



# Anne-Marie Imafidon

Interviewed by

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*Good morning. It's the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 2017, and we're at the offices of Stemettes. I'm Kerri Mansfield, Head of Capability at Digi2al, coach and business consultant. And today I'm talking to Dr Anne-Marie Imafidon, MBE, and Head Stemette. Previous companies include Goldman Sachs, HP, Deutsche Bank, and Lehman Brothers. Good morning.*

Good morning.

*From a young age you've been in the public eye, very much so, branded as a child prodigy and the eldest child in Britain's brainiest family. Tell me about your childhood years.*

I had a really fun, really joyous, really, yeah, enjoyable, I loved my childhood. I was able to explore things I was interested in, was able to watch as much TV as I wanted. And we were in east London. I think there's this, there's this kind of thing I guess about growing up in east London where you kind of take, take what you get, and you enjoy it, and you live on very little.

*Mhm.*

And it's, you know, my, my kind of corner. So, for me, my childhood was one where, you know, lots of, lots of good things happened I guess. It was a, you know, really secure family unit, very supportive. And, we, I'm the eldest of five. So, we were, four girls, and then a boy kind of came as a twin at the end.

*That's nice.*

And so, in my house there was nothing that the boys didn't and that the girls did, because there weren't, for most of, for a lot of it there weren't any boys around, you know, to have that kind of division of labour as it were. So, that, that was life growing up. In terms of school and the rest of it, I think the same carried over. So, I still have a scar on my leg from when I fell over in the playground while [laughs] being the, I was like, the commentator while, [laughs] while the boys were playing football. So, I still have a scar from that kind of, falling over trying to track the ball. I was... I was kind of, the cheeky chappie, kind of class clown in a lot of, a lot of subjects, from primary school and secondary school.

[02:10]

*You went to school in Walthamstow?*

Yeah, I went to primary school, St Saviour's primary, which is a Church of England, So, we were kind of, up and down between there and the church as well. And, yeah, I was, I just remembered kind of, always bouncing off the walls, always enjoying myself, and always having this sense that... I guess I, I, from early-ish on I knew I was smart. Does that make sense?

*Yeah. Mhm.*

But it was never something that plagued me; it was always a upper hand, it was always something that meant that, you know, I could, I was controlling the classroom a little bit more. [laughs]

*Yeah.*

In control. So, another thing I remember was, Ofsted came at one point, and we were in a maths class, and my, gosh, might have been year three or year four, teacher made a mistake on the board.

*Oh.*

And I remember trying to kind of subtly point it out and not doing it as subtly as maybe I thought it was. Although I was trying to help, like I wasn't a terror.

*Yeah.*

[03:05]

So, yeah, I remember things like that. But I guess the biggest, two of the biggest pivotal points in my childhood, one was, being four years old, and I tell this story all the time, playing on my dad's computer, and of course it was, Windows 3.0 back then, and Word, I was typing, you know, the story of Little Red Riding Hood, in Word 3.0, or 3.1. And, I remember typing it, and me preferring the colour purple to red, and So, changing it from Little Red Riding Hood to Little Purple Riding Hood. And saving it on the computer. Going to bed, because bedtime was a thing, and then waking up the next day and my story still being on the computer. And I remember being, I remember enjoying it. You know, still today, I still have the same thing that, you could dig up that computer somewhere and it would still have my story in it, which to me is fascinating, that time capsule.

*Yes. It's magic isn't it.*

It is, right.

*Yeah.*

[03:55]

And I guess the other, the other kind of defining moment was, the two GCSEs that I did, So, I did one... I did the GCSE in maths and one in ICT age ten. And, I remember being sat in the exam hall, So, I actually sat in, physically was sat at the kind of, local boys' school, doing this kind of, ICT and then the[?] maths papers. And, I remember, just, right, not realising the gravity of it being in an exam I guess. And people always ask, you know, the pressure and this. And like, if you're ten, and everyone else there is sixteen, you're ten, like, you're not supposed to be there kind of thing.

*Yes, exactly.*

So, there's like, no consequences on what happens.

*No, exactly.*

So, I remember kind of, doing it, and being like, oh that wasn't, that was all right, kind of thing. And then passing. And, I remember... It was almost like, in passing... Because it wasn't assumed, I didn't take it for granted I guess that I was going to pass. And So, passed it, and, you know, there was the high of, not having to wash the dishes for that week, and going to McDonalds. My dad took me to McDonalds. But also, now, like, the older I've got, that whole thing of, yeah, I did that, was a thing that happened, like, So, the person that marked it didn't even know it was a ten-year-old.

[05:07]

*How did it come about? Because you wouldn't have learnt that level of subject at primary school.*

So, So, there's a couple of, there's a couple of things. So, my... year three teacher was head of maths for my primary school, and I think, by the time I was in year four they had mentioned to my parents that she's just bouncing off the wall, and she actually kind of gets this thing. And, arguably, up until year nine, So, up until thirteen, fourteen, you're taught the same maths over a year. So, it was just that the first time they told me I had got it, so, you know...

*You didn't need to do it again, yeah.*

This is it. So, when we then inevitably repeated it the following year, and the year after and the year after, it was kind of like, yeah, I kind of, I kind of already know this.

*Yeah.*

And, in terms of kind of, preparing for it and all the rest of it, I quite enjoyed... I like piecing things together, like, logically, how does that work, how does that? You know. And OK, what happens if you multiply that five times? All that kind of thing. So, I'm very kind of systematical, kind of, logical. And so, it wasn't that much of a stretch, you know, to get the additional paper.

*Yes.*

And ICT was the same thing. Like I, you know, we joke that it's kind of, GCSE, Microsoft or whatever, I had spent, you know, from four I was using Microsoft, right? So, why wouldn't, like, again, you know... Looking back now, why wouldn't I have passed? But there was a shock, it wasn't, it wasn't, like, oh, you know...

*Yeah. It wasn't expected.*

No. Yeah. You know for me, you know, the epicentre of it all. So, you know, it's exciting. And I think it's something that still stays with me now, that formative experience.

*Yes.*

Which is almost what, you know, I try and do now in my, in my full-time role where, they add up quite a lot, and you have something that young, even if you don't necessarily understand it, there's something about, there's something about having someone independently say that you know something.

*Yes. You know it yourself, but it's validated by...*

Externally...

*...someone saying yes you really do know.*

Externally validated. Someone who doesn't know you, in that anonymous situation. So, it's not like, you know, music exams, they can kind of see you and they can see, you know, she dresses like someone who knows how to play the oboe or whatever it may be.

*Yeah, exactly.*

This was just completely independent. That's still something that stays with me now.

[07:10]

*I like that. What led you to mathematics and computing?*

So, in the...

*Because you're also, very good at languages, aren't you?*

Yeah. So, with the mathematics... So, maths was something, again from kind of school, came up, and computing was that kind of, home peak bit of kind of, going a little bit further. So, it started off in Word, then it was Access, doing a whole load of database stuff, which turned into SQL, if you want to do something more complex, which turned into HTML, because the Web was becoming more and more of a thing.

*Mhm. Yeah.*

And, again, till today, right, you can always look at the code behind a website, and kind of, piece it together and going, ah! So, when they put that, that's what that does, or, that's flash, and that's been embedded, that, all that kind of things. So, that was the computer science. And I think, studying them both together, it was not wanting to drop one and the other, and also, kind of, almost trusting in the fact that they were linked.

*Yup.*

And it was nice, like, best of both, right. Why decide maths or, can't one do both, I guess. In terms of languages, which again is all part, one and the same, it's all kind of, languages, music and maths and computer science, they're all, supposedly it's all kind of the same side of the brain as it were. But... So, languages, I, because I'm So, logical, it's, you know, things like conjugation of verbs for example, it's a very logical thing; there are exceptions of course, but in the main you've got this 80/20 thing where you can kind of, 80 per cent get there. And so, the real decision against languages was, I have always hated reading, I've always hated writing, in English.

