none within the workplace and it made me feel out of place.

I was fortunate enough to get in contact with a great company that focussed on my skills, potential, willingness to learn and my motivation to contribute to the workplace's culture. Seeing the lack of First Nations people within my career made me motivated to empower the younger generations to strive for careers that are outside of their comfort zone.

After receiving some unintentional culturally insensitive comments early in my career, I am driven to make these spaces more culturally aware and safe for First Nations people. I want them to feel com-

***"Seeing the lack of First Nations people within my career made me motivated to empower the younger generations."***

comfortable within the space and know that they don't have to worry about dealing with those uncomfortable comments or questions.

Getting a first opportunity can be quite difficult for young people without career experience. Being young and not having enough work experience are common worries that young people face and stress over when applying for roles.

Talent RISE and Academy Xi were important players in kick-starting my career. RISE created that initial spark. They saw my potential and encouraged me to take the dive into UX. RISE provided me with the training and support to make sure I wouldn't fail. I was supported through the interview processes, my study and the transition into my new role. With my young age, Talent RISE took great care to make sure that I was coping well and they made spaces less daunting for me.

Besides giving me UX knowledge, Academy Xi played a great supportive role. Xi supported my goals in being an advocate for my people throughout my UX career and they actively listened to my suggestions. This gave me the confidence to continue my advocacy within my workplace. I used to worry that my age would somehow translate to a lack of ability. Xi empowered me to embrace my young age and to not view it as a disadvantage.

To make a better workplace, hiring managers should look at their current representation and see if it's balanced. Consider how your workplace can be more welcoming to different cultures. When recruiting a young person, focus on their skills and eagerness to grow rather than their work experience, there are a lot of gems out there!

Personally, I believe that companies can better support Indigenous employees by attending cultural training. Cultural training will educate the workplace of Indigenous history, our days of celebration and what can be offensive. This will ensure that the workplace is more culturally aware, therefore making it a safe space for Indigenous people.

Other forms of support from a company could come from beginning the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) journey and setting up initiatives and strategies to build relationships and create opportunities for Indigenous people. Knowing that your company is supporting the national reconciliation movement, and working to increase the representation of Indigenous people would be highly valued by my people. Simple things like displaying some authentic Indigenous art in the workplace would also be a supportive gesture.

## **Troi's advice for people working in the tech industry who are feeling overlooked due to their background or experience:**

// For people who are having a hard time getting started, don't freak out. Continue to work on building your skillsets and portfolio while keeping a positive mindset.

// Start investing time into developing your network. Make a LinkedIn profile, get in contact with people in your field and ask for advice or feedback.

// Attend as many industry meetups as you can. This is a great way to meet professionals in a more comfortable environment and gain more knowledge.

// Lastly, if you get rejected, ask for feedback and stay eager to learn!

# // Molly Thompson

## - Birmingham



*Molly Thompson // Community  
Engagement Officer @ Silicon Canal*

**Molly Thompson is the Community Engagement Officer for Silicon Canal. She connects, supports and promotes individuals and companies in the tech community, from start-ups and freelancers to SME's and multinationals, with the aim of making the West Midlands the very best region for people living and working in technology.**

I was always interested in core STEM subjects from school age. I chose engineering, science and IT for my GCSE. When I left school, I started an apprenticeship with Birmingham Science Park (now known as Innovation Birmingham) in business, and in doing so established a passion and enthusiasm for helping technology companies. I then went on to work in various marketing roles and now I am helping technology companies through Silicon Canal.

I started my journey in tech at the age of 16, so have always had a massive interest in diversity and inclusion. Being a young individual working to help technology companies grow meant that I could offer a different perspective on how these businesses did things, processes and audiences.

I have always had the pleasure of being included in lots of different conversations within the workplace. Being the youngest member of the team at most places I have worked, I have been able to offer different opinions to my colleagues. I feel these opinions have always been valued.

Since starting at Silicon Canal, I have also had the opportunity to join a number of working groups focused on diversity and inclusion, including women in tech and BAME in tech. Having an active role in these working groups has given me the chance to broaden my views and opinions on diversity and inclusion. With those views in mind, I have helped businesses change or update processes within their companies.



Listening to people's first-hand experiences of diversity in the tech industry has always been of interest to me. There are some great examples of companies working in the West Midlands region who have been able to grow as a result of having different skills and backgrounds, working together to be more effective and efficient.

One way in which I think tech companies can support people in tech, is by giving them a platform to promote role models in their organisation.

