

Simone Hume – DEC Oral History

Interview Access Summary

00:00:00 – Introduction

Gavin Clark, with the National Museum of Computing and Reading Museum, interviewing former employees and customers of Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC), as part of the 60th anniversary of DEC opening its first office in the UK. Interview with Simone Hulme on July 3rd, 2024, in Reading.

00:00:35 – Upbringing and Family Life

Conversation about how Simone's life started and her background. Grew up in a working-class family in Northern Ireland. Her father, an ex-military man, worked for Michelin, while her mother was a housewife. She has a brother and sister. Attended a state secondary school.

00:01:14 – School Years, Interests and Aspirations

Though not academically inclined, sports and gymnastics were Simone's key interests. Struggled with English, elocution lessons improved communication skills, which later proved valuable. Bright but bored in school, Simone was placed in the middle stream (CSE), limiting university opportunities. Outside of school, she enjoyed swimming, gymnastics, music, and playing the trumpet. She also participated in festivals and kept some of her interests, like elocution and music, private from her friends. Aspired to pursue speech therapy, but societal expectations redirected her path. After staying an additional year in lower sixth, Simone left school at 17, pursued secretarial training, and began working two weeks later.

00:03:18 – Move to England

Conversation about how Simone moved to England. Moved to Plymouth at 19 with a friend and began temping while searching for stable work, eventually landing a role at Plymouth Polytechnic (now University of the Southwest) in their personnel department. This made Simone pursue a professional qualification in the field. Met her future husband, which prompted a move to Manchester. Starting over, Simone took on various temping roles, including one at Northwest Water. Unfortunately, the contract there was short term, so she explored other opportunities.

00: 04:26 – Introduction to DEC

The search led Simone to Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC), though she initially knew little about the company or careers in technology. Through Manpower, an employment agency, Simone secured a temporary admin role in DEC's bid support team. During her time there, she learned about DigiTemps, DEC's in-house temp program offering longer contracts, better benefits, and potential continuity for permanent roles. After a few months, Simone transitioned to a DigiTemps role and gained more stability. Worked in bid support and assisted consultants with proposals for Multi-Vendor Customer Services, which deepened her interest in the work. After about six to seven months in the position, a full-time permanent position opened and Simone applied.

00:06:40 – Role in Bid Support: Part One

Conversation about what bid support entailed. The Multi-Vendor Customer Services department at DEC provided a range of technology support services. These included facilities management, disaster recovery, and preventative maintenance, designed to ensure customer systems operated reliably and reduced the risk of failures. Regular health checks on the computer environment to minimize potential breakdowns. The department also offered reactive support, ensuring quick fixes or upgrades when systems encountered issues. Simone explained that these services were essential to maintaining customer trust, as system failures could lead to financial losses and reputational damage. The services acted like an insurance policy, offering preparedness and peace of mind to clients.

00:08:45 – Early Days of Conceptual Selling

Simone described how selling services during the early days of computing required a different approach compared to selling physical products. Unlike tangible hardware that could be seen, touched, or demonstrated, services were conceptual and needed a deeper understanding of customer needs. Her transition from bid support to sales at DEC introduced her to this innovative sales approach. DEC's training emphasized selling with integrity, focusing on addressing customer pain points and challenges rather than pushing products. Simone highlighted the importance of understanding how services could solve problems or improve processes for clients, ensuring value was delivered. Simone noted a memorable training program, Maximum Account Revenue Selling (MARS), and recalled the lessons about emphasizing features and benefits rather than just the product itself. Simone emphasized that the strong training at the start of her sales career helped her develop a customer-focused mindset, which guided her throughout her career.

00:11:00 – Role in Bid Support: Part Two

Discussion about Simone's role in bid support which involved managing the end-to-end process of preparing and submitting bids for contracts. Coordinated timelines, ensuring all components of a bid were completed weeks ahead of deadlines, despite consultants and salespeople often working until the last minute. Responsibilities also included organizing responses to tenders, challenging consultants to ensure customer questions were thoroughly answered, and adding extra insights after addressing core requirements. Simone gained valuable skills in managing complex proposals, collaborating with consultants, and understanding the services her department offered. She also handled the final preparation of bids, including printing, binding, and couriering, ensuring everything was professionally presented. This role, though behind the scenes and not customer-facing, provided her with an excellent foundation in understanding the business and services offered. Her experience in bid support eventually sparked her interest in transitioning to a sales role within the company.

