

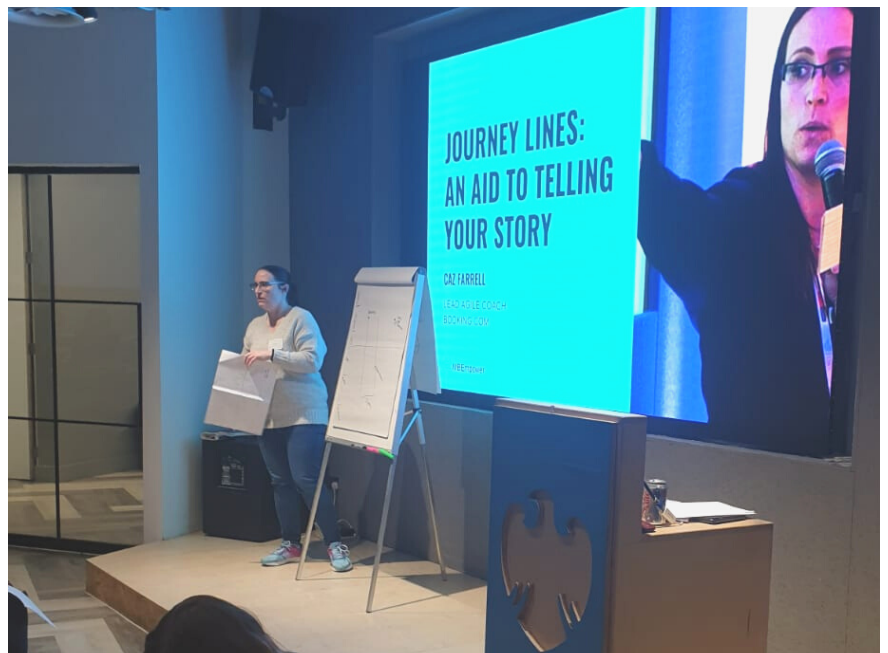
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# CAZ FARRELL

JOURNEY LINES: FROM GIRL GUIDE TO LEAD AGILE COACH

## CAZ FARRELL LEAD AGILE COACH

Inspired by her coding Girl Guide Leader, Caz was determined to make a difference in the world of technology, and put everything she could into achieving her goals. Read her story here.



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THAT"

Aside from the 20 years of hockey-playing experience under her belt, Caz is also an accomplished Lead Agile Coach, who has wanted to work in tech almost all of her life. At the age of just fifteen, she researched the A-Levels she would need to study Computing at university, and later went on to complete her degree in Computer Studies at Liverpool John Moores after receiving an unconditional offer, despite her grades not being what she wanted.

Caz chose to do a sandwich degree, whereby she completed one industry year as a Junior Project Manager and completed an APMP qualification at the same time. After completing her degree she moved into a contract role as Project Coordinator, but was quickly given more responsibility and was promoted to Project Manager after excelling in her position and going 'above and beyond'. An amazing success, but Caz didn't stop there.



## FINDING HER CALLING

Noticing a skill gap on her project, Caz was keen to learn and fill that gap herself. Leveraging help from a third party developer, she quickly became familiar with the system functionality, and consequently wrote the whole user guide. As her contract ended, she was offered a permanent position as a Business Systems Analyst. Caz felt like she had 'found her calling', explaining how "all my life I'd annoyed people asking variations of the question 'why', and now I could do it for a living!"

## CONTINUOUS LEARNING JOURNEY

Caz has an APMP qualification, UML qualification, a (lapsed) certified scrum master qualification, and a degree, but admits to learning much more from soft skill courses she has completed including leadership training which has helped her effectively delegate tasks, provide feedback and manage people. As well as this, Caz has always endeavoured to work hard and seek honest feedback from inspiring managers, who have helped her build confidence, challenged and championed her.

In her eight year period at Swinton Insurance, Caz progressed from Senior Business Analyst, Software Team Lead, to Software Development Manager, which allowed Caz to gain invaluable knowledge and experience. Upon a restructure, which saw Swinton outsource her role, Caz moved to Booking.com as a Scrum Master, which evolved into an Agile Coach.

When the Lead Agile Coach Role was advertised, Caz was encouraged to apply, but experienced some Impostor Syndrome. It wasn't until her colleague gave her a 'bit of a kick' that she took the plunge, and of course, was successful.

As a Lead Agile Coach, she has been pushed the furthest outside of her comfort zone. As agile is still a relatively immature market, there aren't many experts in the field, and Caz has benefited from being given the scope and trust to make mistakes and learn and grow from them.

## KEY SKILLS FOR A LEAD AGILE COACH

Caz emphasises how a good Lead Agile Coach should express empathy, humility and leadership, and often something of a "data geek." As a lead, Caz explained the importance of being able to aggregate data and tell the story at a higher level.

The ability to empathise with colleagues isn't something that someone can necessarily develop, but it really does boil down to the ethos of "know your people, know your people, know your people!"

The job of a leader is to adapt to each person's individual needs. It's also important to show humility. Caz explains how she is always open and honest when she doesn't know something, so that her team know they can go to her when they don't know the answers.