These role models should be from different backgrounds, ages, ethnicities etc, to show individuals joining the company that there are clear progression routes.

Another way that organisations can support women in tech, is similar to a mentor/buddy system, having someone they can reach out to and talk to. Regular check ins or catch ups, a safe space they can go to reflect and pairing up individuals with someone that they can talk to in confidence can all make a massive difference.

Marketing is also really important for tech companies - being careful not to use stereotypical images in marketing, changing wording to feel more inclusive. I personally

don't agree with positive discrimination. I believe it starts with looking at hiring processes, ensuring that when you write a job description that it is written using gender neutral language.

I have had some instances where I have been turned down for a promotion or job due to my age, I distinctly remember one employer asking my age in an interview before turning me down for a promotion. This not only hurt my confidence but also meant I didn't feel qualified for doing

other jobs in the same bracket.

Companies should also look at their working environment, ensuring that everyone feels comfortable,

no-one is made to feel that they should act a certain way to fit into team. Look at different benefits that could be offered to their team, such as working from home, maternity and paternity leave, offer diversity training, and acknowledge holidays of all cultures.

***"Companies should also look at their working environment, ensuring that everyone feels comfortable, no-one is made to feel that they should act a certain way to fit into team."***

## **Molly's advice for people working in tech who may feel overlooked due to their background or experience:**

// Join some awesome meetups in the area to get a feel for the industry. From my experience, women in tech groups give a great sense of community.

// Look for role models or mentors in the specific tech you want to get into, these people are fantastic at showing you what's there to aspire to. Work experience is also great, this will help you with jobs later on and help you decide on the type of work you might want to do in the future.

// Look into the type of roles you would like to apply for, identify your strengths and areas for development, try to think about strategies for the latter to help you advance in your career.



# Troy Roderick

## An expert's reflection

- Why real inclusion is not 'set and forget'



*Troy Roderick // Diversity & Inclusion Specialist*

**Troy Roderick has specialised in Diversity & Inclusion for more than 20 years, achieving national and global recognition for his impactful and original work across both corporate and public sector organisations. Most recently, Troy led Telstra's global Diversity & Inclusion function for more than 10 years. This work included ground-breaking initiatives on flexible working, inclusive leadership, gender equality, Indigenous employment, and workplace responses to domestic and family violence.**

**In 2015 and 2016, Troy was recognised in the "Top 50 diversity professionals in industry" in the Global Diversity List, supported by The Economist.**

**Troy shares his reflections on the stories included in this book, and insights from a career dedicated to building inclusive workplaces.**

What I find most compelling about stories of difference is not so much that they can be inspiring, though they often are; not that they give an insight into the damage of discrimination, though they can do; not that for each one there will be countless more that are similar – what is most compelling is the fact that, in these profiles, side-by-side with the ever-present nature of diversity is the important presence of intentional inclusion. The active and deliberate efforts of leaders and colleagues, and the conditions around them that enable inclusion is what brings these stories to life.

It shows us all that being inclusive is not a "set and forget" exercise. The profiles in this collection, "Human", loudly remind us of this.

When I began working in the area of diversity and inclusion 25 years ago – addressing sexual harassment in workplaces (and yet here we still are) – the work seemed very fringe. Despite the collective, revolutionary work of many, particularly in gender equality in the seventies and eighties, making discrimination illegal, workplaces were doing little to proactively design for and enable inclusion.

The topic was rarely discussed and had limited profile. Fast forward to the second decade of the twenty-first century and there's barely a day that passes without public comment on diversity – gender equality, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, faith, class, disability – by a politician, business leader, brand, politician, advocacy organisation, a celebrity influencer.

And increasingly we all have a view too. Social media has fuelled a range of views and actions in a way that has raised consciousness and brought unprecedented profile to the issues of what it takes to be more diverse and inclusive. “The conversation” is alive and well, but we know that it takes more than just talk or a tweet.

The current state on so many dimensions of diversity shows persistent gaps in access, opportunity, equity, safety, representation, voice and visibility. In many ways, power and privilege remains monocultural, gendered, ageist and lacking in a rich variety of ideas that we know is a core ingredient of innovation and healthy, optimistic disruption. The profiles shared here talk to this – the barriers that can be in the way and how they are overcome. They

also talk to the power of inclusion, and efforts of leaders to create an experience of belonging, to value each person's uniqueness and to create psychological safety to speak up and take risks. Such leaders bring the best out of diverse talent.