*OK.*

[08:38]

So, English is my first language, it's my mother tongue, all of that kind of stuff. Never... You know, English is my, you know, I think in English... I think in English to a point. And, and I learnt French, really deeply, to the point that I started thinking in French.

*Yes.*

And So, almost applied to do French at university. And at the point when I was making the decision, I already knew that I definitely wanted to go to Oxford to study, whatever I was going to study, because, when I was thirteen at secondary school we had done a career survey thing, and it said, 'First off you should be a management consultant,' and the second thing was, I think software architect or something like that.

*OK.*

And I looked up management consultancy and I was like, gosh, they get paid a lot I... I could be a management... And I remember vividly thinking, I could be a management consultant at Sainsbury's, and get a discount on my groceries. And that was legit, like, as a thirteen-year-old, that was it, you know.

*Yeah, it's a big thing, yes.*

Never met one in my life. Seen how much they earn, you know, that kind of thing. And then, on this same kind of connections portal, because that was the career service at the time, said you're sixteen times more likely to get a job as a management consultant if you go to Oxford. So, if you studied anything at Oxford, you get a job. So, OK, well I'll go to Oxford.

*Do that.*

It was either maths or comp or French at this point, because it was, I was great at French. And I learnt that, with French, even though you're studying French at university, you have to write, you know, at least half of your essays in English.

*For what reason?*

I... Till today I don't really know why they do that, you know. I mean you're studying at an English university, which may be the reason. I don't know. But either way, at Oxford, to do French, you need to write English. And I was like, no chance I'm doing that. I'm not going to spend the rest of, you know, the next three years, four years, writing in English. It wasn't just writing in French, I'm fine with that. And So, that was it, it was like, no, I'm out. [laughs]

*Yeah. [laughs]*

I'm doing comp. No writing or reading.

*Because there's no logic to it. So, if you're very logical, that wasn't a logical decision for you, yeah.*

[10:33]

It wasn't... It wasn't. Yeah. And So, that was it, four years of not reading or writing anything longer than 500 words, and if I did, it was painful. I remember we had an essay competition one summer, and I was like, oh no! To put thoughts down, and words, and... No. So, yeah, that, that was how it became maths and comp, not languages.

*OK.*

And to this day I'm still glad I did that. And I still hate writing today.

*Well that's good, because you're, you're very much out there, and very able to verbalise everything; that doesn't mean you want to physically write things down.*

And it's... It's funny, sometimes it's read that I can't read or write. So, I can do them; I just find... I find reading incredibly boring. And because I'm logical, and have a certain way that I organise things in my head, I get frustrated if I have to read someone else's thoughts in their order.

*Because then you're also, trying to get into how they created that thought?*

Yeah. Like there's, there's So, much work.

*Where it came from and the logic behind it.*

Yeah. So, it's like, when at school when we did English, you'd have to read between the lines, and things like that. And to this... So, that was the other reason why I ended up not being a management consultant, because you have to do verbal reasoning.

*Oh.*

Tests. And, from banking, which is what I ended up doing, or working in is only a numerical test.



*Yes.*

And So, it was like, there's no chance, after four years I'm not doing this. I'm not going to sit and do a verbal reasoning test. Out.

*So, changed your, changed mind.*

Yup.

[12:00]

*Being the youngest academic on all the courses that you were doing, must have brought some challenges with it to you. How did you go about coping with them?*

Not too many challenges that I remember. I think... [pause] [sighs] I don't know. I think... So, all it would have been I guess is... So, doing the GCSEs and all the rest of it, I was very used to being in that environment with older people.

*Mhm.*

So, I never... For me, I, I've never... I was rarely... The older I get, in fact still now, I'm rarely in a situation where I'm with people that are the same age as me, kind of...

*Yeah.*

Yeah, it's just not something... So, the boards that I sit on, I'm the youngest person on whatever it is. So, for me, it's a default position.

*Mhm.*

And I think, being there, because I had got in it the same time as them, there was no kind of inferiority in, in that kind of work. The only challenge really was socially, things like being out and drinking and all that kind of stuff, which I hadn't got to, because, it wasn't really legal for me to be doing that anyway, right. So, I think, I think that was probably the only difference, was... And even then, after a while it kind of petered out, because I ended up only going a year in advance, rather than... There was, at one point I would have gone three years in advance. So, yeah, being younger... I mean the only... So, things like going three years in advance, it was because, if I was too young my whole family would have had to move, which, you know, wasn't fair. Which other people had been able to do in the past, but, for us it didn't really make

sense. But it's, it's something that I still... It's just life, it's kind of just, I've never, never not been, that's never not been the norm.

*Yup.*

So, for me, there weren't too many challenges other than that whole social, I'd not done before, I've not done this before, I've not done that before, which, I kind of did in my own time.

*Yes. When it was right for you.*

Yeah. Yeah.

[13:55]

*That's good. And also, not only were you the youngest, but you were a woman in an overwhelmingly male world. What advice do you give to other women following in your path?*

So, I'll say actually on that, I didn't realise I, I didn't realise I was a woman... I didn't realise basically. So, as smart as I might be I guess, I wasn't very perceptive. So, for example, doing my A Levels, there are loads of modules I did where I was the only girl in, in the exam hall, but then, some of the modules there were only six of us, if it was like, a higher, one of the higher, additional maths ones. So, being the only girl out of six, you don't feel it as much, I guess. And So, even being at university, and this again is only something I've learnt in the last six months, or kind of, realised in the last six months, is that, being on a course at Oxford means you have the tutorials, So, you don't really sit in big classes. I mean you do eventually, but for a lot of your university life, it's you and an academic, or you and one other person, an academic. Maximum three of you plus the academic. Which means that, again, you don't feel like the only girl in that situation. Even if you are, you're one of four, and not one 100.

*Not one of eighty, yeah, exactly.*

Yeah. So, being three of 70, that was 70 in the lectures, which is that kind of number that, I now look back as, me, Clarice and Carina. And we were in the lectures, but in tutes, the ratios weren't that bad. And the other thing was, I was never made to feel like I was the only girl.

*Mhm.*

Ever. So, it wasn't until... And even then, starting work, So, graduating and starting work, again I was the only girl in the team, but wasn't the only one on my floor for example.

*No.*

And So, again, you don't feel like you're the only one. But then, it wasn't until I ended up at the Grace Hopper Celebration in the States, So, that, the year I went, the first year I went, three and a half thousand women there. And it was only in that moment that I was like, oh my goodness, all these women in computing. It was like, a thing, like, wow, there is women everywhere. And they're all technical...

[15:52]

*How did it happen, how did you get there?*

So, how did I get there? So, I, when I was working at Deutsche Bank, I worked in the technology department, and I was an enterprise and collaboration strategist. Basically meaning, we had our own social media platform internally, and I was kind of, kind of lead, lead, like, adoptions specialist/low level dev to kind of, build solutions for people that wanted kind of, extra functionality on the, on the platform.

*Yeah.*

And so... And I was the only person, there were only five of us on the team that looked after it for 100,000 people. And so, the Grace Hopper Celebration is sponsored by Deutsche. An opportunity came up for someone to speak about that on a panel with Facebook and kind of odd people, when it was in its infancy. So, now you have Workplace by Facebook, So, it's like a normal thing. This was back in 2012 when it was brand new. And So, I ended up on the panel with, with a lady at Facebook actually who's, who's kind of, developed Workplace. And, yeah, So, ended up speaking there. And, again, I am, kind of, not perceptive, also, kind of, do things last minute slash... I'm detail oriented when I want to be and not, not when I don't feel like I need to be. I kind of didn't realise this, the gravity of it all.

*The enormity of it.*

Yeah. And So, got there, and it, it was like London Fashion Week, but for technical women. And it's crazy, because London Fashion Week, and I give this analogy all the time, and a lot of people haven't been to London Fashion Week, but, you know, you have the catwalks, you have the people, you have the who's who there, you have the kind of exclusive parties all around it, like a big festival, whatever.

