



Capturing the Past, Inspiring the Future

# Shirine Khoury-Haq

Interviewed by

**Kerri Mansfield**

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*There we go. So, it is the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November. I'm Kerri Mansifield, independent IT consultant. Today I'll be talking to Shirine Khoury-Haq, have I pronounced that correctly?*

Mhm.

*COO of Lloyd's of London, the world's specialist insurance market, as it says on your website. With a career ranging from finance, consulting, through to operations, companies including Catlin, IBM, Macdonald's Corporation, Shirine had also lived on all continents, except Antarctica, by the age of twelve. Good morning.*

Good morning.

[00:40]

*Where do we begin? I've looked at a number of things that are out there in your public bio and other interviews you've been involved with, and you seem to have had a very interesting and extremely unusual childhood. Can we talk about some of those early years?*

Sure. You know, you mentioned that we had lived all around the world. My father was in the oil business, and, basically, we just travelled wherever the oil was. And then, sometimes they just decided to move to another country as well. So what that meant for me, and then my sister who was born seven and a half years later, was that, you know, we went to lots of different school systems, often in the middle of the year. So, my parents, luckily, were very focused on my education, and they, I was able to skip a couple of years along the way.

OK.

So, there was the good, that was the good bit. The bad bit was when I landed in Australia, and they have the equivalent of the A Levels, which is a two-year thing, and I came in halfway through the year... [laughs]

*Ooh, ouch.*

...the first one, from the US school system. There was a lot of catching up to do.

*Yes.*

So those, those early years from my recollection had to do with lots of different cultures, having to assimilate to lots of different school systems, and...

*And languages.*

Languages as well. So I picked up, my first language was Turkish. I didn't learn English till I was, around four. So, I, I picked up French in Algeria, Portuguese in Brazil, Spanish from school in Texas, at my school, because it was very similar to, to Portuguese. And these languages I haven't really practised along the way, except for Turkish of course which is my, my mother tongue.

*Your mother tongue, yes.*

*Yes.*

[02:42]

*Well that does sound interesting. And then there was a bit of a change in your teenage years, from what I gather. What brought you through that experience?*

What was the change?

*I think you... Didn't you start work at fourteen to put yourself through education?*

I did. Yes.

*That's a change.*

Yeah, that's a change. So along the way, my parents' circumstances did change, because, there was a slump in the oil industry, and, we found our, well, I had been

working since I was fourteen, so, I started off waitressing. So my very first job was at Pizza Hut as a waitress. And then, through university, and in high school, and I remember during my university summers, I would work in a petrol station starting at six in the morning until twelve. And then, from one till five I worked in an accounting firm, because I was studying accounting and economics at university. That was for free, that was just to get experience. Then from six till midnight, I would work as a waitress as well. But what that did was, it enabled me to fund my education, and to build up a little pot as well for when I started out after, after school.

*Afterwards, yes.*

Yeah.

*That's a lot of hard work.*

Mm.

[04:06]

*You're highly qualified. You mentioned university. From what I've had a look at, you've got qualifications from Australia, America, the UK. Have I missed anything?*

No.

*What took you to each of those different places to study?*

With, in Australia, that was when I finished up high school. Because, as I mentioned, my, you know, the oil industry was not in a great place. So my mother's brother, my uncle, lived in Australia, so we ended up moving there. So, that's where I finished off high school. Then I went to the Australian National University, and studied accounting and economics there. And then I moved to the US, after that. I had actually moved from the US to Australia.

OK.

So we, we didn't just live in places once. So, I had lived in the US, I've lived in the US three times. This is my second time in the UK; Australia was twice. And so we were back and forth quite a bit.

*Quite a lot, yes.*

So when I was in the US, that was actually quite difficult, because I moved to Kansas. And not only had most people there not heard of Australia, they certainly didn't understand what the universities did, they didn't understand that a three-year degree could be equivalent to more than a four-year degree in the US, because it didn't include all the electives.

*Exactly.*

So I had to go through a process of having equivalency for my qualifications, for my accounting and economics degree. When I did get that, it turned out that the accounting degree in Australia was more like a master's degree in the US.

*Oh wow. Yes.*

But, there was a period of time where it was hard to, you know, get that done. Anyway, so that, that was done.