00:12:32 – Securing a Full-Time Role

Discussion about how Simone transitioned from a temporary position in bid support to a full-time role, driven by her desire for job security after recently marrying. Temping was never her preference, as she valued the stability a permanent position offered. The interview for the full-time role proved memorable. Unknown to her employers, Simone had just discovered she was pregnant and was managing early symptoms. During the interview, she experienced sudden morning sickness, excused herself to the bathroom, and returned to complete the process. A few weeks after being offered the permanent role, Simone informed her employer about her pregnancy. When asked why she hadn't disclosed it earlier, she explained her initial uncertainty as it was her first child and questioned whether her pregnancy would have influenced their decision. Her honesty was met with a candid response: they weren't sure if it might have impacted the outcome. Simone's transition from temping to a full-time role in bid support did not significantly change her responsibilities; the biggest change was the move from Manpower to DigiTemp.

00:14:59 – Transition to Sales and Key Mentorship

Simone's career took a pivotal turn when a new department called Base Sales was established under Marion Hathorne's leadership. Simone believes Marion was instrumental in her moving forward in her career. Base Sales focused on upselling additional services to existing customers, building on their equipment purchases and contracts. Marion played a crucial role in encouraging Simone to pursue this new opportunity, recognizing her strong communication skills, relationship-building abilities, and personality traits well-suited for sales. She assured Simone that the technical skills could be learned, boosting her confidence to make the leap. Simone's colleagues in bid support, however, expressed concern about her transition, worried

about her young age and lack of experience in what was perceived as a demanding, mature sales environment.

00:18:26 – Customer Relationships and Navigating a Male–Dominated Field

Simone entered the sales environment during a time when technology and hardware industries were predominantly male dominated, yet she found her unique approach resonated with clients. Despite the challenges associated with being a young woman in such a space, Simone believes her presence brought a refreshing perspective. Her customers appreciated her enthusiasm, different approach, and authenticity, which often provided a contrast to the industry's traditional, less diverse norms. Simone worked with a wide range of clients, including ANC, a courier company, Michelin, Telewest, and Ikea. Each presented unique dynamics—Telewest became the site of her largest deal, valued at a few million pounds, built on trust and strong rapport. At Ikea, Simone encountered a laid-back culture, where the CTO encouraged casual attire, breaking corporate norms she was accustomed to.

00:20:50 – Comprehensive Sales Training at the Outset

Simone noted that her transition from zero sales experience to a skilled professional was guided by rigorous and well-structured training. The company brought in experts like Ray Meek from the US, who delivered specialized sales training. Programs included personality assessments such as DISC profiling and practical methodologies like Shipley proposal writing, equipping employees to understand customer requirements effectively. The training covered a wide spectrum, from fundamental sales techniques to advanced practices. Simone recalled sessions on cold calling, where the team was taught how to initiate conversations with clients, transitioning from routine contract discussions to promoting additional services, such as preventative maintenance. These weren't generic telesales sessions but rather telephone account management, a role requiring deeper engagement. Building rapport over the phone, without the benefit of face-to-face interactions or video tools, demanded refined communication skills, which the training emphasized. Simone highlighted that the training wasn't limited to theory, it involved real-world scenarios where participants practiced uncomfortable tasks in training scenarios until they gained confidence. Simone believes it was among the best sales training she's received.

00:24:02 – Progressive Management and Behavioral Focus in Training

For Simone, one of the standout aspects of the company's training and management approach was its emphasis on behavior rather than just technical skills. Even the hiring process reflected this mindset, as interviews were heavily behavioral based. Candidates were evaluated not only

on their skillset, which could be discerned from a CV, but also on how they would handle specific situations, revealing their underlying behaviors and attitudes. This approach ensured the recruitment of individuals who aligned with the organization's culture and values. This focus on behavior extended into training. Recognizing that skills can be taught but behaviors are harder to change, the company prioritized cultivating the right mindset in its employees. The training emphasized empathy and understanding the customer's perspective, ensuring a respectful and customer-centric approach even while meeting sales targets. Simone reflected that this behavior-driven approach was reminiscent of Amazon's leadership principles.