*Yeah.*

So, it was like that. So, you have, like, Twitter having parties, and a Google, and, you know, you'd go to this hotel and you'd say a code word on the door, and it would be a Pinterest party up on the fifteenth floor, and, people were making dreamcatchers, and all this kind of cool stuff was happening. And they were all technical women. So, it was, it was exciting to be there. It was a great environment to be in, but one that you, you don't know, you don't know what you're doing though. So, I didn't realise that I had that feeling, being in that big group of women.

*Yes.*

And... And you just feel like you're at home, like, it's incredible, right. And so, that was kind of, the first bit, what I kind of learnt in that experience. And then the second half was... Then the keynote was a lady called Nora Denzel who was saying that, you know, 'The number of women in tech has been in freefall in the last 30 years. All of you here, you should stay, and all of you here should recruit one friend, So, we can reverse the trend. And here's what, here's what I'm telling you, here's five things I'm telling you to stay, and five things that you need to tell your friend for them to kind of join.' And So, that was it. And I was, like, OK, cool, it was interesting. Kind of sat there being, like, ha! Americans, like, this is an American problem. Got back to the UK, and realised, and heard, or saw, that the Institute of Physics had just put up their 'No Girl Left Behind' report, and then saw that we had the same thing here. And there was me thinking, ha! you know, silly Americans, not realising that it was happening on my doorstep. And So, it was like, OK, cool, I'm in a minority that I didn't realise, I didn't realise the, the sense of identity in that minority, as I might have done. Being a black girl from east London, there are already enough things that I had recognised.

*You'd got enough identity going on.*

Yeah. Yeah right, like I knew I was a minority, that's fine. But I hadn't realised that being a woman in technology was also, a thing, right?

*Another minority already. Yeah yeah.*

And also, a shrinking minority. It was like, what? I've realised I'm part of this cool club, and it's shrinking. So, there was this kind of thing of, OK, who is doing what?

*Mm.*

[19:07]

I had a great childhood. Like, it was never a thing. Even up until working, like it was never... Because when you, when you are sat in the team... So, I was in, like, technology CR office, right. So, you're sat there and you're looking, and it is all white, all pale, male, stale and So, it goes on. Same age as my dad if not not older. All white, all old, all this, all male. And you're looking out, and you don't see yourself in that scenario.

*Mhm.*

And So, it was when I get back and I'm like, goodness, yeah, like, yeah, but we're all having the time of our lives. Like, why aren't there more women here? I'm enjoying it, I'm getting promoted, I'm getting paid loads.

*Yeah.*

Life is good. And, why aren't... What...

*Why aren't people following that path.*

There's nothing I'm doing here that involves genitalia or anything. Like I did... Why couldn't more people...

*Exactly. Yes.*

Adding on top of that, you know, the friends that I had had at uni, who had all done English and history and whatever, and had almost, all, I mean it was, it was jokes, like, you know, even less than banter, but it would have been like, you know, Anne-Marie you and your computer thing. All of them are now tech consultants. All of them are now working in technology. So, it was, OK. Well... [laughs]

*What's gone wrong?*

Yeah, right? And why... You did history because all your mates were applying for history. You did English because all your mates were applying for English. OK. I didn't need mates to apply to read science, but what if I had mates who applied for computer science? How would that have changed my experience? So, So, that was it.

[20:27]

And so, my kind of, my advice for women, which was your original question, I think is, depending on the kind of woman you are, I was a stubborn person, I'm a stubborn woman, I can do my own thing, I don't really mind if I'm the only, whatever it is.

*Yeah.*

So, long as I'm enjoying myself, I don't really care. And so, if you're a woman like me, then do what, do what you've got to do, like, you'll, you'll get there anyway.

*Exactly, yeah.*

That's how we get to seventeen per cent. Because not all women are like that, because we're not a homogeneous group. So, for anyone else, I'd say, find your tribe, find a community to be a part of. 2017, we're really fortunate that, in all major cities, at least across the UK and Ireland, you have women in tech, women in STEM, women in science, women in engineering groups. And, we're all here, we're, we're in the industry, and as much as things aren't perfect, there's that strength in numbers, is there. And So, for you to come and try and convert over, those numbers, they do want to help you, they do want you to join the fold. I mean, I'm trying to think now of like, a, of an alternative example. There's rarely, you know, there's not a women's group you're going to go to, I guess for any industry really, where you're going to meet and they're going to be like, "yeah it's terrible, you know, if you're thinking of switching to marketing, don't go into marketing".

[21:39]

But for technology, at least, you know, it's a really nice environment. And even if... It doesn't even have to be a women-only environment, you know, a lot of people are looking for a lot of talent, a lot of people that, if you just show an interest you can kind of, come in.

*Yup.*

But also, for, you know, for people, or women, that aren't considering it, you know, technology's one of these things, it's not going away, so, it would have been a fad. I'm sure if you talk to people that started, you know, a couple of years before me, you know, the Internet was a fad. In fact, I remember, three years ago, maybe four years ago, New Year's Eve, so, normally, if I spend it with the family, we spend it at church, and, I remember meeting someone who knew me from when I was little, and obviously I've always had this technology thing, and you know, and I remember having like, you know, 'How are you? How's the technology thing going?' And me being like, *technology thing?* Like, er, I'm pretty sure you have Facebook, and the technology thing is not a thing anymore; technology thing is life.

*Exactly. Yes.*

So, it's one of those things that, you know, technology is here, like, it, you... As much as you might want to shy away from it, or say you don't understand it, or you break them, or whatever excuse, that's what it is.

*It's a part of everything. Yes.*

It is. And to be a citizen, to be someone contributing to society, to be someone who can access your own public services, to be someone who knows, knows things that people in industry might not, and so, there's a great opportunity for you to, either apply technology in a new way to the problems you have, or to improve the solutions we already have, it's almost, you know, the responsibility as a human being now, today, you know, the same way as climate change or whatever it is. You know, don't become a second citizen don't outside the second class of people who just don't understand technology and are at the mercy of their Wi-Fi fridge or autonomous car, or whatever comes next. So, it's, you know, it's something where, you know, in your own interest, this is STEM. Like, you know, I have this slide that we show the girls of a pug in a hoody kind of, 'I didn't choose the pug life; the pug life chose me', kind of thing. And it's like, even if you haven't chosen the STEM life, the STEM life has chosen you. It's 2017. This is how we get around. It's how things function.

This is how you know when your bus is coming. So, get involved. As a woman, you know, you're a natural problem solver, because we've had to, done it for centuries. So, technology is your space. And as you were saying, you know, initially it was seen as a woman's thing anyway. Somehow, we've let the boys in and they've kind of taken over. And not in a kind of us versus them way, but in a, we kind of all need to be pulling on this together.

*Definitely.*

So, the bots don't kill us. Because it's not the bots that will kill us. It's those that create the bots that will kill us.

*Yep.*

And if you're in the room, that's maybe less likely to happen, unless of course you want to kill people, in which case, that's a reason to learn technology anyway right. [laughs]

[24:37]

*Have you found in your journey So, far that you've had mentors who have been helpful to you?*

Loads of mentors, and even more sponsors. Which is something, which is kind of, a really important kind of thing that I find to highlight actually. I think mentorship is fantastic, and is great, and it's always good to be able to ask people for advice, talk things through before you're doing them. Have sounding boards. But even more so, in terms of building a career, getting ahead, and kind of making movements, you need sponsors, you need people who, you don't ask them to do things for you, but they see enough of what you're doing, and they act on your behalf when you're not in the room.

*Yup.*

So, I've had loads of those. I guess publicly, we have the Godmother Stemettes who kind of, do things and pull strings in the background for us. And they, you know, know what's going on, we're, we're quite public with what we do, So, you don't even necessarily need to be a godmother to say you're going to submit us for award X, or you're going to introduce this to your company, all that kind of thing. So, there are a lot of people that have done that that. So, us as an organisation, but also, for me personally, I've been really fortunate to have two bosses, especially when I was at Deutsche, or my last two bosses when I was at Deutsche, were incredibly supportive of me, of, and kind of saw my talent, you know, and mentored me as bosses as well, and kind of gave me opportunities, put me up for promotion as much as they could. You know, all those kinds of things.