*Yes.*

And then, I ended up becoming a certified public accountant in the US, just to US qualification.

*Yeah, to get the US qualification, yeah.*

Sadly that was right before I realised I didn't like accounting so much. [both laugh]  
But at least I had the, the qualification.

*You'd had enough by then.*

Mm. I also did my MBA, at Ohio State University, as well, which I loved, because that was a much broader business education. And then, here in the US – sorry, in the UK, IBM was kind enough to sponsor me through a leadership programme.

*Oh great.*

Kind of like a business management programme as well. And I did that at Bristol Business School, the University of West of England.

[06:34]

*Now I noticed that you worked for the McDonald's Corporation.*

Yes.

*Which I find fascinating. I have been to Hamburger University.*

Have you?

*I have, yeah. A friend of mine was the facilities manager there, in, it must have been Chicago, because that's where she lived.*

Yeah, Oak Brook, yes.

*It's a really interesting company to work for.*

Mhm.

*How did you find the organisation behind the high street restaurants?*

Well, I... As I've mentioned before, I don't, I tend to do things a couple of times. So when I was in high school, I worked at a McDonald's, so I did the burger flipping and the toilet cleaning and the serving at the tills. It was after I became a certified public accountant that they were looking for people who could do a dual job really. The first

was doing the accounting and financial management for McDonald's-owned restaurants, and the second was doing more of an operational role, to help those restaurants operate a bit better.

*OK.*

I have to say, I loved my time at McDonald's. Because I, I was promoted a couple of times, and by the time I left I was responsible for 160 restaurants.

*That's a lot.*

And I had a lot of leverage, right. So I could do what I needed to do. I often went out to the restaurants and worked with the managers themselves, doing everything. So I wanted to learn all the bits I hadn't learnt in high school.

*Yeah, exactly, yes.*

So I found myself crawling through freezers, taking inventories, looking at the whole supply chain, looking at how we predicted what the customer demand would be based on, you know, what had happened the prior year, prior week, et cetera.

*Yes.*

And, they had... And if you've seen the movie, gosh, what's it called? *The Founder*.

*Yes, Ray Kroc?*

*Yes.*

*Wasn't it? Yes.*

So they talk about the methodology of how a McDonald's is most efficiently run. McDonald's was great in that, they didn't force that down your throat. They said, this is the basics. So I was lucky enough to build some, some tools around that, so that I

could very quickly ingest the operational data of those restaurants and spit out what the issues were, and then work with the, with the managers to fix what they needed to. So we experienced increasing sales, we experienced increasing profitability. I built really good relationships with the managers as well. Oak Brook was helpful, the head office was helpful. I was doing my MBA at the time.

*OK.*

Now, you talk about hard work. Doing a full-time job and an MBA at night.

*Yeah.*

And one semester of the MBA was full-time as well, it was the full-time equivalent workload plus full-time job. I didn't sleep much. But, but McDonald's helped me, for example by letting me take on projects, strategic projects that I could write up when I...

*That you could then use with the MBA.*

For school. Yeah.

*Yeah.*

So it was, it was an awesome organisation.

*Yes. They are, they're absolutely incredible.*

Yeah.

*Yeah.*

So.

*They're extraordinary. Do... Sorry, do, do...*



No. No no no. Go ahead.

[09:54]

*So, during that time, and during your working life, you must have come across some obstacles that have made life a little bit difficult at times. What do you use that you have to overcome them? What sort of knowledge and skills and behaviours have you picked up that help you get through those difficult times?*

I mean, if I... Well, I mean, you're talking about professional difficult times, personal?

*Yeah, I think, sometimes we can bring the same behaviours for either.*

Mm.

*But we, we tend to find it within ourselves. And it just interests me what different people use to get through those.*

I... I don't know. I... I think that I am a survivor, and I've really had to be. And it started in my childhood. I was really dropped in some quite difficult circumstances without much support.

*Yeah.*

When I moved to Australia, I had never really experienced racism before, and, there was quite a lot of racism towards Middle Eastern people. And, prior to that I had grown up in, in the international school system, people of all races and nationalities. It had never occurred to me. And to land there, on the first day, and be, just, have it in my face, you know. Fist fights, people screaming in my face. You know, just awful.

