

QG Breakfast Series

6 August 2019 event - transcript

Interviews with presenters

Fiona Habermehl, Asia Pacific Assurance Technology Leader, EY

MALE: Hello Fiona.

FIONA: Hello, thank you very much for having me.

MALE: Tell us about the exciting work that you do.

FIONA: So my role is exciting in that it is all-encompassing all areas of technology so it's keeping pace with the change of technology and implementing solutions that really transform our business and to that end give our clients much better outputs with greater client insights because of the technology we implement.

MALE: So how exciting is it for you to be central to all of this change?

FIONA: Yes very central to all of the change and our leadership team see that we are that people element that have a very good understanding of our legal, our regulatory and risk requirements but really have a deep understanding of the technology and bring in the expertise when we need it to help us drive better solutions and better outcomes and really ask really great questions to get better outcomes.

MALE: What sort of feedback are you getting from those involved because change can be quite frightening for some can't it?

FIONA: Yeah well we have just implemented a large business transformation for analytics and that involved actually taking away some of the work that our auditors would do on cleansing and transforming data. They were, there was actually quite a lot of resistance to that at first. We implemented it and we found that it was the junior staff that came absolutely with their feet, we literally cannot keep up with them because they see how much advantage and how amazing this is for them in their work, that oh my goodness, now we don't need to do this and it allows me to focus on the real things that are meaningful to our clients in their work. And we can't hire quick enough to it, for those services that we are offering them.



MALE: It's changing that quickly?

FIONA: It's changing very quickly. I, recently I was on the steering committee with the executives yesterday, I actually said to them we need to hire more people, we can't be saying no to these projects. We look after the whole area, China is transforming, Japan is way ahead of the game as well. And also we find that each of the regions are at different maturities and so it's keeping pace and understanding exactly where they are in their economy and with their change and helping them with that and helping them have the right expertise to drive this strategy and their implementations. I can't budget any more for 3 to 5 years, I budget obviously yearly but I have even said to leadership that budget yearly, honestly it's the value of the dollar amount. But then we will get projects that people haven't thought about, literally on a monthly basis that we will need to quickly hop onto to help them to implement because it's the people that are coming up with the ideas and it's the value that it is going to add to their jobs. So that's what we're finding how quickly technology is changing and it's exciting, I love it.

MALE: It is exciting so, given that, what are some of the lessons that you have learnt?

FIONA: I find that when we talk about technology it can become quite overwhelming, people find, and even I do, I get some times oh my goodness, this is quite overwhelming, how do I keep up, what ideas can I have and as a leadership team we do the same. And we made a conscious decision that we could either stand still and wait for the solution to evolve to where it needs to be because obviously technology is transforming and when something new comes out, it's not perfect. And we have made a decision that that's okay, we just need to get on the train and if we make a mistake or things don't work as we had wanted to we take stock, we fail, what we say is fail fast, maybe that's you know not the right wording but we fail fast and we say no, this isn't going to work and so we change tact. And a really good example of that is an automation project that was put in place. It was to help the business with an automation, it was driven by the business and what we found was they had developed it so it was for a smaller market but it couldn't be industrialised. And so we actually turned it all off and we said do you know what we really need to do, we actually need to centralise this process and do it manually. And once you have all those people doing it manually, they understand every single component. We also had found that it was great for year one but it actually wasn't year two, year three because the process changed. So once we have that centralised and do it manually we're then able to back fill with technology and that's where it's really important. This is why people's jobs are not going to be out of, they are not going to be out of a job, because it's those people that understand the process that can help bring in the IT expertise to say it needs to do A, B, C, D and then we implement a really good robust solution.

MALE: So the future is exciting as you said today and other speakers have said that robots aren't taking over, robots are not going to control everything that we do but people are very central to change and central to technology and the growth of businesses.

FIONA: They absolutely are and we are globally talking to really big business. We are engaging with government, we are engaging in the conversation of how can we actually

embrace this change, embrace this technology and move forward together. This is not something that people can do in isolation of others and others skill set which is why diversity and inclusiveness is key to the skill set that is required for the future.

MALE: Fiona lovely to talk to you, lovely to meet you, thanks for your time.

FIONA: Thank you very much for having me.