*Mhm.*

And, in terms of mentors, you know, you, you definitely, you almost want a board of mentors. It's not about having one particular mentor, but it's, a group of different people who, you can just ask them for advice, like, no strings attached, no, you know, money needs to exchange hands; it's just, you know, I see you did that in your work like that, you know, how did that happen? Or, trying to build a team and this person in my team is, you know, causing a bit of trouble. How do I, how would you...

*How do I handle it? Yeah.*

You know, that kind of thing. So, yeah, So, definitely have loads of mentors actually, loads of mentors, loads of sponsors. And sometimes it's not even a conscious thing.

*Mhm.*



Like it's not, I'm not on a mentoring, like, a formal mentoring thing. Well it's a formal mentoring programme. But, it's not a kind of, you know, So, how we'll sit down, have our six-month check-in. It's It's more of a kind of, you know, things just happen.

*As and when*

Yeah.

[26:46]

*Yes. So, bringing the two together, Stemettes came from somewhere. What was the defining moment for you?*

So, defining moment was being at Grace Hopper that year, and, being sat in that keynote thinking, like, OK, cool, if I was American, here's what I'd do. Getting back to the UK and realising we had the same problem here. And then kind of, restarting up that engine in my head. So, blogged about it a little bit, spoke to different people, spoke to different mentors. And, it was one New Year's resolution for 2013, So, that was how it kind of started, kind of, I put that out 31<sup>st</sup> of December, this is what we're trying to do. So, if a couple of you are ready, share the word, tell other people if they're interested, then get involved.

*Yes.*

And...

*And you were working at Deutsche at the time?*

I was working at Deutsche. And, So, started it off. Deutsch knew I was starting. My boss [NAME] already knew I was starting it off. And, just got going really, kind of, knew. And, had... So, I had run businesses, I had run kind of social enterprises in different businesses before, So, this was maybe my fifth thing that I had started.

*OK. Yup.*

Had picked up things along the way, how you kind of make a buzz about what you are doing, how you pull together volunteers to make things happen, how you ask, approach people to kind of get involved with what you're doing, and you talk to companies, how you pitch to companies.

*Yeah.*

Being at Deutsche, kind of understood how we work with our career people who understand how the industry works, spoken to loads of different women. Lopa Patel was one of the people that I spoke to as well. And so, it was like, OK, cool, let's see how I goes. I'm going to give it a good go, see how it goes. The intention was never to be sat here, you know, being interviewed by you or to become tghis.....

*This was a part-time thing you were just going to do?*

100 per cent. You know, sometimes you're like, I'm just going to do a good thing. I'm going to go and volunteer, do, whatever it was. I would have wanted to go and volunteer. But kind of saw the, there was nothing that I really, nothing that, that resonated with me. You know, for me it's quite frustrating. I, I would have come to Stemettes if it had existed when I was younger, and there are similar programmes I guess we can say that existed, and you know, partners that we have now that work in this space. But none of them ever reached me.

*No.*

And, I should have been the number one person.

*Yeah, as you were out there. Yeah, you should have been noticed, yeah.*

Number one. And I would have, I would have spent my, I would have... You know, I would have been, I would have been running those organisations, you know, I would have volunteered, I would have gone back and been like... You know, they came to my school and they did this, and So, now I want to go and give back.

*Yes.*

But there was no, there was nothing I could go to, nothing I could associate with, nothing that resonated with me, and also, nothing that I saw resonated with the young people that I already knew and I had already worked with on other projects.

*Mhm.*

[29:18]

And so, that was where Stemettes came from. It came from a, OK, we're going to do this completely differently. We're going to do something that, maybe not little Anne-Marie, but, you know, Rebecca was

my best mate when I was at primary school, little Rebecca would have gone to, right? And so, it kind of came from that, and it was like, I don't know if, if we remove the focus from the tech itself, and put it on food, and fun, and just enjoying being with people.

*Enjoying being together. Yes.*

If you put the focus on that, or that, you know, will that work, will that change things? And So, that was, that was the premise. It was like, OK, it's a bit about London Fashion Week vibe, the Grace Hopper vibe, plus, my childhood. Like, we were chilling, enjoying ourselves, having a laugh.

*And your younger sisters growing up.*

Yeah. You know, the ones that were behind me. So, let's just do it, like, my kind of environment. I mean the only difference I guess is that we don't have the TV on when we're at events, but, that was basically what my childhood was, sitting and us playing, and see how it goes. So, that was where it came from. And, it caught fire, [laughs] basically, more than I think I could have ever hoped, wished or expected. I called it a Monster for the first year, because it kind of just... It was like, it's something on the weekend, that then on Tuesday morning people want and sit and talk to you, and then, Tuesday afternoon, and then... And it kind of was like, you know this was just this weekend thing.

*Yup.*

You know I have a job. [both laugh] You know like, this isn't... This isn't a company, though, people were calling me, like, that this... I spoke to your, you know, don't you have a this department? It would be like, no, it's me.

*Yes.*

There's no departments. It's me and those volunteers. And she might write that thing in the *Guardian*, and, you know. So, it kind of escalated. And, So, much So, that by the end, by November we're Number 10, that year.

*Yeah.*

[31:06]

Having started in February, November, so by November, sorry, at Number 10. And it was crazy to be sat at the table with, Michael Gove, David Willetts, you know, all these people.

*Yeah.*

You know, we were called the insurgents. I was sat there with kind of science girl and, I think Belinda Parmar. And it was crazy, because it was like, actually at this table there were like, 20 of us were in Number 10, having a serious meeting about a problem that I just happened, that I just discovered on my own last year because I just happened to be at this event. And people listen, or, I'm asked to contribute and lead one of the sections. This is just a weekend thing, like, you know, I ended up having...

*It's only part-time.*

Can you imagine, being like, yeah, I've got take the day off and... 'Oh yeah? OK, cool. Why?' 'Because I'm going to Number 10.' And it was then they all went, you know, thankfully they all knew what was going on, to some extent, but it was like, huh, like, what? So... So, it escalated. Got to that, and I was like, OK, cool. Well, I shared my learnings or whatever. This might seem like a logical junction to kind of just pause it all and be like, I'm not going to do this anymore. And it was like, mmm... No. [laughs] I was like, OK, cool. I haven't got time I've got a job.

*It had got under the skin then. Yeah.*

Yeah, I got under everyone else's skin. I was like, I have a job, and, that's my livelihood, and, if this isn't costing any money, it's costing me huge time.

*All your time. Yeah.*

So, I can't do... I need to sleep, I need to see friends, and, I haven't done anything for a year. So, that was when I kind of said, no, I'm not doing it any more. And then, kind of, sponsorships and kind of, offers of partnership and whatever started coming in. Got some bigger funding. And, then it became, you know, a fully-blown social enterprise with a member of staff, and the kind of structures of it all. But it never... I mean, up until the end of 2015, part of the on-boarding process for everyone was, you know, there's a list of things, we, we won't do lectures, we won't do this, we won't do that. And Anne-Marie won't go full-time.

*Yup.*

And So, on.

*Until did you...*

I had to full-time. [both laugh] Until... I literally had a team of five working on one side of town, and I was at my desk at Deutsche doing two days a week working from home and working with the team, on the phone like, 'OK, cool, just tell him to do that, and then do that.' OK. Or, or like, 'So, pick this date then, because I can't make that.' Or... You know, it was... I was having to share my, everyone had to see my calendar, to know to book things in. To delegate. You know, all that kind of thing. And it was like, this full pot.

Yes.

So, yeah.