*Awful. Awful.*

But I guess I just... I, I don't know. I... I always try to look at the bigger picture. I always think, this is not the be all and end all. There's a big world out there. And I do that in my professional life as well. I just think, you know, what is the absolute worst that could happen here?

*Yeah.*

So, you know, in that case, yes, I'd had some crappy childhood years, or some crappy high school years, but there's a big world out there [laughs], I can go to university, get a job, leave the country. I don't know.

*Yes.*

And I, I don't want to run Australia down, because it was a great place to live, but, you know, just, if you think about specific things that, you know, you had to, to come back from.

*Mm.*

The same with jobs as well. You know, I, I went from doing really really well at IBM in the US to landing in the UK where it was a much smaller organisation, the opportunities were much fewer, and, you know, having to kind of, build a career up from that again.

*Yes.*

But it's, it's always been about, recognising that, you know, I, I do feel unbreakable, if I can... The only person that can break me is me.

*Absolutely.*

No one else can possibly break me. I am an optimist. I do, always, think that things are going to turn out for the best. So even if it's horrible today, it's probably for a good reason, because things will get better down the road. And, and I do always

think, you know, there is, there is more out there than just this thing that I'm dealing with now.

[12:53]

*That's really cool. Thank you. So from, did IBM come straight after McDonald's for you?*

Yes.

*How did you make the move between the two?*

I had spent just over two years at McDonald's, and I had gotten my MBA. And I asked whether I could have a job at the head office, because I wanted to travel, and I was young, and I thought that being on planes all the time would be a fun thing.

*Would be fun, yes. [laughs]*

I later found out that it's not so much fun. And, they just, they, they asked me to continue doing what I was doing, and, which I loved, but I felt that having really slogged so hard to get the MBA, I needed to do something else.

Yes.

I also recognised that in my, in my role, I liked the consulting part of my job a lot more than I liked the finance and accounting piece.

Yes.

So I made the decision to move into consulting. And I looked at a number of different consultancies. And this was in 1998. So, it was on the cusp of the dotcom boom. Everything was around the Internet, and technology, and IBM seemed to be on the real leading edge of that.

Yes. *Mhm.*

I also liked, and I really work best this way, their approach to just giving me professional space. So, they didn't talk to me about how they were going to put me in a box and tell me what to do and how to do it, and make me into their machine. They wanted me for my experience, and, and you know, they were very interested in what I could bring to them, and they, they were willing to give me space to do that. And so that's how I moved into IBM.

*Mhm. And that was still in the States?*

It was in the States. So I spent three years with IBM in the US. And at that time I met my husband, who is, who was in the UK. And so I transferred from the US to IBM UK, and spent six years at IBM here.

*Wow. Were you still studying while you were with IBM?*

No.

*OK.*

No.

[14:55]

*When you were... You mentioned before, you were just talking about studying and working full-time. What advice would you give to others who are thinking of doing the same?*

[pause] I... I... Oh gosh. I don't know what advice I... I can tell you what I did.

*Yes.*

I didn't want to mess around. Because it is very hard to study and work at the same time. So, when I was doing my CPA exams in the US, there was a very high failure rate on, you take four, at that time you took four exams, there was a high failure rate

in terms of, most people didn't pass all four at once, or they chose not to take all four at once. I did not want to elongate the period of not sleeping. You know, *Friends* was big at that time, and I had half an hour every week to watch *Friends*, and that's, that was my only discretionary time.

*Mhm. Yes.*

So, I just put everything into it, studied, slogged it out, and just made sure that I was successful at the end. Did the same thing with my MBA. So I recognised it as, you know, two years of very very hard work, but then after that I could relax. I did not want five years of kind of hard work.

[16:15]

*No. No, I agree with you there. And so, then you were here, with IBM, with a husband.*

Yup.

*Another different country.*

Yup.

*Another different culture.*

Mhm.

*What sort of values did you bring with you? Because, all the moving around, you've picked up different behaviours and different cultures. How did you internalise them to become your values that you could take to anywhere, and through any situation with you?*

[pause] I... [sighs] I am very driven by my values. If you ask me to list them off right now, I don't actually know what they are. I do, I do know when I feel good and when I don't feel good. The values that I, I think I bring is, respect for, everybody.

When I first moved to the US, while my qualifications were still kind of unknown, my very first job after having gotten my degree was selling vacuum cleaners door-to-door.