00:25:59 – Encouragement into Management

The opportunity to become a team manager arose when Marion Hathorne, who had established the base sales team, transitioned to a field sales role. With the team operational and performing well, Marion needed someone to take over its management. While Simone was excelling in her role and enjoying her success, she initially had no aspirations to move into management. However, she was encouraged by leadership to consider the role as a step forward in her career progression. Simone ultimately accepted the position as the sales manager of the base sales team in the Northwest. The role was competitive, with another experienced candidate vying for it. This individual, a woman much older than Simone at the time, had strong aspirations for the role. When Simone was chosen, it created a challenging and uncomfortable situation, as her competitor struggled with the decision and eventually left the company.

00:27:32 – Early Experience as a Young Sales Manager

Simone stepped into a sales manager role between the ages of 24 and 26, a time when she still felt quite young for the responsibilities it entailed. Despite being a young mother and married, she found the role daunting due to its scope. Her responsibilities included managing, recruiting, training, and evaluating her team's performance. She also had to step in for senior leaders during their absences, such as Peter Foy, the Northwest Sales Manager, and Neil McTavish, the Scotland Sales Manager. This required Simone to oversee not only her base sales team but also occasionally assist with field sales operations in both regions. The role put her in positions of authority over more senior salespeople, which at times created challenges. For example, some older colleagues were hesitant about submitting their expense reports to someone so young. Despite these obstacles, Simone navigated her responsibilities effectively. Her career progression during this time was remarkably fast, although it wasn't part of a grand plan. Simone attributes her success to working in a progressive organization that rewarded hard work and integrity.

00:29:26 – Open and Supportive Career Progression

Simone highlights the transparency and openness in career progression within her experience at DEC, particularly in the northern offices. Unlike other organizations where career advancement can feel like a secret club, her environment actively showcased talent and celebrated individual achievements. Employees who were performing well were encouraged to advance, and their progress was openly shared as an example for others. Simone believes this approach creates a healthier culture, offering a clear path for those aspiring to grow professionally, as opposed to keeping opportunities hidden or exclusive. She acknowledges that this openness may not have been consistent across all regions or parts of the company but feels strongly that it was evident in her team. Simone credits the individuals she worked with, emphasizing their supportive and transparent nature, rather than attributing it to an institutionalized policy.

00:30:38 – Stepping Back from Management

Discussions about how at 26, Simone had another baby and found the senior management role challenging. She appreciated the support from senior managers but struggled with managing performance expectations, particularly with a team that was younger and not always aligned with her high standards. She found it tough to have difficult conversations with underperforming team members, a common struggle for many leaders. Simone ultimately realized that she missed the personal satisfaction of sales, the thrill of meeting her own targets and the simplicity of focusing on her own performance and doing what she enjoyed most rather than managing a team.

00:32:14 – Transitioning to Field Sales

After stepping back from her management role, Simone moved into Field Sales. At the time, she was likely the youngest person in the role, being in her mid twenties. Field Sales was a step up from Base Sales, offering larger contracts, a company car, and the opportunity to meet customers in person. While the core responsibilities were like those in Base Sales, Field Sales involved more complexity.

00:32:38 – Returning to Work After Maternity Leave

After having her first child, Simone took four months of maternity leave, which was extended to six months after having her second child. Despite the relatively short time off, Simone returned to work out of necessity. As the main breadwinner in her family—her husband being a lorry driver—her income was crucial. She also enjoyed her work, which made the transition back easier. At the time, maternity leave policies offered more than the statutory minimum but still weren't enough for her to live on. When returning, she was given the flexibility of a field sales role, which allowed her autonomy over her schedule. Simone didn't have to adhere to strict office hours and had the freedom to manage her own diary, attend customer meetings, and still

meet her sales targets. Her manager, Peter, helped make this transition smoother by ensuring that the field sales role was available for her when she returned.