[33:22]

*So, where, where did you find the first Stemettes to come on the programme, where did they come from?*

So, they came from schools, local schools. So, I had a, I had a friend, there was a school group, So, a friend of mine who I was at university with, who was doing Teacher First, and Teacher First normally has kind of, disadvantaged schools, So, he brought a group of girls across from his, his school. I, like I said, I'd done kind of previous youth work, So, I was involved with my local, like, Saturday school, So, all of those girls came along. And, word got out, So, there was a lot of kind of, word of mouth, and people telling other people, they'd be like, this thing's happening, and you should maybe go along and try it. And then, King's College I remember as well had widening participation that kind of got wind of it and sent people along. We had a big Twitter push, I guess, effort, So, that also, helped. And that was it. So, we hadn't, to be honest, we had more volunteers than girls at the first event.

[34:14]

*And now, you've worked with over, 17,000, 18,000?*

17,000. So, the latest counts, we've counted it, just last week actually for a report we're doing. So, 17,200 girls.

*And are you now having to turn people away, or are you able to take everyone that comes through?*

So, we don't... We... So, because... So, our ethos is that, we're very girl-centric, it's girls first. And so, we don't, we don't end up necessarily turning girls away, but we do have waiting lists. So, we never want to turn a girl away, ever. It's just kind of, not... I mean I'd rather, there are other people that I turn away other than the girls, even in terms of diaries and all the rest of it. So, I travel a lot now. If something comes up

with the girls, nine times out of ten I'll, I'll go to where the girls are and I'll say, 'Do you know what, I just can't make it, I'm really sorry.' So, even... You know, one of the things I've learnt from my mentors is, thinking, it's all about the girls. So, if you're not funding us to do something for the girls, and you want me to come and speak to adults, you're going to have to pay for my time if you want me to speak to adults, because that's not what I'm here doing.

*That's not what you're here for. Yeah, exactly.*

So, we don't turn them away. However, it pains me every, every morning when I wake up it pains me that, we aren't able to do as much in Wales as we'd like to do, or we're not able to do as much in Scotland as we'd like to do, or, you know, there's loads of girls that don't live in Dublin, who live really remotely, like Shannon or whatever, though Shannon has an airport So, it's not as remote, but, that we're not able to... Or Derry, or, you know, those kinds of places that aren't on the mainland. So, I think...

*Yeah.*

So, we don't turn girls away, but, I wish we... We're still working on having more of, more national reach. And we do have national reach, So, we are... So, this week we're in Manchester. This week we're in Manchester; next week we're in Birmingham; the week after I'm in Glasgow. So, we, So, we do go all over. But I just wish we could do more all over.

*And get to the more remote girls.*

Yeah, get some more remote girls. Because, you know, as much as we, and we do pay for girls to come to London and come to the kind of, the big city, as much as we do that, again, you know, the same way as I was a stubborn young woman, some of those girls don't want to travel. They've never left their village. And So, why... Technology can come to anywhere, right? So, why must they leave their village to be able to do it?

*They're the girls you want to reach.*

And why must girls in London get everything, all the time?

*Yes.*

Saying that as a Londoner...

[36:35]

*Difficult to do the food remotely, but the technology...*

No. So, you'd be surprised actually. The food is a, food is an easy one, because food, everyone needs food for survival. So, we can send the money, So, they can buy it and we can send the money there. I think, what's difficult to transplant is the vibe.

*Mm.*

It's... The Stemettes way is what we called it. That kind of, this is a girls' environment. So, it's not, it's not actually taking the industry environment; it's an environment for girls to come and for them to feel comfortable.

*Mhm.*

And, it's really, it's been... That's why it's hard for us to recruit people, it's hard for us to, to be in five places at the same time. Because, it's not Brownies, it's not Guides, it's not coded OJ. Like, it's a very different field, very different.

*Yeah. And it's creating that vibe.*

Which is what attracts the girls. That's what they enjoy.

[37:30]

*You are quoted, I've seen this a few times, as having a mission to normalise maths. Can you explain the implications of that?*

The implications of normalising it. The implications are, that, if you say... So, I say I don't like reading, I don't like writing, and then I have to add caveats, I can read, and I can write, right? But if I said to you I didn't like maths, there will be no caveat. You also, wouldn't be surprised, right, that I said I'd don't like maths, because you hear it So, often, people, 'Yeah, I don't really get that.'

*Yeah.*

And So, to normalise maths, and normalise this, would be the... You kind of give people permission to enjoy it, and to do maths, and not be afraid.

Yes.

It's almost like you, when you hear the word maths, you get transplanted back to the last maths lesson you had, which might have been great, but for a lot of people it was shockingly bad. And I could say the same for my ST? lessons, they were awful. My computer science lessons now. There was the report last week from the Royal Society. They're not great, you know. So, you get transplanted to the thing of, you know, I'm not good at this. Yet, if you go to China, if you go to India, if you go to other places, no-one would dare say that.

Yes.

How dare you say you're not great, you're not, you know, I don't get this maths thing, or I was not good with numbers.

*It's like it's acceptable to just not be good at it.*

At all. It's not, right? So, this, this weird thing we have where it's like, yeah... Meanwhile, people like money, people want businesses, people work on their taxes, people, know how long it takes them to get to places, you know, all that kind of stuff. That's maths. Like, if you work out logically how you're going to get the shortest route to work, because that day you did that and that day you did that, and then you test it, that's science. So, you did an experiment, and you worked it out, like... That's how you live life, logically, you do things. It's the same, you use the same logic when you travel to different countries, you know, you take a... It's a formula you follow, you take your passport, you check if you need visas, you go through security. Like, it's the same thing. All of that is maths. Like, how you get around the Underground or any kind of system. All of that is maths. How you route your post. Like, So, many things, it's like, you're doing maths. [laughs]

Yes.

Stop running away from it like it's bad, OK, right, you're not. You might not feel like you're Einstein, you might not feel like you're me and you can pass it at sixteen, but, I know a lot of people that would have passed it at sixteen – at ten, sorry, if they had the right environment, if people didn't say, 'Oh I'm not good at this maths thing,' .

*Yeah, and if it wasn't made to be a difficult thing. And acceptably difficult thing.*



And it's the science community's fault, because maths, maths people's fault, you know, it is, it is our fault as an industry, as a, as a field, for taking that kind of self-confidence to the extreme, to the point that it's, it's, you know, it's for us, not for them, it's not for everyone. Whereas something like poetry, you know, you want everyone to enjoy poetry; why can't I have everyone enjoy maths?

*Yes. That sounds very sensible.*

[40:13]

So, that's, that's what it is. And I think, you know, in terms of, how we're socialised, it affects girls and women more than it affects boys and men.

*Yes.*

You know, there's this famous thing of, if you put out a job spec, to men and women, of ten points, women will be able to do six and say that they, you know, they're not good enough; men can do three and they'll say that's. that's enough. So, that's the kind of thing. Yeah, the... guys, the men that, you know, will say, 'I'm not the greatest at it,' but you'll still find them there on the front row, you know, trying to make it happen. It happens in the classroom.

*Yes.*

Happens everywhere. So, if we can organise it just a little bit more, then you won't get... Primary. You know, this is what we were talking about back at Number 10, back in November. I remember, that November, I remember part of it being a discussion that you have, people who don't enjoy maths, or didn't do maths at a high level, teaching in primary school, and passing on that fear of maths at that formative age, those formative years.

*Yes.*

And we don't have enough people graduating in maths or physics to teach at secondary let alone having the thing that... You know, if you had a physics graduate age six teaching it, that fear of maths won't exist, that will never be something that fear of maths.

*No..*

So, you won't even... You know, you might hear it at home, but when you come to school it will be a completely different environment.

[41:25]

*Completely different, yeah. That's good. You've had many awards already. I'm sure there'll be more to come. And you received an MBE for services to young women in the STEM sector. How did it feel to get that award?*

It was nuts. [both laugh] It was crazy. Like I said, I'm younger than a lot of people that I work with. And it was always one of those things that, it's kind of like, you know, eventually kind of, look up and you're like, eventually there might be something that happens, or, kind of, you just don't think it's... You just... I guess you don't... I don't realise... Sometimes you don't realise your own power.