*Kirbys?*

Yes.

*Yes.*

How do you know?

*[laughs] I know all about Kirbys.*

Yeah?

*Because I have a dust allergy.*

There you go. Yes.

*And they are fantastic.*

Well I was selling Kirbys. And, yeah, that's... I, I have not met anybody else who would know that.

*They're brilliant.*

They are brilliant.

*They are brilliant vacuum cleaners, yeah.*

Well I sold a few, and paid the rent.

*Yeah.*

But, you know, you get to see then that, you know, people might open the door and think, you know, roll their eyes at you. They don't know who that person is.

*Yes.*

It was the same when I waitressing, you know. I always say thank you. I always tidy up my plates. Because, everyone deserves to, to be respected.

*Respected, absolutely.*

When I, when I moved to the US, again, we, I, I ended up doing a job, but then, I ended up moving to a very small town where there weren't that many jobs, and I was a PA. And I was not treated very well as a PA. I was kind of bossed around, and... I, I had a very good education, I had good experience, and...

*Probably more qualified than your boss.*

I was. And, I didn't like that at all. And I didn't say anything, because I needed a job, and I needed income. But again, it teaches me a real lesson in how to treat people. When I was at McDonald's... You know, sometimes people say, you know, 'What is your best professional experience?' Even now. It was that, we went, we had a regional meeting with the McDonald's managers, and, there was a real division between head office and the people on the ground who were managing the stores. There was a feeling that they were the ones making the money, they were the ones doing the really hard work, and people at head office were just kind of, sitting there.

*Sort of riding off the back of it.*

*Yeah.*

*Yeah.*

So, we had a charter that we had to go up and sign, and I remember when people from head office were going up, there was a slow clap from the regional managers, which was horrifying. And I was just dreading my turn to go up there. And when I went up there, I got a standing ovation.

*Oh wow. Brilliant.*

And, the reason for that was, I was never head office when I was in those restaurants.

*Yup.*

I was in the freezer, I was in the, scraping things, I was cleaning things. And if things went well, I made sure the manager got credit for it. If things went badly, I made sure that, they weren't thrown under a bus.

*The team. Yes. Mm.*

And that I've carried through all the way.

*Yeah.*

There are things like honesty, you know, it's so important to me to have honesty and transparency in all of my business and personal dealings. And that's how I try to conduct myself all the time. And then I think finally, in terms of leadership, it's so, it's important to me that the people that I lead and that I work with understand where we're going, why we're going there, that they're part of developing that, but also that they feel completely empowered to deliver on it as well. They... I don't like someone breathing down my neck, so I try not to breathe down their necks so to speak.

*Other people's, yeah.*

*Mm.*



[20:46]

*So, you mentioned, is it Catlin, the company?*

Yes.

*I don't know them. What do Catlin do?*

Catlin? Well they've been acquired a couple of times since they were Catlin. But at the time that I joined them, they were the biggest syndicate and managing agent within Lloyd's.

OK.

Yeah.

*And then, so from there, you came to Lloyd's.*

I came to Lloyd's.

*With, as I understand it, two roles.*

Yes.

*COO, and also sponsor of the modernisation of the London insurance market.*

Mhm.

*That's a biggy, isn't it?*

Yeah.

*That's huge. How do you divide your time between those two roles?*

It, it has changed. So, I didn't come in with two roles; I came in as a COO of Lloyd's.

*Yup.*

But, one of my remits was to modernise the way that we work within Lloyd's. However, this is a, this is a market. You know, there are so many big risks where Lloyd's has a slice, but our competitors have slices of the same risk. So really, within the London insurance market, if we're going to modernise, we need to modernise the way everybody does business.

*Yes.*

So, there was a, there was a high level vision that I and some others who were, you know, brave enough to come in in early, developed. We took that to the wider market, and I was asked to lead the modernisation by the market at the time.

*Yeah.*

So, how do I split my time? Initially it was pretty much all modernisation. So I've been at Lloyd's four and a half years now, and my, my children are, just, almost two and a half.

*Just two and a half. And twins.*

Twin, twin girls.

*So that's easy isn't it. Two full-time jobs, and, and children. [both laughing] You like to be busy.*

One day I'm going to look back and think, I just don't know how, how I survived that.