00:34:41 – Doing the Right Thing by the Customer at DEC

Simone noted that DEC, the guiding principle of “do the right thing” meant ensuring that customers received exactly what they needed, not just what would hit a sales target. In Simone’s role, it meant being thorough and transparent in all interactions, especially during the sales process. For instance, when working with Tele West, Simone would go over every detail of contracts and schedules multiple times with customers to ensure they fully understood what they were getting. This approach earned her customers’ trust. They felt confident in her because of her commitment to providing the right solution, not just closing the sale. While there were sales targets to meet, Simone recalls that there was no pressure to meet quotas at all costs. Unlike some companies where missing a target could lead to termination, DEC emphasized professionalism, customer care, and balancing performance with customer satisfaction. Even as a manager, Simone focused on helping her team achieve their targets while ensuring the right thing was done for both the customer and the company.

00:38:28 – Workplace Environment at DEC in the Early Years

In the early years at DEC, Simone found the workplace to be a vibrant and fun environment. The atmosphere on the sales floor was energetic, with the team creating a positive and enjoyable culture. The layout of the building itself was memorable—sales teams were in one area, while engineers and support staff worked in separate sections. Simone recalls the camaraderie across the teams, especially when meeting with other Base Sales managers from different regions. When visiting DEC Park, she was struck by its scale and modernity. Coming from Northern Ireland, where infrastructure was more limited, DEC Park felt like a city within a city. It had its own street, bank, shop, and even an ATM—features that seemed impressive to someone new to such an expansive corporate environment. For Simone, DEC Park represented the future of business spaces, and it left a lasting impression. Her visits were often for training and meetings, where sales managers would collaborate and align strategies.

00:40:41 – Abiding Memories from the Workplace at DEC

Simone’s time at DEC is marked by fond memories of the people she worked with. One key figure was Marian, a highly skilled and influential woman who had a lasting impact on Simone. Marian was not only an excellent salesperson but also a kind and supportive presence, and Simone deeply regrets not reaching out to her before she passed away. Another standout memory is her time with the sales and bid support teams. Simone felt like part of a close-knit family, where everyone was supportive and collaborative. A particularly memorable colleague was Martina Roadway, whom Simone had recruited. Years later, their paths crossed again at

AWS, and Simone witnessed Martina's impressive growth and success. Peter Foy, the sales manager in the north, also left a significant mark on Simone. He was known for his distinct personality and leadership style. Peter challenged Simone's straightforward approach, advising her to embrace some "gray areas" in decision-making. His mentorship helped shape Simone's approach to leadership.

00:42:51 – Social Life at DEC

The social life at DEC played a key role in building camaraderie within the team. Every Friday afternoon, the tradition was to head to the pub, and while some might not return to the office afterward, it was a relaxed and enjoyable time for the team to unwind. Simone, who often had to drive, still joined in for lunch and socializing with whoever was around. One of the standout events was the DEC 100 Club, a recognition program for high achievers. The celebration involved staying in a beautiful hotel with your partner, where you'd receive a thoughtful gift, and enjoy an elegant dinner. In the evening, award plaques were presented. Team meetings were often held away from the office, sometimes with overnight stays, offering a mix of work and fun. Simone noted that these events created a sociable environment for them.

00:44:19 – Age Range and Work Culture at DEC

The environment at DEC was a mix of ages, with field sales team members typically in their 40s and 50s. Despite the age differences, the teams gelled well together, fostering a positive and collaborative culture. Simone recalls how the field sales team didn't view the base sales team as competition but instead worked alongside them, which was unusual in some organizations and likely a reflection of DEC's culture. One of Simone's key experiences was approaching Mike Sen, a much older, more experienced sales guy, to be her mentor. Despite his seniority, Mike was open to mentoring and offered valuable insights. Simone fondly remembers his willingness to share his knowledge, especially when she joined him in the field.