*You almost sounded as though, when I grow up I'm going to be a... [laughs]*

Yeah. It is, it's one of those ones. Because you don't... It's just not... Because it's not an exam. So, I think, I think the big... The weirdest thing, or the biggest thing about the MBE is, it's not an exam. It's not a, open judging process. It's not a... I mean it kind of, it is, but it's, it's, it's not; like it's not a, I did this and I did that and did this and I did that, and then you reach level one, kind of thing.

*Yeah.*

It's entirely subjective, entirely, like, cloak and dagger type thing. And So, it's strange to have made it through something like that. And without realising, but also, without... Like if I said I wanted to get an MBE, and that was the aim, there are 100 other ways that you could have done it. Like I would have become a sportsperson or... Do you know what I mean? Like there's formulae. As with everything, there are formulas to follow. So, this wasn't part of the formula, or part of what I was following, or part of what I was aiming for. And, the Queen's cool, right. [both laugh] Letters after your name and titles are cool. But this is, it's like another level. And... So, for me it was, it was shock that it had happened, and then it was that kind of, gosh, like, what... Almost the same the GCSE right, like, someone that didn't know me or whatever kind of anonymously, all that kind of thing. So, yeah, you know, it's the biggest, it's the biggest award. [laughs]

*It's a big thing.*

Yeah, it's a pretty big thing. It's massive. And I don't, I don't... I, I... It probably still hasn't sunk in. I think, every now and then I, you know, I'm sat on a bus and I'm like, I wonder... And like, do these people know they're sat next to someone who has an MBE, and like, it's one of those things, it's like, wow. Yeah. So, I'm still kind of, it's one of, it's like a new, like, jacket that I'm not quite used to wearing every day.

*Who did you choose to take with you?*

Took my parents and my best friend. And...

*And were your siblings waiting outside?*

They were waiting outside. My siblings and the team actually, quite a few people. There were a couple of us, a couple of people waiting outside. So, I told my mum to wait outside, So, they brought like, big MBE balloons, and we had like, a photographer and everything.

*Yeah.*

So, that was fun. My parents were an hour late.

*Oh.*

Yeah.

*How did that come about?*

Because they decided to drive to Buckingham Palace, because they could drive to Buckingham Palace. And there were roadworks on the day. And so...

*No!*

Literally going into the briefing at the Palace, and my phone rings, and it's my mum asking me for directions for how to. Yeah I know, I don't want them to forget that, that happened. [both laugh]

*That's going to be there as a reminder.*

Yeah. And so, my best friend was sat there like, literally, just didn't know what to do. And then they, apparently they arrived, sat down, started talking to the people next to them, or something. And I was... They were So, late that I was the fourth in line when they sat down, to go up to... Because it was Charles doing it.

*Yeah yeah. Yeah.*

And they had to tell them, like, look she's there pay attention. Yeah. Parents are great. [both laugh] So, fantastic. [laughs]

*And what was the celebration like afterwards?*

Well, the devil makes work for, for light hands I guess. So, we had an event, we had a massive, we had a big AI hack day after. So, it was one day of celebrations. I still haven't quite finished... I know other people do like, once every two months for the year.

*Yes.*

I still haven't quite got round to like fully celebrating I guess. I went... I think I went away at one point. Yeah. So, we had drinks, we had this, we had a party.

*A garden party?*

I had been to a garden party. I had actually, a couple years previous. So, I had been to the Palace before.

*Yeah.*

And, So, yeah, that was, it was, it was fun. It was... Yeah, just a chill-out day. But just for that day, and then back into work.

*And then, back to it...*

Went back to work, yes.

[45:52]

*Now, let's talk about Outbox Incubator.*

Mhm.

*How's that come about, and what does that do?*

So, Outbox Incubator was, it was something that, we had kind of said after five years we'll do it, and then, we ended up in Brussels at the Innovation Convention in 2014, and saw a couple of girls on the stage, and, one of them's called Ciara Judge, who kind of, now does TEDx Talks and all that kind of thing. She's still

only nineteen, or eighteen. And, she was on stage with her group, So, they won the Google science prize, Google global science prize, they're girls from Ireland. And, they were up on stage as part of this Generation Z panel they had. All of them were under eighteen. I think four girls, three boys. And the stark difference between, not between what they were saying, but between the opportunities that they had all had, and what they had all done, was like night and day. So, these girls who had discovered this bacteria that's speeds up the germination process for certain crops.

*Yup.*

That's what these three girls had done. One of the boys, at least one of them, or two of them, were running app companies, they were building apps for people.

*Yeah.*

OK. One of the boys was Spanish and was living in a flat in Shoreditch, age sixteen. And these three girls from Ireland were still living at home in Ireland, because they had discovered this new thing. And I was like, how...? How. Right? Because they're young women, either, there's this whole thing of, we must protect the young women, and so, they're not able or allowed to travel on their own, all this kind of stuff, and so, we're going to keep them where they are and let them out now and then. Meanwhile the sixteen-year-old boy is fine to move from Spain to Shoreditch to live in a flat on his own in the middle of London.

*Yeah.*

But even more so... Someone did that for that boy because they saw themselves from that boy.

*Yes.*

You're like, you're like a young me, that's why you're going to be amazing like me and I'll pay for you to live in this flat in Hackney.

*Yes.*

And I was like, OK, where are the people that are doing that for the girls? Who sees themselves, who sees the girls in themselves? Who's paying for them to come to live in a flat in London?

*Yes.*

So, it wasn't a tit for tat type thing in that moment. I think I was in, I think I was in tears, and I never cry, I was in tears by the end of the panel, because like... And they were So, open, So, smart. So, you know, what can adults do to help you? And I remember Ciara saying, you know, 'Don't just pat me on the back for thinking outside the box. Help me and support me to live outside of that box.'

*Yes.*

And So, it was this kind of aligning of, we've got to do it now.

*Got to do something.*

Got to do it now. Because, she's not going to be that young for that long. These kind of, formative years, then, it's going to run out, and, we're going to lose her. And that girl, you know, might even solve world hunger.

*Yes. And...*

Is on the way though.

*Is disenchanted now...*

Then that's it. And that's what was done. That's what happened to generations of those girls. Been patted on the head and, 'Well done for thinking outside the box.' Now go straight back into it..

*We'll take your idea away from you. Yeah.*

Yeah, right? And so, it was like, no, we have to do something.

*Yes.*

We work with these young women. We don't do it, no one else is going to do it. Literally.

*Yes.*

And So, it was this mad rush before Ciara turns eighteen. [both laugh] How can we pay for her to live in a house in London? So, that was, essentially what happened. It wasn't obviously, just for Ciara. And we partnered up with Salesforce.

*Mhm.*

And, we put together this kind of programme, this Incubator programme. So, you have it for, you have it for, the big companies in Silicon Valley where you get people to live together, or be in close quarters for an extended period of time. You teach them about business, teach them about product development, and then expose them to investors. That's basically what we did. These teenage girls aged eleven up to twenty-two. And, we called it Outbox Incubator, because we were living outside the box, kind of, outbox, inbox, ready to send, all that kind of stuff. And, put out the kind of call across Europe to say, who wants to come? Like you, are you eligible to come to this house? You good enough, can you express that you, you've got an interest, you've done something? You know, almost on a par of what these girls on stage had done, inviting you to come along and then and join in. Princess Anne came along and helped us launch it in the April. Launched the applications. And then we ran it that summer holiday. So, for six weeks we had a massive house in Tulse Hill in south London.

*Nice.*

Fourteen bathrooms, just as many bedrooms, 45 girls living there under one roof.

*Wow. That's a big house. [laughs]*

Massive house. Massive house.

*Yeah.*

[49:55]

And it's funny, because, I, I obviously was leading the team, and so, I think there were a good three weeks that I didn't make it to the top of the house, because there was So, much going on. So, obviously they all, the rest of them did. Because they were, you know, there was food... And, food is a big part of what we do So, there was a big food cupboard in the kitchen. All day there was somebody in that food cupboard, eating some chocolate, some, whatever. We discovered frozen Toffee Crisps at that point, there were ice lollies, you know, all that kind of thing. We were feeding them three times a day. And we had different people from the ecosystem coming in to run sessions.

