

MARCH 2020

DAWN SHERWOOD

THERE'S NO SUCH WORD AS CAN'T

DAWN SHERWOOD DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMME

Dawn fell into tech through good fortune but her achievements since, can't just be attributed to luck or chance. Through hard work, determination, and a strong mindset, Dawn has grown and progressed, on a fantastic journey.

"I NEVER HAD AN
OVERALL PLAN
AND HAVE KEPT
TO THAT
MINDSET TO THIS
DAY"



IT has been the home of Dawn's career for over thirty years, including ten years in the Product space before moving into Project and Programme focused roles. As a young girl, Dawn wanted to be a teacher. However, a stroke of luck found her working as a temp admin assistant, which became a permanent job managing stock management and invoicing in a tech company. After this experience, it was a no-brainer for Dawn that she would remain in tech in some form.

Although Dawn has always remained within the technology space, this was not by design. Her key interest in the companies she has worked for, has been their drive to success. In every role change, she has also ensured that it is a challenge, not just a straightforward company swap. Whilst she has admitted to never having an overall plan, she always aims to reach high and choose opportunities which gives her the chance to grow and progress.

ALWAYS AIMING HIGHER

With every career move, Dawn aimed higher and always pushed herself towards an opportunity. When she moved into a tester role for a software company, and quickly discovered that there was an opportunity to write an end user manual, and then go on-site to train staff, she quickly built a case and proposed it. She was awarded the opportunity. This has ingrained a mode of working which she still adheres to; find an opportunity and build a case which will push you towards it.

Dawn cites her biggest personal achievement as having pushed herself harder than ever to take more difficult roles. This included a six month period in a dual role of Programme Manager and CTO. This role posed a huge challenge to Dawn's confidence, as she was not only representing the company on her own, but also had the responsibility of delivering for clients so that they also met their targets. Whilst recognising that not everything was perfect, she realised that everyone has a version of the same issues wherever you go, and it's important to leverage your experience to help.

More importantly though, Dawn admits that her best achievement so far overall, is that nobody in her team takes credit individually for what has been done as a team. She has ensured that team spirit is priority, and that all successes and failures are felt as a team, not as an individual, therefore giving everyone a sense of purpose and achievement.



CHALLENGES

All great journeys come with their own challenges. Dawn admits to being a doubter by nature and struggling with her self-confidence and belief in her own abilities. These struggles can sometimes resurface, but thanks to a great Dale Carnegie training opportunity and meeting the inspirational Kate Peacock, Dawn realised that this internalised fear meant that she was the only one getting in the way of her own success!

KEY SKILLS OF A DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMME

There are many skills beneficial to the role, but to condense them, Dawn emphasises the importance of the following:

- Ability to identify specific skills required and to ensure you have the right team(s)
- Understanding the needs of each individual client; each client is different
- Building bespoke relationships and trust with clients
- Have experience of being on the ground so you can guide and share experiences with all team members to help them learn and find success as a team.

SWITCHING OFF FROM WORK

It's important to switch off from work, and to give your body and mind time to recover and rest. Dawn enjoys watercolour painting and racing cars with her husband in her spare time, getting involved in hill climbs and track days with their Morgan 3 wheeler!

In our recent event, Dawn emphasised how nobody should be scared about having a life outside of work, and she certainly sets a great example of how to switch off and enjoy yourself.



LEADERSHIP

"I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO BRING OUR TEAMS ON THE JOURNEY AND WATCH THEM SAIL"

Leadership is a key part of Dawn's role, and she strongly emphasises the need for complete respect and taking the time to fully understand each team member on an individual basis. She explains that if you can treat others how you want to be treated "you can do anything as a leader."

As everybody is different, she strongly urges leaders to fully understand what motivates and drives each team member in order to know how to manage and lead that person effectively. This is an important way to work together to help the individual grow, whilst also keeping the overall team motivated. In reference to herself, she states how she never compares herself to anybody else, because everybody is different. By acknowledging her strengths and weaknesses, she can leverage her knowledge, and also find out where she can learn and grow.

RECRUITMENT & DIVERSITY

To compare applicants for a role purely based on having the hard skills, knowledge and ability, limits the progress of the company and the individual. Having the right skills on paper, is just one small aspect of a much bigger picture. In order to hire effectively, the employer needs to gain a much bigger picture of the candidate overall, including motivators, drivers, and where they see their career progressing.

"MY MANTRA IS TO GET THE RIGHT JOB FOR THE RIGHT PERSON, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND."

Dawn emphasises how, within her role, she doesn't force diverse recruitment, it is rather, something that just happens when unconscious bias is removed from the recruitment process. As a multi-cultural and diverse company, they are already attractive to a diverse range of applicants, but being based in Manchester is also a benefit, as they automatically have access to a very diverse, skilled talent pool. When recruiting, Dawn focuses initially on three areas:

- Are we the right fit for the candidate?
- Is this the right candidate for the role?
- Do they fit with our culture?



PERSONAL MOTIVATORS

A strong mindset of 'work hard and treat everyone as you would want to be treated' really drives Dawn's work, and she always aims to make a difference, no matter how small. Being able to develop her own teams and watching them 'sail' has also always been a key driver for Dawn, as well as her own children. She believes it is fundamental to show them that nothing is impossible and to always shoot for the moon!



THE MANCHESTER TECH SCENE

When Dawn first started working within the technology sector, she explains how changes were much slower to happen. Now, however, tech is constantly emerging and changes are so quick and reactive that it is sometimes hard to keep up. Therefore Dawn recommends that decision makers within companies, ensure that they are using the right tech for their specific demands rather than simply 'jumping on the latest bandwagon'.

Talking on Manchester, Dawn expressed how the growth in the city has been phenomenal and is stunned at how it has progressed into the huge, influential tech hub it is today. Predicting that the growth will continue, she also touches on how this could pose the challenge of having enough quality resources to fill roles. In order to address this challenge, Dawn says that we all need to ensure that there are more graduate schemes in place to make sure that we have enough talent for the future.

“

DON'T TRY TO
PIGEON-HOLE
YOURSELF TOO
SOON INTO A
ROLE. GET AS
MUCH
EXPERIENCE AS
YOU CAN.

ADVICE

Dawn currently loves the diversity in her role, and how nobody is pigeon-holes early in their career. During her time at her current company, she has been given the opportunity to play to her strengths, whether that be as a temporary CTO, account manager, or a consultant!

Therefore her key pieces of advice to others is to never pigeon-hole yourself too soon into a role. Take advantage of every opportunity given to you in order to gain as much experience as possible. This will help you realise your strengths and how you want your career to progress moving forwards.

To herself, Dawn would always give the advice to 'never doubt your abilities' and to always find opportunity, build a case, and push yourself towards it. This is how she has progressed so far throughout her career, and is a mantra she continues to live by,





KNOW SOMEONE WITH A GREAT STORY TO TELL?

Maxwell Bond believe in giving back to the technology community so if you think anyone has a great story to tell or can inspire others, please let us know and we'll reach out to them for potential future opportunities.

www.maxwellbond.co.uk

bethany.stevens@maxwellbond.co.uk

0161 359 3280

maxwellbond