00:45:46 – Collaborating with Engineers and Technical Teams

Simone reflects on her time at DEC and acknowledges that while she didn't often travel with engineers or technical staff on sales calls, she did have a good relationship with some of the engineers. In instances where things were going wrong or technical issues arose, she would reach out to them for support. However, looking back, Simone feels she missed an opportunity by not building a closer relationship with the technical teams. She recognizes the incredible technical expertise within DEC, which she describes as amazing.

00:46:26 – Understanding Customer Needs Beyond the Sale

Simone explains that in her sales role at DEC, she had to focus not just on selling a product or service but on understanding why customers were purchasing certain technologies.

Salespeople engaged with both technical stakeholders, such as CTOs, and business decision-makers like finance directors or management directors. This approach meant understanding the broader business needs and how technology could serve those needs, rather than simply selling hardware or services for the sake of it. Simone emphasizes that DEC's training helped her see technology from the perspective of how it would help customers achieve their goals, tailoring solutions to meet their specific requirements.

00:47:44 – Evolution of Perception of DEC and Career Growth

Simone reflects on how her understanding of DEC evolved over the years. Initially, she wasn't fully aware of DEC's stature in the tech industry, but over time, as she began competing with big names like IBM and learned more about the company, her awareness grew. By the time she moved into the hardware sales team, she recognized the challenges of selling against companies like IBM and Compaq. This shift in roles allowed her to gain insight into product sales and work closely with partners. Eventually, when Compaq acquired DEC, Simone felt a mix of emotions: while it was a difficult transition, the acquisition opened new opportunities, especially as she worked for one of Compaq's top reseller teams.

00:50:25 – Cultural Differences: DEC vs. Compaq

When comparing DEC and Compaq, Simone highlights significant cultural differences. At Compaq, she noticed a lack of female sellers, particularly in the northern regions, and felt like they were among the few women in the field. She also describes Compaq's environment as more aggressive, or assertive, and somewhat arrogant in its approach, though she recognizes that the partner model was very well executed, and she learned a lot from it. In contrast, DEC had a more customer-led and collaborative atmosphere. Simone found the environment supportive, with a sense of camaraderie among colleagues. While there was still healthy competition to be the top seller, it felt more like a team effort, with people genuinely happy for each other's successes and teasing done in good spirit.

00:52:51 – Partner Model and Product Challenges: DEC vs. Compaq

Simone reflects on the differences between DEC and Compaq's partner models, especially in relation to product positioning. While DEC had strong channel partner relationships, the company was struggling to compete on price with competitors like Compaq, particularly in the personal computer space. At the time, Compaq's PCs were gaining traction in the market, with competitive pricing and strong growth, while DEC's products didn't offer enough of a differentiator. Simone recalls that selling DEC products became increasingly difficult due to price competition, despite technology being on par with competitors. In contrast, Compaq's partner model seemed more aggressive, partly due to the perception of their products being

more attractive in the market, especially when competing against companies like Dell. The difference in product positioning was evident, with DEC struggling to match the pricing advantages of competitors, making product sales much harder towards the end of her time there. Simone noted that the key to winning contracts at DEC, like one she secured with the Navy, often came down to relationship-building, as the product itself wasn't the main differentiator.

00:53:46 – Cultural Changes at DEC Before the Compaq Acquisition

Before the Compaq acquisition, Simone did notice some changes at DEC, particularly with leadership transitions. A U.S. executive, presumably from Compaq, was brought in, and this led to some shifts in the company's culture. While these changes were felt at a corporate level, particularly in Reading where the new leadership was more focused, Simone felt somewhat insulated from the full impact of the changes due to being based up north. There was a sense that the environment was shifting, with the presence of a "big brother" watching. However, Simone was deeply focused on her role, and she didn't pay as much attention to the broader changes at DEC during this time.

00:54:33 – Regional Identity at DEC in the North

Simone didn't feel a strong regional identity in the North during her time at DEC. While she collaborated with Base Sales, there wasn't much interaction or collaboration with other field sales teams, particularly from the South or Scotland. Though there were occasional team-wide events like award dinners, the field sales teams mostly worked in their own silos. While her manager, Peter, had relationships with peers across the UK, Simone didn't experience the same level of collaboration at the seller level.