*Yes you are. [laughs]*

But the first two years I didn't have the children, and I literally spent all, all my time building this, this modernisation programme. In order to get the funding for it, we

had over 100 meetings with executive teams and boards across this market, to try to convince them of the vision and to fund it. And, it was incredibly difficult, because we had had years and years of failed modernisation attempts.

*Yes.*

So, one hundred per cent of all those meetings involved being asked at some point, how are you going to make it different from that thing that failed before?

*When is this one going to fail as well?*

*Yeah.*

*Yeah.*

[23:30]

I know when I took this job, and when I, when it was announced that I was going to be doing the modernisation work, my friends just contact... They remind me now, that, you know, it was a crazy move, it was career suicide. I was told, I think I was the thirteenth person to come in to Lloyd's to try to do this.

*Ooh.*

So, you know...

*And you thought, I'm going to do it.*

I thought, I'm going to do it. Because, I, I... [sighs] I could see a way to doing it. And I could see that it was different from the ways that had been tried before.

*Yes.*

But, so, you asked about my time split.

*Mm.*

I worked every weekend, I worked into the night, I slept very little. But it was so important to just get that thing set up. My children were born through surrogacy, so I didn't have to be pregnant. [laughs] So I could... [laughing]

*That's a help. [both laugh] That's a jolly good idea.*

It was for, it was for a terrible reason actually, because we lost our first daughter...

*Oh, oh I'm so sorry.*

...you know, seven years previously, so I couldn't carry, I couldn't carry our children. But I did work until the day before they were induced [laughs], which, which was helpful for, for Lloyd's, and the market.

*Yes.*

But, I worked to set that thing up, to get the very best people on board, to get the money, to get the vision, to get the programme set up, to get the leadership in place, so that afterwards my job became just making sure that the very talented people that were on the programme just had the space. So if there was an obstacle, I would come in and try to remove that. If they needed something, I'd come in and try to give it to them. But when you've got the best of the best driving it, and you've got commitment, and you've got colleagues, and we had hundreds of people around this market, pulling together, and various committees and groups, just to get the job done.

*Mm.*

So then, the shift changed a little bit more, where I was spending less time on the modernisation, and I started looking inwards, into Lloyd's. But honestly, I, I ignored my Lloyd's job [laughs] for the first couple of years, to get that done.

[25:37]

*And did you take any maternity leave?*

I took ten weeks of maternity leave. I have to say, I was so lucky to, to be working at Lloyd's, and for someone like Inga Beale, at the time, because, what we... And no one pressured me to do anything. I could do anything I wanted. So I took ten weeks of maternity leave, and then I came back to work full-time, but it was four days a week at home, one day in the office. And those four days a week at home, my PA... You know, with little tiny babies, you feed them every four weeks, and then they sleep in between – every four hours, and then they sleep in between. So my calls were scheduled so that I could feed the babies, be with them, put them to sleep, and then do...

*And then, get calling.*

Cram the calls in.

*And then you start the whole cycle again.*

And, and I didn't have hour-long calls to chit-chat. We had short calls, we got to the point, we did the business, and then, I fed my babies, took care of them. So, I did that for a couple of months, then went to three days a week at home, and then now, still now that they're over two, I do two days a week.

*Because it makes a difference just cutting out that travelling time at each end.*

It does.

*Because that sort of... I know people work on trains, I know people do all that, but it's still to a large extent dead time, when you're doing it, isn't it?*

Well, and so is the time, as, well, me, I can't speak for all women, doing my hair and my make-up and everything else. So, I will fight, I know this is a technology thing, but I will fight video conferencing to my dying breath, because I do not want to look

decent on [laughs], on a video conference. I, if I'm working at home, I want to be working, and that's it.

*I'm with you. When I first started working from home I was working for Lotus Development, which was subsequently taken over by IBM.*

Mhm.

*And of course, Lotus very much facilitated working from home. You would go online, on the old modems, sync everything, go offline. But on conferences, people would always say, 'Are you in your pyjamas?' And you'd think, why would I be in my pyjamas? It's two o'clock in the afternoon. What sort of life do you live that, you would do that? And I totally get that that was people's, what they were really saying to me is, I would love to be in my pyjamas at two in the afternoon. [both laugh] And it just, it just wasn't me. You know, I'd be up, I'd be dressed, I'd be there, I'd be working.*

Yeah.