Their efforts mean that the one who feels different, who might feel they'll be marginalised for being who they are, can step forward with confidence and bring all their talents and perspectives to their work.

For this reason, the fact of diversity combined with the act of inclusion is a recipe for success that holds true at the personal, team and organisational level, whatever the business or industry.

## **My own experience in helping leaders and organisations similarly become more inclusive and diverse has taught me some key aspects to consider in bringing this recipe to life. These include:**

// Starting with business strategy, drawing specific links for your customer and market and how business objectives will be served by the D&I work. Activism isn't enough.

// Focusing on measurable outcomes, not just activities. What difference are you trying to make?

// Not relying on HR – this is everyone's work. Find the right people to help you. “Passion” is a good start, but you need a mix of people who can give you their time, energy and influence.

// Fixing the system, not the people. Mentoring programs and women's networks generally won't be effective in addressing systemic barriers and entrenched disadvantage.

// Remembering that real life happens at the intersections, not in the neat segments. Take an intersectional approach that values unique individuals with complex identities and needs. This is why building inclusive leadership, and mainstreaming flexible work are your best bets.

// Inclusion happens one decision at a time – what can you decide to do that will bring the powerful combination of diversity to life in your talent pool, team or business?



**We would like to thank each of  
the people who gave their time  
and provided such valuable  
“data with soul” for this book.  
Your stories inspired, moved and  
taught us in many ways.**

- The entire team at Talent

# // Do you have a story to tell?

We are keen to keep the conversation going so if you have been affected by any of the stories in this book or you would like to share your own experience as part of future publications, get in touch:

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# Talent

## About us

Talent is a global leader in tech and digital recruitment.

We work with thousands of contract and permanent tech and digital professionals across the globe, in each of the cities represented in this book. Our specialists find talent for promising start-ups, small to medium sized enterprises, public sector organisations and multinational corporations across diverse industry sectors.

Our vision to redefine our industry and our commitment to building a healthy, inclusive company culture for our team have helped us achieve unparalleled success. We've had year-on-year growth, received 26 industry awards in the past 10 years, and achieved world-class employee engagement levels.



## Diversity at Talent

We believe diversity of thought, backgrounds and experiences makes for stronger, more innovative teams. It's that simple.

As a leader in our field, we have a duty to inspire the companies we work with to look beyond stereotypes and find exceptional people from all backgrounds to join their teams.

Our vision, to redefine the world of recruitment, means that we take an active role in creating diverse and inclusive environments – both for our clients and ourselves.

## Awards

- // HRD Magazine Top Performing Company - Diversity and Inclusion 2018, 2019
- // Recruiter Awards Best IT/Technology recruitment agency 2019
- // Gallup Great Workplace Award 2019
- // LinkedIn Most Socially Engaged Staffing Agency 2018
- // APSCo Corporate Social Responsibility Award 2018
- // CEO Magazine Executive of the Year Awards CEO of the Year – Mark Nielsen 2018
- // SEEK Large Recruitment Agency of the Year – Australia 2018
- // SEEK Medium Recruitment Agency of the Year – New Zealand 2018
- // Gold Medal HRD Employer of Choice Award (Medium Employers Category) 2018



## About RISE

Getting your first career opportunity can be difficult. For young people with challenging personal circumstances, it can feel impossible.

Through our foundation, Talent RISE, we find solutions to youth unemployment by empowering young people and giving them better access to resources they need to secure a job. Focusing on inclusion, Talent RISE works with young people from all backgrounds who are facing barriers to employment to support, mentor and place them into jobs.

RISE has now successfully launched in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, placing over 170 young people from difficult circumstances into employment and supporting 2,400 more through workshops and training sessions.

Visit [talentrise.org](https://talentrise.org) to find out how you can help change lives through meaningful employment.

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# Human.

Global perspectives on diversity in tech

Human takes a different look at diversity in tech by showcasing the stories behind the statistics. Featuring firsthand accounts of 25 inspiring people around the world, the book offers key learnings into what leading businesses are doing to embrace diversity and inclusivity from the perspective of the individual. With moving personal experiences and invaluable insights, Human celebrates difference and shines a light on the most important element of this industry, its humanity.

The book features participants from [Uber](#), [Virgin Australia](#), [Telstra](#), [Tableau](#), [Fujitsu](#), [Isobar](#), [Ogilvy](#) and [Tech Nation](#) among others.

“Stories are data with a soul”

– [Brené Brown](#).

Talent