00:55:40 – Recruitment of Women at DEC

Simone noted she didn't recall any specific programs at DEC aimed at recruiting women or positively discriminating in their hiring practices. She believed DEC's recruitment approach, which focused on behavior-based qualities rather than qualifications like a degree, may have naturally attracted more women. Reflecting on her own experience, Simone, who didn't have a degree but worked her way up, noted that DEC's open recruitment practices likely allowed more women to rise through the ranks.

00:57:50 – Transition to IBM

After the Compaq acquisition, Simone moved to IBM, where she started as a Partner Account Manager for the public sector. She later transitioned into account management, and defense and national security, as well as local government.

00:58:51 – Reflections on DEC's Acquisition by Compaq and HP

Simone, now at IBM, recalls the transition when Compaq acquired DEC, feeling that Compaq struggled to integrate DEC's technical expertise and services business. Despite the complexity of combining business models, she felt Compaq wasn't mature or experienced enough to fully manage the transition. For those still at DEC, it was a sad time. When HP acquired Compaq, Simone viewed it more positively. She believed HP understood the services side of the business better, offering hope that they could salvage the best parts of DEC's technological advancements. Reflecting on DEC's legacy, Simone noted how ahead of its time the company was, especially in areas like email and programming technologies.

01:00:57 – Feelings on the Acquisitions of DEC by Compaq and HP

Simone reflects on her surprise when Compaq acquired DEC, as she felt Compaq's business model—focused on high-volume, low-cost sales—was quite different from DEC's approach. Although she learned a lot from the acquisition, she questioned what Compaq truly brought to the table beyond that model.

01:01:36 – Feelings on the Acquisitions of DEC by HP

As for HP's acquisition of Compaq, Simone wasn't overly surprised, as she believed HP had a better understanding of the services side of the business. However, she was curious if there were any services left for HP to integrate. She speculated that HP might have been playing a waiting game, and overall, she felt less surprised by HP's move.

01:02:09 – Legacy of DEC and Lessons Learned

Simone reflects on how her experiences at DEC shaped her approach to leadership and career development. The key takeaway from DEC was the emphasis on culture and behaviors over just technical skills. She learned the importance of understanding not only customers but also the people on her team, and how the right behavior could lead to success even if the technical skills weren't fully developed at first. This insight has stayed with her, especially when transitioning to companies like IBM, AWS, and smaller startups. She credits Marion for helping her gain confidence early on, especially in roles that were initially outside her comfort zone, such as management. Marion's approach helped Simone understand her own potential, and she aims to pass on this same belief to others. Simone shares the example of mentoring a young man at AWS, who initially struggled but, with the right guidance and belief in his behaviors, has since become successful in his career. This reinforces her belief that recognizing and fostering the right behaviors is just as important as technical knowledge.

01:06:33 – Reflection on the Journey

Simone reflects on what her 20-something self would think of her journey. Looking back, she feels her younger self would have benefited from more confidence and self-belief. She acknowledges that while she's achieved a lot, there were times when a lack of confidence held her back from pursuing even bigger opportunities. She feels she could have aimed higher and pushed herself more, especially in certain situations. One key piece of advice she would give her younger self is to stay in touch with Marion, her mentor, and use her guidance throughout her life. Ultimately, Simone sees confidence as the main factor that could have helped her unlock even greater potential in her career.

01:08:03 – Lessons for Startups from DEC's Legacy

Conversations about key lessons startups can learn from DEC's legacy. Simone noted that the first lesson is the importance of truly understanding your customer's needs and tailoring products to meet those needs. Another takeaway is the need for startups to have a strong organizational structure and business model that can support customer demands. The third lesson is continuous development, ensuring that your strategy and go-to-market approach evolve in line with the market. Simone argued that startups should also prioritize behavioral-driven hiring and invest in people through coaching and career development. Understanding and mitigating risks is also crucial for long-term success.