*Yes. And you're creating the same buzz.*

The same, the same vibe, the same buzz, the same... You know, it's, it's a tech programme. You know, it's funny, because, you call it a residential, and it doesn't quite do it justice, because there's, what residential do you know where at two in the morning you've got Journey blasting, and the girls are singing at the top of their voice? Or they're up at... Again, these girls didn't sleep, they were up at 1 a.m., drinking tea out of bowls, because everyone, all the mugs had finished, or were in the dishwasher or something. And they were, they were reading One Direction fan fiction to each other.

*Yes.*

You know. Or, strange... What was it, Stranger Things? There was like, another show. Because in the evenings we'd have down time. During the day they'd have the sessions. But, it was that kind of, it was a tech residential, right. So, they were just as likely to be doing that as they were to be teaching each other how to code, or helping build a prototype, or... Today, Ciara's website was built by four of the girls that were in the house with her. There's another start-up called Lablin[ph] that does kind of science communications that one of the girls in Dublin runs. And has recruited one of the girls from Manchester. And there's another girl in Essex who sat on a panel for us last month who's written a blog, and it's on the other one's website. You know, they're all...

*Yes. It's an ongoing thing.*

And this is now, this is 2017. After two years, they're still building, like, the legacy lives on, that network, that same thing of, I applied to do history because all my friends were doing history. We have all these girls where they're all now, you know, let's meet at freshers. So, now they're freshers together, at the same university. Some of them are at Queen Mary, some of them are at Cork, some of them are at, St Andrews, or wherever it is.

*Yes.*

And they're all in it, they're in it together. So, they almost have, it's stuff that they've gone to university with, which makes it a whole lot easier, if you do feel like you're the only one on that course. Even if you are one of 300, you've got a sister that's in the physics lecture and you're in a computer science lecture.

*Yes.*

So, you're not alone. That person knows you from when you were little, because two years is a lot, it's a long time. [laughs]



*It is, yeah.*

[52:14]

And, you know, there's the Outbox legacy lives on. We now have young women who are running their own thing and we get the vibes, and they're creating the vibe in their schools, and all that kind of thing. And we have the documentary as well from the, Outbox, which is due out on Amazon just after Christmas.

*Would you do it again?*

We'd love to do it again. I think given the right nature of support. So, it cost a lot of money to fly 115 girls into London and get them to stay in London. It also, cost a lot of energy, like, human, woman hours I guess, man hours, to do it. And so, now, we're looking at how we do it in a way that, either scales, scales physically or scales impact-wise. So, the documentary is one way of doing it. We're talking to TV companies now about doing the same thing, in fact I've got a meeting later on today with one of the TV production companies. And having it as an industry joint with media type thing.

*Yes.*

So, we'd love to do it again. I think, you know, having support of a Salesforce or someone else, it's like, more than one. Initially we were supposed to have more than one partner, and that, Salesforce were kind of, just like, 'We'll cover it.' And we're like, OK. So, that we'd definitely love to do. But I think, doing it the next time, we've already learnt So, much, so, Welsh girls, for them, spending the week, spending a week in London is not the biggest thing that they're going for in their lives, not all of them. You know, Scottish girls the same thing. So, all those plans are tweaks, it's what we're now looking at, how we, we run it. Where we start, get the vibe, have the same impact, but doing it in a way that's more sensitive for girls that aren't.

*Yeah, there's always a, what can we do differently? What have we learnt, what's good, what's bad?*

Yeah, retrospective.

*Yeah, absolutely.*

Get with the retro. Yeah.

[54:00]

*You are also in the top, whatever number you are at the moment, of inspirational women in IT. It varies, depending on what volume you read. [laughs]*

[laughing] It does. It does, yeah. What day of the week it is.

*Exactly. And that carries a certain level of responsibility with it, doesn't it?*

Yeah.

*How do you use that level of responsibility to the best advantage?*

So, I don't. I think I've always had this thing in life where I just don't take myself as seriously as I should, or as other people take me, maybe. One or the other. Both, both levels are higher than basically I take myself. And so, there's a responsibility which I, I think I am... I have always had this thing where, with mentors or with anyone else, or even with the girls, I hold myself to a certain standard, just So, I don't shame them basically. You know, anything that's done in darkness will come out in light eventually. So, I have this standard where, you know, I, I do things responsibly. Like I don't put anyone in danger unnecessarily, so, we don't take advantage of anybody. I'm quite protective of all the girls that we work with, and what we're doing. So, for example, some companies will call us up and say, 'We'd love to do this,' and have them as a workforce, and have them contracted, and da-da-da-da. And I'm like, OK, well, no. Because, you get a lot out of that and the girls aren't really getting much. So, let's just end this conversation here kind of thing. But I think, what I'm again kind of learning, kind of listening coat I guess I'm wearing, or understanding, is that[, is exercising some of that power, and exercising some of that influence, which I just don't do. I kind of just, get on with it. If a mentor advises. I'll do something; if a sponsor says something. But I never say, that, I'm going to have that, I am going to do that, because, I know that's supposed to be done.

*Exactly.*

[55:45]

And it's something that I'm kind of, with more boards and different things that I'm joining, and, and being invited to do. So, I'm on a DCMS board now as well, and all that kind of stuff, with the Government, with their Minister of Digital. So, all of that, I'm getting used to, not, not just saying, yeah, I'm on this board, that's kind of core, I'm going to make contributions at the meetings, but being like, OK, cool, well, that's a problem, that you're going to stamp out, we're going to stamp out, we're going to sort that out.

*Exactly. And .*

No longer is it going to be that when you choose your GCSEs, you have to choose maths or art. We're going to stamp that out now. Because it's only a scheduling thing, and that's why we're cutting out a lot of people. So, that's like a thing that I now have round my, I'm going to make that happen. Or, having a female technical character in *EastEnders*, is another thing I've been banging on about for ages, partly why we talk to TV companies all the time, it's like, we're going to have more female technical characters on TV.

*Yes.*

I have the influence supposedly, let's see how far this goes, we're going to make it happen. I think, the most recent one where I didn't realise how much influence or power I had was, I've just come back from San Francisco, we landed back Saturday, and, like two months ago, three months ago. So, we knew we were going. It was one of those things where it's like, OK, cool, I'll ask this person I know, ask that person I know. Anyone want to host us while we're there or know people that, who can. And I put out the request on Twitter. And the response that came back was insane. We got, we... Mark Zuckerberg walked past us on the way to the toilet, this was last Tuesday.

*Yes.*

That was a thing that happened. Legitimately. That was a thing. So, it's like...

*Yeah.*

And, I would have never... You know, gently going, 'Oh please can I...' But when the 7<sup>th</sup> most influential women in IT says, we're going to San Fran. 'Well what you got?' That's the kind of thing that comes back.

*Exactly.*

And, and of course it's not for me to see Mark. It was actually for the girls to go and see Mark, you know. For them now, that's sort of a lifetime. And it's Mark that they have to see, I guess it's not a Cheryl or someone. But...

*No no. But that's...*

It's the way life is, right?

*And the reality's IT.*

[57:51]

Right. So... So, that's a thing that I'm now kind of, getting used to and being like, OK, cool. You know, I'm not power hungry, So, it's not that I've wanted to have all of this stuff and I can do things myself.

*No.*

But, if you've got the power, it's your responsibility. Like you say, to exercise it to use it, and what, what more can I do, what more, how more can I change the dial? How more can I move things in a way that means, things for other people. Which is why this project is, is wonderful, is, kind of where I started. So, I remember being... I remember being about ten, having passed this GCSE and being like, I love ICT, I love technology. I love the Web. Tim Berners-Lee was a British physicist, he created the Web. And you can imagine how many people now are employed, like, the impact that he had on the world. I'd love to have, I'd love to use my, my joy from technology to have that kind of impact.

*To share that.*

And weirdly, I'm kind of, I'm getting there, right?