"The ability to make myself vulnerable and ask for feedback plays into that too" she explained.

## TEAM SPORTS & TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

When her CV didn't have much technical experience, Caz heavily emphasised the transferable skills she had gained through playing Hockey, umpiring, coaching, and girl guiding as a guide, ranger, young leader, and leader. "This really helped me get my foot in the door."

# IMPORTANCE OF COGNITIVE DIVERSITY

It's so important to hire people who have individual differences especially in a position where you are building things for other people. Caz uses the metaphor:

"Imagine a piece of Swiss cheese - the stuff with the holes in. Each slice represents a different person and the holes represent skill gaps or missing experiences. Put extremely simply, people who are the same as I am, will have those holes and blind spots in the same places. If you put two slices together, it's likely that only a couple of those holes will be covered. The aim of diversity and inclusion for me is to limit the number of holes we have when we put all of our slices of cheese together. This can increase innovation, creativity, and decision making."



## RETAINING TALENT

As a firm believer in Dan Pinks 'purpose, autonomy and mastery, Caz aims to always provide those attributes to her skilled workers, because she says that's how "magic can happen".

"There's no point in hiring great people and asking them to leave their experience and knowledge at the door with a 'that's not the way we do things here' attitude".

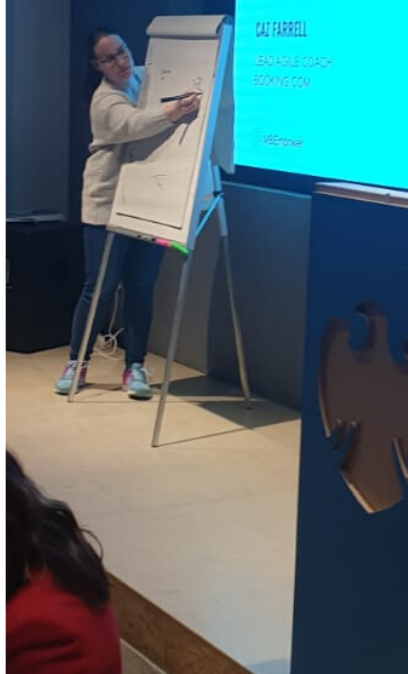
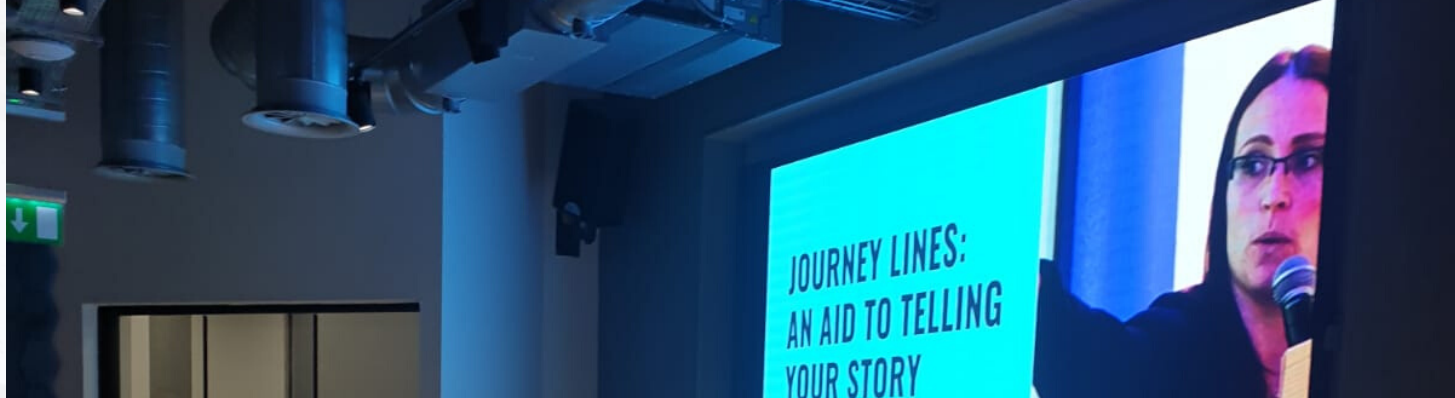
## MOST INTERESTING SECTOR

The sector Caz most enjoyed was the one that challenged her the most. The gambling industry was fast paced, and complex, with lots of really interesting rules. From proving the pay tables, to the thrill of being on the trading floor, and even the time she cut a customer off before managing to place their bet! The industry was challenging, incredibly varied, and therefore immensely interesting!



## MANCHESTER TECH SCENE

"Technology is always fast paced and will always keep you on your toes" Caz explains "There's never a dull day!" With tech constantly emerging and developing, there is always something new to learn which will benefit your team, your personal development, and your customers. It's exciting, particularly in Manchester, the home of tech. "We boast the very first electronic stored program computer and Alan Turing!" As we all know, Manchester's tech industry is very competitive with great companies and great technologists, which consistently raises the bar and challenges us. Caz envisions "this triggering more innovation."



# 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.

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