01:10:40 – Sales Experience and Lifestyle at DEC

Discussions about the lifestyle changes experienced by employees at DEC, especially regarding compensation and perks. Simone recalls receiving a company car, mobile phone, and a generous salary. She had company cars, including a Vauxhall Omega, a Saab convertible, and an X-type Jaguar. As the primary income earner, her salary was pivotal in supporting her family, allowing for a comfortable life with full-time childcare and covered bills. Although the salary and bonuses were good, she reflected that there was a salary gap between her and the male field sales team members, which she did not question at the time. Despite this, it was still a financially secure job that provided a solid standard of living.

01:13:03 – Stability and Growth at DEC

Simone reflects on their time at DEC, emphasizing that she never felt the need to leave as they were in a constant learning and growth phase. Moved roles quickly, with each transition offering new challenges and opportunities. Despite not always feeling confident, she didn't consider looking elsewhere for better pay or opportunities. DEC provided plenty of chances to

explore different areas of the business, and manager was supportive of desire to branch out, whether into field sales or product sales. Openness and encouragement from management allowed Simone to feel secure and supported in the role, making the company a place with room for growth.

01:14:56 – Family and Friends' Reaction to the Career at DEC

Simone shares that her friends and family didn't fully understand their work at DEC, especially when it came to selling services. While people were familiar with computers and PCs, the concept of selling wraparound services, such as disaster response, remote management, or training, was hard for them to grasp. The feedback often left them frustrated, as explaining the nuances of the service-based model proved difficult. In hindsight, she realized that selling services was ahead of its time, and educating people about the value of these services was a challenge.

01:15:52 – Selling DEC Services and Customer Reception

Conversation about how customers were generally receptive when they called to sell DEC services, especially because they focused on addressing the customers' pain points. By discussing what clients were already using and identifying their challenges, such as remote management or on-call stress, they could position DEC's services as solutions. For example, when a customer mentioned being on call during the weekend, the response was often enthusiastic, with many eager to adopt services like remote management to ease their workload. By focusing on solving practical challenges, the sales approach was effective in gaining interest and securing signups.

01:16:47 – DEC's Relationship with Customers

Simone recalls that DEC maintained strong relationships with its customers, and vendors were generally open to conversations. There were no challenges in securing meetings, as the approach was based on understanding the customer's needs and existing contracts. Although sometimes creative methods were needed to get in touch with clients, the overall strategy was effective. DEC's team was trained to understand the customer's environment and offer tailored solutions. Initially, base deals were handled entirely over the phone, but by the time Simone left, the role had evolved into a hybrid one with some face-to-face customer interactions and even company cars for certain sellers.

01:18:05 – Travel Experiences with DEC

Simone didn't travel much internationally with DEC, mainly staying within the UK for work trips to locations like Reading and Scotland. However, the opportunity to travel abroad came later during the Compaq era when she attended large sales events, including a trip to Paris. This

marked a shift, as previously, travel was limited to domestic locations. Despite this, the UK trips were still considered highlights and enjoyable.

01:18:47 – DEC's Legacy and Influence – Reflections on the lasting impact of Digital Equipment Corporation

Conversation on the enduring impact of Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) and how its technological and cultural innovations have shaped the modern world. The discussion highlights DEC's pioneering role in the development of programming languages and early mobile devices. It's pointed out that many people today are unaware of DEC's significant contributions to the technologies that power today's internet and smartphones. A notable example is DEC's involvement in the evolution of mobile technology, from their digital jukebox to the iPaq and ultimately to the iPhone. This is indicative of how DEC's early innovations laid the groundwork for the modern devices we now take for granted. Beyond technology, DEC's legacy also extends to the corporate culture and the way the company approached business. The concept of conceptual selling—selling the need for a product or service rather than a tangible item—is something that has remained essential in the modern tech industry. DEC's forward-thinking and collaborative environment made a lasting impression on those who worked there, teaching valuable lessons that have carried over into today's business practices. The conversation touches on how this consultative approach is particularly relevant in selling abstract services like cloud computing, which many salespeople struggle to grasp, especially if they come from a background in product or commodity selling. DEC's contributions to technology and business culture continue to resonate today, even if many people don't realize where these innovations originated. From the tools and platforms used to the way businesses engage with their customers, DEC's influence remains a powerful and often understated force in today's digital world.