*Getting there.*

I'm on course. I mean I'm not creating the Web. But I'm on course to have this thing where maybe eventually it will be, it won't be a thing anymore, and it will be like, yeah, there was this woman called Anne-Marie, and my grandkids will be like, 'Yeah, my grandmother was Anne-Marie,' and da-da-da-da. And they won't be hanging their head in shame that their mum was one of these weird women in tech. [both laugh] That kind of a thing. The whole weight has been like... When they have children, I don't want them to be ashamed that their mum was in tech. And also, if I have a daughter, it's 50 per cent me, there's a high chance that she might have the same drivers. And I don't want her... She might not, because she might be as, you know, unperceptive as I was, and kind of just do it anyway. But, I don't want her or, you know, the people my kids marry or whatever it is, to be like, agh! why would I want to be one of those tech women, like, get their hands dirty, or, you know, that kind of thing.

*Yes. I know what you mean.*

So, for that to be a thing, at least for UK and Ireland, not even world domination, that's, kind of what drives me. That's kind of it. And, the more I'm able to do the more...

*It can happen.*

That's going to happen. Yeah.

*It's a great driver.*

Yeah.

[59:43]

*What brings the most joy into your personal life? Apart from the joy you obviously get from what you do most of your time, what else gives you the most joy?*

Television. [laughter] you wanted to know. TV. I watch far too much television, I watch... I'm watching TV now while I'm talking to you.

*[laughs]*

So, what gives me joy? [laughs] So, TV gives me joy. Cooking and food gives me joy, which really I bring to work.

*No, that's good.*

Everything food.

*Yes.*

It is enjoy... I'm a very... I enjoy myself.

*Mhm.*

So, just, living brings me joy. Like, I don't know, a sense of purpose gives me joy. Freedom gives me joy. Sleep brings me So, much joy. I love sleep So, much. Don't get to do it enough.

*I'm So, sorry today's the day you had to do this.*

It's all right. No no, it's the third day that it hits me, So, it'll be fine. But... So, sleep, sleep gives me So, much joy. I think... So, I'm a very happy person. I'm not... I've never... I'm not unhappy. So, like... So, being a child genius for example, being the smart kid in the class, people have asked me before, you

know, were you bullied? Like that. No. Like, I, it was a bargaining chip. It meant that, people would pay for my lunch because I'd help them with their coursework. Do you know what I mean? Like I was very... I'm a, optimistic, I'm a happy person.

*Yes.*

That, touch wood, fortunately, not too many bad things have happened to me. You know, my cousin's died, my grandparents are dead, you know, I've... Not that, it's not been without sorrow, if that makes sense.

*Yes.*

But I just like to see the, I like to see the happy side of things, I like to see, I guess, good in people is maybe not the right way to say it, but I, I like, I see the positive, I always see the silver lining.

*That's good.*

But when I am shattered, cooking calms me down. I love, love, love TV. I watch far too much TV, and sleep. That's it.

*That sounds good to me.*

Yeah.

[1:01:36]

*What about you is least documented that you'd like people to know?*

My love for television. [laughter] What's least documented? Do you know what? So, I don't know. A couple of things. So, I... And I'm, I'm like, I'm, this is like a new thing. So, what's least documented? I watch a ridiculous amount of television. I watch a lot of TV.

*Yes.*

I only watch TV that makes me laugh, or that's joyous. So, I don't watch science documentaries or anything like that. Which is the most frustrating thing talking to these production companies, because they all assume I want to do, like, tech documentaries. And I'm like, I don't watch them. So, I do it, but I don't know who, what good looks like, put it like that. So, I watch a lot of television, a lot, a lot, a lot of TV, a lot of American TV, a lot of comedies. A lot, I watch too much TV. So, that's one thing that maybe isn't

documented that should be. Favourite shows, *Parks and Rec*, *Parks and Recreation*, a great show, with Amy Poehler and all that kind of stuff. So, So, TV is one thing.

[1:02:33]

The other is, I'm quite a sickly person. So, as a child I think... I was in and out of the hospital, at least once every two months up until the age of three.

*Wow.*

And it got to a point where my parents were like, do you know what, can you just leave her alone because, we can't just always be here. So, I had my tonsils out, I had my this, I had my that, I had my everything. And, my mum always thought I was allergic to nuts. Which, we realised at sixteen I wasn't, that it was just because I had eczema and I had asthma and I had this and I had that, I had whatever. So, I was a really, really sickly child.

*Yes.*

And as an adult I also, have been quite ill. So, every two years, at the moment every two years, the last, since I was, since 2001, I've been in hospital, under general anaesthetic, for various reasons. And, and So, now, now I'm still... So, this morning I was at the nurse actually. So, I'm always, I'm constantly ill. And it's weird, because it's not, it's not... I'm not like, it's not like cold. It's like, unseen conditions.

*Yes.*

So, I've got something now, like, almost diagnosed it, called hidradenitis suppurativa.

*Wow.*

Which is...

*That's a big thing to live with.*

Big name isn't it.

*Yeah.*

Big scary words. And it basically means that I get lumps all over my, I get lumps in my armpits, now they're in my armpits, that get really big, get really infected, whatever, they have to cut them out and whatever it is. And it's like, a really big illness.

*Yes.*

But it's something I've, I've had... So, I've had since 2001. So, that's why I end up going under general anaesthetic. So, it's something I don't talk about enough, but, this time round, because I had an episode a couple of months ago, which is why I'm still recovering, we actually, the first, one of the first doctors I saw when I went to A&E called it what it was, and up until now no one's wanted to diagnose it. And when you're on private healthcare there's a whole load of things like when I was at Deutsche, when I had the... So, I had two surgeries under BUPA. And, but I've got it. And So, now, now I've kind of, taken on this thing of, I have HS, have joined Facebook groups and all this kind stuff. And I've seen there, it's part of like, a group of autoimmune diseases that people really suffer from. So, there's a really high incidence of people that have this. But, but because it's under your armpits you never really see it. So, it's something that I'm considering, I think maybe later on, because I've got a lot on my plate now, but something that, considering maybe I guess doing something to kind of raise awareness, or that kind of thing, because I have it. For me, it's not majorly life-threatening, but I'm learning that for other people they have... So, I've got it severely, but not on that part of my body, whereas other people have it like, on their face, on their chin, all that kind of stuff, which means that they basically, effectively become housebound. So, it kind of, then plays with mental health quite a lot.

*Yes.*

[1:05:10]

So, yeah, that's something that's not really documented. Yeah. But I don't, I, I mean, I see the see the glass, [laughs] I see, I'm a happy person.

*Yes.*

So... Even though in hospital or whatever, I'm kind of like, I've had the same surgery five times, and So, it's really funny going under this time, my best mate was there, two, my both, two of my best mates were there, and they were like, 'Anne-Marie, you're going under general anaesthetic to have surgery.'

*Yes.*



And I'm like, yeah yeah, OK, cool. So, I will be out in an hour and a half. Do you mind going to pick that up, I'll be back, give it... And being to the nurse, "is it going to be an hour and half or an hour and forty-five because I don't want my food to be cold". And that was legitimately the conversation I was having.

*It's a chance for a nap. Yeah. Yeah.*

Yeah. No for a great chance for a nap. Because when I got under, I come straight back. So, I don't even, I don't even have the, the consciousness of time passing. So, it's great, like, it's not satis... That's not satisfying sleep though, if that makes sense.

*No, I know what you mean. Yeah.*

But yeah, but it's really funny. Because then, they were like, 'How is this a thing, that you're, you're going under?' Like, other people would be, you know, going under general anaesthetic, getting....

*They'd be really worried about the whole thing.*

You know, processing, whatever. And I'm like...

*It's a thing. And it's always been a thing. It's OK.*

So, there you go.

*Well it's been an absolute pleasure to meet you, and to have an interesting and inspiring conversation.*

*Thank you So, much for being open and candid in your answers, and willing to share your knowledge and experience. Thank you*

Thank you for having me.

[End of Interview]