

QG Breakfast Series

6 August 2019 event - transcript

Interviews with presenters

Nasa Walton, Chief Digital Officer, Residential Tenancies Authority

ANTHONY: Welcome Nasa.

NASA: Thank you for having me Anthony.

ANTHONY: What does your job entail?

NASA: So I'm the Chief Digital Officer of the RTA, otherwise known as the Residential Tenancies Authority. We look after the private rental market and we make sure that renting is easy for everybody. We are the independent watchdog that ensures that every party knows their rights and roles and responsibilities between the landlord and the lessor, and we also look after and hold their bonds while they're renting in that, and we're also the investigators of any complaints about what has occurred during a tenancy.

ANTHONY: Given all of that how does technology play a role in the work that you do?

NASA: Yeah, so technology is definitely the digital disruptor. Our customers, which is 34% of Queenslanders, they all expect 24/7. So when they're making that decision, whether it's after work, on the weekend, that I'm going to lease this property then they want to be able to lodge that bond online there and then. And we have a fabulous digital portal that enables them to do that.

ANTHONY: It must be exciting for you given the technology is working for most organisations today.

NASA: It is. And I think most people are a bit frightened of where digital technology is going, but in fact it's one of those things that we need to embrace. Digital technology has been on the landscape now for 40 to 50 years. We're seeing more rapid development of that. But I actually think that's exciting and I enjoy part of my job bringing that to customers and to Queenslanders.

ANTHONY: What do you particularly like about the advances that technology has played in your area?

NASA: The thing that excites me the most about technology is how we're getting it closer to the individual. So whether it's been for the RTA in getting people access 24/7 or whether it's my previous jobs in Health, getting health care into the home, making technology at the base for people's touch and fingertips so they can get the information that they need right there and then no matter what that information is that they're looking for.

ANTHONY: Where though do you see the ongoing challenges at this point in time?

NASA: Yeah, so there's lots of ongoing challenges. The first obviously is the rapid pace of change. It's really hard and costly to keep up. The second is, is that there is a lot of fear what's that doing through the workforce. And I would tell most people that yes, have a look there is jobs and careers changing, but as a woman in technology I can tell you there are plenty of jobs going forward. Start having a look at things like automated processing robots. Because the task that you may do today manually you can actually manage those APR's in doing that work in automation. And we're going to need a lot of coders to do that.

ANTHONY: How then do we prepare those in the workforce now who may find it challenging to adapt in some way, what advice would you have for them?

NASA: If you don't actually embrace the tools in your home life it's pretty hard to then transform them into your work life. So start at home. Start embracing it. Don't be frightened to start looking at the technology. Yes, talk to your 14 year olds they may know better, but start doing that. Second, start doing some self-learning. There is so much education material available on YouTube, on the internet, on Reddit, start having a look and start having a go. And then start having a look at the Deloitte Access Economics Reports. Start having a look at the Women in Technology sites. Have a look at where technology's going and what careers are going to be disrupted, and where those new careers are. And then start mapping that journey. And do it, it's like eating an elephant, right, do it one bite at a time.

ANTHONY: I've never tried, but I will. How did you get involved in the whole sort of digital sphere?

NASA: I fell into technology 20 years ago. I actually have a background in business in human resource management, industrial relations. And I became the first subject matter expert in developing a new software technology. And I loved it. So I fell into and started as a BA, then I went to project management, into program directors. And I was very fortunate in my career to work for eHealth Queensland and then you know went into putting infrastructure in new builds of hospitals. From there I went to work for a hospital and led their digital transformation deal that culminated in digital electronic medical record.

ANTHONY: Were there many women 20 years ago in your line of work?

NASA: No, not many women at all, and certainly many women in digital infrastructure either can I say, or a building site. And even today there's less than you know 20% of women in the IT workforce. And we actually have one of the highest drop-out levels. It is hard when you're a female. It's not only that it's male dominated, but it also doesn't work with your flexible working arrangements. And that's really important about talking here today is talking about as a women in technology, how you can embrace flexible working so you get that work/life balance and stay in technology.

ANTHONY: How do we do that? How do we maintain a flexible lifestyle?

NASA: So the idea is actually understanding of when you need to access your information for work and when you need to access your information for home and how you balance the two. Again, only one in five people are actually using flexible working arrangements. It's making decisions around working out of distributed work centres for the government. It is about making decisions around working you know maybe a couple of days of 10 hour days and then having one day a week off a fortnight. It's working and negotiating with your management team that you don't have to be physically in an office to work. And those in the regional area they get it the most. They're the ones who embrace video technology, podcasts and what they can do to keep up with what's happening in the workplace.

ANTHONY: And do women bring a different creative approach to technology, digital technology?

NASA: Oh they absolutely do. I think...

ANTHONY: How? How?

NASA: So I think women in technology because we are so focused in juggling so many aspects we're always thinking of the short-cut and that's where technology gets us across the line. Quite often we're the early adopters of technology because it gets us done faster.

ANTHONY: What excites you about the future?

NASA: What excites me the most is the fact that it is constantly changing. I'm constantly learning and constantly being challenged. What excites me about that is there is a few things that I'll be able to go I don't need to do that function anymore, and I can start using you know

real life, real time, automated technology that will make things a lot easier. I can't wait till I can say beam me up Scotty.

ANTHONY: The take home message for those here today and listening to this podcast what do you want them to take away?

NASA: There's probably three things I want them to take away. The first is if they're frightened of technology start embracing it personally. Second is to then start having a conversation at work. Start thinking about what are the leadership and management qualities that you need to do at work to embrace flexible working. So having virtual meetings for example. The third is then embrace that technology and just start, start having a flexible working life.

ANTHONY: And you're a living example that it can work.

NASA: I am a living example. I do do it. And I do strongly recommend it to others.

ANTHONY: Are you a mentor to other women?

NASA: I do. I have a particular focus in mentoring women who've been out of the workforce, generally due to pregnancy and raising children. I get great satisfaction in helping them how to re-write applications, how to work their CV. Sometimes people are bit frightened to explain that they've been out of the workforce for five or six years because they've had kids. In fact that's a quality employers are looking for cause they know you can multitask.

ANTHONY: Nasa Walton thanks so much for joining us.

NASA: Thanks so much Anthony.