

QG Breakfast Series

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My journey from... I don't know much about technology to Asia Pacific Technology Leader

Fiona Habermehl, Asia Pacific Assurance Technology Leader, EY

MC: Now it's my great pleasure to introduce Fiona Habermehl to the state. Fiona leads the Asia Pacific Assurance Technology team for EY. And Fiona gets to work in a number of areas, including data analytics, automation, AI and in particular machine learning, climate change and sustainability, financial accounting, and advisory strategic solutions. So you know she's got a bit of time on her hands a bit of a boring life there. Fiona leverages technology to meet the needs of the business to enhance their work experience. Key recent successes are the industrialisation and operations of data analytics, automation and AI using low-cost destinations and infrastructure implementation which meets the legal risk, financial and operational requirements of her business. Fiona has significant experience working with both the business leadership and IT leadership to implement technology solutions and project manage large transformational activities. So thank you for being with us this morning Fiona.

FIONA: Thank you very much. A very nice lovely warm welcome. I really am quite honoured to be here talking to you today about a subject which I never thought I would be talking to people about, which is my personal career journey. And that is I actually started with in my interview saying I don't know much about technology, but I'm willing to give it a go. Everything else in my role I'm sure I can do. I am still in contact with that person that interviewed me today. She's moved on to other career opportunities. And she and I laugh today that I actually did say that in my interview to where I am today. So I would like to actually take you through a video which I think is really helpful which gives an overview of the future of work. And for us it's, I think it's, technology is about we're all connected, we're all on this journey together. And then for me how do we break that down so it's consumable for our people. So without further ado I'll show this video.

(plays video)

FIONA: So I think that video, it really resonates with me because it is actually all about people. Technology is driven by us as people to make our lives easier. For me I love technology. Did I actually know what this meant when I first started my career? No, I didn't. But what I did know is that I wanted to make my life and my team's life and that of the organisation's life much easier. And technology is the best driver to enable us to do that. So for our team, which looks after the assurance service line, which is the largest service line within EY, we are growing, I literally cannot keep up with the demands of the business. And there's some key reasons for



that. Our philosophy is really to drive high value business offerings with the highest customer service. Which really drives through business transformation and leverages innovation. It's about connecting with people. It's about asking them what ideas do you have that will improve your work. It's communication. And then really having the resilience and the grit to say, and stand up and say actually we can do this. And that is my journey. I find for my team it's not about being a computer engineer or a technical genius, because that is not what we're about. It's about humanising technology. Particularly as well breaking down when everyone, we hear is technology is going to take over our roles and our jobs. Well, in actual fact technology is going to make our jobs easier so we can do things, more of the things that we enjoy doing. For me I love that I can sit outside of my children's school with senior executives on a phone call driving a project and then five minutes later get out of the car, they have no idea where I am, I can get out of the car and I can collect my children. It makes my life easier. And that's the part that excites me about technology.

I have a philosophy in life that I'd rather look back on my life and say I can't believe I did that rather than saying I wish I did that. And that is actually where my journey started. I started not in professional services, I actually started in the tourism industry. My husband is an executive chef so we lived in some amazing destinations, one of which was Cradle Mountain. We also lived on Heron Island. And we lived on Hamilton Island. And we worked in Germany for Lufthansa for a couple of years as well. And it's the lessons I learnt through that career journey in my early years that have really helped me today. It's the lessons of understanding people, particularly in the tourism industry. Some of the stories that we would get when people would come and that they were on a holiday because a person in their family was sick and it may have been their last holiday together. It's really connecting with people. It's having that difficult conversation with people. It's that resilience. I couldn't speak German when I went and worked in Germany. It was the hardest lesson, because my job actually required me to speak German. I learnt very very quickly. I am now fluent, thank goodness. But if I didn't learn German I was out of a job.

So it's that resilience that I find and what I look for in the people that I hire in our team. And that's where I see it's really breaking down what is technology so it's not so overwhelming. It's about people, it's about the skills that those people can give. And you don't all need to be a computer engineer or a data scientist or a data analyst, it's about humanising the technology and bringing in the right skill set to drive through and build solutions for our people that make their life easier.

Some of the things that I'd also like to talk to you about is having an inquisitive mind and asking you know willingness to learn. Don't fear the impossible. And take steps to make it possible. I was sharing a story earlier this morning and I was in a leadership conference with, I'm on the Executive Leadership Team when we were actually briefed on where technology is going, and what we walked out of that meeting and said wow where do we start? It's like we were, one of the analogies we gave is we're actually in, there's a canyon and we're on one side and where we actually need to be is over here. How do we get there. It's not the right thing to actually stand there and do nothing. We needed to drive forward and take that first step to get across the canyon. Which is what we did. We also allowed ourselves to say that's okay, we don't need to get it right the first time. And we have got it wrong on a number of occasions. Some of the key lessons as well for us is – and I keep pressing the wrong button – is finding a business sponsor. This is really key. We see this as very important to help you drive and to keep us all connected. Make sure that you are constantly letting your leadership team know where you want to be. And this is important as people go through their careers. And something that I've

really modelled and model with my team. Remember team work. It begins with trust, conflict, commitment, accountability, and results. I highly recommend a book which is written by Patrick Lencioni on the high performing teams. If you'd like to have a good read on teams.

Also start going the extra mile. An opportunity will follow you. And this is very much something that we have always done in our team. When people come to us with an issue or a challenge then we will actually say okay so how can we make this better and then how can we make it even better for you. And so this is really my career journey. I never ever would have thought 20 years ago I would be leading a team. And we're actually now globally recognised as building really good high quality solutions for our business, which are also tangible for people, and they can focus on really making their lives easier in a world of change.

So I will leave you with that. I would like to say thank you very much for having me. Thank you for listening. I am available afterwards if anyone has any questions. And I'll also be on the panel. So thank you.