*There wasn't a desk, it was just the dining-room table, you know.*

Yeah. Yeah.

*It got cleared off when I wanted to put dinner on it.*

Yeah.

*That sort of thing.*

That's it.

*So yeah, I'm with you on that, there's no need for video calls, especially if they're all in their pyjamas. [laughs]*

I know. There are certain things you don't want to see, and once you see them, you can't un-see them.

*You can't un-see it. [both laugh] No, exactly.*

[28:28]

*So you've done a lot of modernisation of the insurance market. How much is technology affecting the insurance market in the UK and beyond? Because Lloyd's of course is global, it doesn't just operate within the UK.*

Mhm. A great deal. A great deal. So this is a very old market, it's been paper-based for a long time. And, I, I've only been in the market for, almost twelve years now. But historically, there would be a period of, you know, price... (Oh no, I'm fine thank you very much.) There would be a period of price declines, and then there would be a big event and then the prices would go up. So you'd have these highs and, and lows. But you could pretty much count that, you know, once they went down for a while, once there was an event they would go back up again.

*Go up, yeah.*

But the economics have really changed a lot in our markets, so, there are low interest rates, so there's a lot more money available, in terms of capital to be coming through the market. And we're not seeing those price... They're just low now. So what that's forced this market to do is, start to look at things beyond just the underwriting profit. They've had to look at their expenses, and how they work, and how efficient they are. So technology has been rising in importance.

*Mm.*

And then the clients that we serve, they're, they're the, there are all the Names. I mean there are the biggest Names, across the world. And our clients are investing heavily in technology, and they are investing more in data, and they are becoming much more savvy in terms of how they buy insurance and what they do and whether they self-insure or not.

*OK.*

So, we need to, we need to make sure that we, we kind of match up to that. We can't have that discrepancy between how modern our clients are and how modern we're not.

*Mm, exactly, yeah.*

[30:18]

And then, technology itself is, is business for us, so, Lloyd's for example is the leader in cyber insurance. So we've had to, we've had to be on top of it from that perspective as well. So it's immensely important. In terms of the modernisation, you know, I talked about how there wasn't a lot of faith in the ability to deliver technology in the past, and that was probably one of the biggest obstacles we came across. I... You know, and, I spent a lot of my time with my team trying to help people to understand why it was different this time. One of the, one thing that we did was, we brought in, as I said, the very best people, and the very best people aren't always in the insurance industry, you know? Sometimes you have to go out and get them from outside. And, that was one obstacle to overcome, because people assume that if you didn't know insurance, you, you couldn't do the job. We have a lot of people in this market that know insurance. If you can marry them up with people who know about IT, and data, and change management, and successful programme delivery, you can make some real magic happen.

*Magic. Yeah, absolutely.*

And that's, and that's the approach that we took. I mean, if... Paul Jardine, who was the COO of Catlin, if he didn't go out to try to find someone who knew process and operations but didn't know anything about insurance, then, I wouldn't be here.

*You wouldn't be here. No.*



So... Anyway, so, so that's, that's the approach that we took. We took people who really knew technology, who knew how to implement it. We didn't try to build everything from scratch. There are some things that work perfectly well off the shelf. We partnered with technology firms.

[32:11]

Another important thing we did though was, we had a stream of work looking at innovation and new technologies as well. So we always tried to disrupt ourselves along the way. And also, to build an architecture, and, you know, a set of tools that were modular. So, if we decided for example to progress with a blockchain solution, our architecture wasn't set up in a way that made it impossible.

*Yes, so you could slot things in and out of the jigsaw as well.*

Yes. But again, trying to convince the market, who didn't really understand technology that well, and thought it was probably going to fail anyway, to try to explain to them why we wanted to invest in, I don't know, an API gateway, or, single sign-on, or, you know, master data management, that was, that was a very hard sell. They understand it now.

*Which is brilliant, yeah.*

Which is brilliant. Back then they thought it was just a waste of time and money.

[33:15]

*Yeah. Oh I'm sure they did. You're also, you mentioned earlier that, when you went to Australia you became a minority.*

Mm.

*You're also, here, a woman in an overwhelmingly male businesses world. How do you help people coming after you, if you've sort of spearheaded that if you like, how do you help women coming after?*

[pause] There have been a few things, and it's not just women, it's, ethnic minorities, it's LGBT, it's all forms of diversity, that, anyone who's in a leadership position I, I feel has a duty to, to help others who come after them.

*Yes.*

What have I tried to do? First of all, I have insisted on balanced shortlists when I'm hiring for my teams. There have been a couple of instances where I've received a shortlist that all looked the same, and I refused to interview until I had something that looked a bit better. And I have to be... And I'm very clear about this. I, I... I told you how hard I was working.

*Mm. Yes.*

I was desperate to get the best people. I would have hired the best person, regardless of what they were. But I'll tell you, when those shortlists came up with other alternatives, a number of times the people that would have never made the first shortlist were absolutely the best candidates. And when they came in, they performed so well.

*Yes.*

So I think that, people in leadership positions have to insist on that, and you have to stand strong to that.

*Yes.*

I also spend a lot of my time mentoring other women, other ethnic minorities as well, and I try to explain to them what I did to, to try to get past some of these things.

[35:22]

*Mhm. Did you have mentors yourself as you came through?*

Always. Yeah, always. And I would hunt them down, would stalk them. I would identify [both laugh] who it was that I, that I needed to mentor me for that time. It would either be someone that I needed to learn from, in terms of my personal growth, or, if there was a difficult time at work, someone that could sponsor me and take me to where I needed to go.

*Yes.*

I tried not to be sneaky about it. I tried to say, you know, 'I stalked you.' [laughs]

*Yes. Yes, absolutely.*

'I want you to mentor me.'

*Yes.*

And then I tried to do a lot of the work for them, so that it wasn't hard to mentor me. You know, I tried to say, 'Look, this is what I'm trying to get out of it. Can you help me to do these things?'

*Yeah.*

So yes, I definitely had a lot of help along the way.

*It makes a huge difference doesn't it?*

Mm.

[36:12]

*You're quite active yourself in blogs and social media and so on. Which environment do you find most useful for getting your views recognised?*

I think it has to be a variety of environments. And I do get a lot of help with that. You know, if I had to sit down and write every blog, I just couldn't do it. So, I'm

very lucky in that there are people around me who are very good at writing, who understand the topics, who send it to me, I add my bits and pieces to it.

*You add your bits. Yes.*

And I think it... You know, one thing that I've learnt in this modernisation is, we made a mistake when we first started. So we thought, you know, we don't want to waste a lot of people's time. We'll just pick one person from each organisation, give them an update, and then that way, that organisation's covered. I realised that that, you cannot assume that that person will speak to anybody else in that organisation, and generally they don't. [both laugh] So, so we had to change that to speaking to everybody, all the time, on every platform possible. So Twitter and LinkedIn and our, we have a TOM website that gets about five to seven thousand hits a month. Which, it's surprising actually. That's a lot of people using it.

*No, I was looking at that, and your latest blog on that is 'Ready to Run'?*

Yes.

*With quite a lot of initiatives...*

Yes.

*...that are all just being released now.*

Yes.

*How much difference are they going to make to the...?*

I think they're going to make a lot of difference. You know, when, when we look at the benefits cases of each one of those individual solutions, they are, they are incredible. I mean to be able to digitise what we do in this market, is tremendous. Now, if I was going to start all over again, and if I had the faith of the market from day one, I probably would have set it up differently, in that, we were asked to make

sure that we concentrated on four things, no more, because there wasn't really a trust that we could do any more than four, because of history.

*Yeah.*

We were asked to ensure that the first phase delivered benefits on its own, and that each one of the solutions could cover itself in terms of benefits realisation. So we delivered four things, and, you know, some other things around it. We were also able to take in things from future phases, and bring them in. We are under budget at the moment, we're ahead of time on a lot of things.

*Brilliant.*

But we were able to do a lot of things early and still remain under budget. But the thing that we would like to do next is tie them all together, so that you have a straight-through process where one digital process is able to use the data produced by the previous digital process, and that the data that is put in is either only touched by a human once, or never at all.

*Yes.*

So, it, it's that, it's that bringing it together and knitting together all the solutions that really needs to be done. As I said, if I, if I had had the faith of the market to begin with, we might have started the straight-through processing piece a bit earlier, and invested in it. But when you were trying to convince people of the value of data, [laughs] at the basic level, trying to explain to them, it was just too much at the time.

*No. You've got to do a piece at a time haven't you.*

*Mm.*

[39:32]

*You are now one of the most influential people in IT, and in business, and that carries a lot of good things with it. You've got awards, you've got accolades for your work.*

*But it also carries a level of responsibility doesn't it. How do you utilise that in order, for the next generation that are coming through? Is there anything, programmes and things you've got in place for new people coming in?*

Well, I, as I said, I, I mentor a lot of people. Lloyd's has lots of initiatives in terms of bringing in young people, apprenticeships et cetera, and I end up mentoring a few of those as well. And I'm an active, I am the executive sponsor of the Cultural Awareness Network within Lloyd's where we work on ethnic minority issues. We're working across the market on that. So, there are various groups that come together now and talk about how to deal with this, with these issues across the board. I chair the EMpower steering committee, and that's, that's looking at issues around ethnic minorities. And this is on a cross-industry basis, so it's tech, retail, consumer, I mean, all the industries.

*Yes.*

And, I've never said no to anything I've been asked to do on this. So, it's, if I'm asked to chair something, or drive an initiative, it's so, so important that we provide a path for people to, to follow. I also led the employee engagement group within Lloyd's, where we drove flexible working through the organisation.

*Cool. Yeah.*

Which I think is a big driver of retention. And it's not just working mothers. We have lots of people who have, other personal interests, or commitments, or elderly parents, or young children, or, you know...

*Or just fabulous at a hobby.*

Yeah, or...

*And they need to be able to do it. Yeah.*

Or they want to teach a class. And, you know, they... Whatever it is, to be able to have employees who feel like they have complete and enriched lives. And if they choose, like I do often, to do bits of work late at night, because, I'm a night owl, I wake up at 10 p.m. really, that's my ideal time.

*Always convenient. [laughs]*

I know. [laughs] So if people can work, and, if you measure them on their objectives, which is, you know, how I survived with twins, it was very clear from Inga that she was interested in what I produced.

*What you produced, yes.*

Not how much time I sat in the office, and, you know, all of that sort of stuff. So, we can help people to find ways through their careers to balance work and life, and provide an environment where they feel included, like they have a voice, where they can be promoted, and treated the way that every person needs to be treated, then, you know, I try to get involved in all of those things, and, and help people along that way as well.

[42:36]

*Help them along the way. That's really cool. What brings you the most joy in life?*

My, my babies.

*Yeah?*

Yeah, I have to say my babies.

*Are they, they're twins, girls?*

Twin girls. They were, so they were two in August. And it took us, fourteen years to get them here. So, lots of rounds of IVF, and, we lost our first daughter shortly after birth, and, oh, so many miscarriages, and just a nightmare all the way through.

*Horrific, yes.*

And it was alternately, we had embryos in the freezer, and, I just couldn't carry them.  
My body just said, no.

*Not doing it. No.,*

No, no more. Because I had had septicaemia, and all kinds of horrible things happen.  
So, yeah, we had a lovely surrogate who carried them for us. It was her third set of twins.

*Wow.*

[laughs] So, it was lovely to be able to just hand them over, and just say, 'Ah, they're in the hands of experts now, and I don't have to worry about it.'

*Yes.*

And we're still in touch with her and her family, and, you know, so that, that's the biggest, the biggest joy and biggest blessing.

*Yes, wonderful.*

*Yes.*

[43:43]

*What goals...*

[break in recording]

*What goals do you have for the future?*

[pause] I'm still working on those.

*Mhm.*



I'm still... Having just announced that I'm leaving Lloyd's, I've left it kind of open. So, certainly on a personal level, my goals are to feed and house and educate my children.

*Yes, absolutely.*

And to be happy with my husband, and be, you know, do all of that.

*Yes.*

From a professional level, I'm leaving it open. Because I've had, you know, so much geographical experience, experience in lots of different industries, experience beyond tech and operations. So I'm just waiting to see what might be out there, and then I'll set a new set of goals after that.

*That sounds good. It's been an absolute pleasure to meet you, and have an interesting and inspiring in many ways conversation. Thank you for being open and candid in your answers, and willing to share.*

Thank you so much. Thank you.

[End of Interview]