

Digital Podcast Show Notes

Episode 55 with guest Sherry Bevan

Hosts: Barclay Rae, Ian Aitchison

(disclaimer: Show notes are approximations of topics discussed, not word for word exact quotations).

Greetings section

BR: Greetings!

IA: Howdy. Today's trivia. Machine generated art. This week I've been looking at **makeavideo.studio**. Extraordinary, amazing and terrifying.

BR: Today's guest is Sherry Bevan ! Introduce yourself...

SB: Hello. I've been in tech all my life. Working in a European Service Desk, then application management, then a law firm, then running an outsourcing company. About 13 years ago I launched independent coaching, found being asked for coaching and over time it has evolved into coaching and development of leaders and leadership, with focus on women in technology.

Main Bit

BR: Why is the demand for leadership coaching?

SB: It's not the tech sector only, for anyone in a leadership role who wants to do better, talking to someone outside of your sphere of influence is very powerful. Don't need to worry about politics and strategy and peers and hidden agendas. Coaching is an undervalued opportunity to develop your career. Allows you to be more creative and build better relationship and make better decisions and be better leaders.

IA: What sort of activities do you do as a coach?

SB: We ask questions. I ask to help you get more clarity about what you are trying to do. Not advice usually. Clients are going through leadership development, or with individuals of potential or going through a big change program.

IA: Almost sounds like a counsellor

SB: That's right. A rapport is important. My role is to help you believe you can do what you want to do, so it is a bit like counselling,

BR: I have seen some situations where a coach does become therapy and that can be a cause for concern.

SB: We have industry body and defined ethics, and is it was turning into counselling I would recommend they seek that, but not from their coach.

BR: Have you found more pressure on people working in IT?

SB: It depends. It's changed over the last 10 years. Now it is more common to talk about struggling and mental health and pressure. And in technology it is changing all the time.

IA: Tech is always changing. Are there areas of Leaders in a tech or IT context to look out for?

SB: Yes. In the past people got promoted because of their tech skills. But brilliant developers do not make brilliant leaders. Sometimes in tech we see leaders that are technical but without people skills. You need relationship, listening, vision and inspiring, People skills.

BR: In tech, in order to manage a technical team, you need to have the technical skills don't you?

SB: You are never going to have enough headspace or time to be both a technical expert and to lead people. People in the first 18 months as leaders sometimes struggle if they are trying to hang on their technical skills as well as take on leadership roles and responsibilities.

IA: I see in tech product teams that you have a triad of Product Manager, Technical Lead and Design Lead. This leads to shared trust not one person doing everything. Do you see that elsewhere?

SB: I do see some of that in some more agile places. I can see how that help.

BR: what is the mindset shift away from 'I need to know everything'.

SB: As you become a leader you will start to burnout if they let go of the detail. They become more productive if they can delegate more and let go of the detail more. It's about seeing the benefits and letting go. I like to get leaders to think about succession planning.

BR: You also run projects across organisations. What are the key elements to bring different people together.

SB: Its important to understand what the rest of the organisation is doing. Bringing a collection of different people together helps them all understand the stresses and challenges that all parts face. IT tends to be a bit more analytical and logical, whereas HR tends to be more people and feelings focussed. You can learn from each other. I work with women in tech and this helps them understand that they can develop their careers into areas not considered before.

IA: Tech is many things. Tech is more than the back-end code and developers. There are many roles in a tech organisation.

SB: Yes, there are many roles in tech and women in tech in many roles. We might see less women in engineering, if 25% of people in a company are women they tend to be in the non-tech-hierarchy roles, less so in engineering or security as examples.

IA: The more 'difficult' it is, the more it is seen as 'important'?

SB: Yes, but this is changing. Tech is becoming more seen as about clever people than geeks now, but that hierarchy can still remain.

BR: Is that women want to head towards the more interesting roles?

SB: Yes I always enjoyed the people relationship side roles. But there remains an image of IT being nerdy and geeky. Even in schools there is still a perception that girls are bad at science and maths. But also as we said, there are so many roles in tech, so many roles need communication and project management and less technical. But then look at job adverts which are geek-text heavy, and people don't realise how broad it really can be.

BR: Does our education prepare us enough for leadership?

SB: They could do more in schools but it depends on the school. Some are good. There is also an element of role modelling and you follow what you see your parents do.

IA: In the UK, private schools emphasise leadership and confidence, so where you go to school can affect this.

SB: And that takes us into social mobility as well.

BR: what would make better leaders, and what you look for that shows there is improvement around women in tech?

SB: I'd like to see more leadership development in organisations. Learning only on the job is not the best way. In terms of women in tech I would love us to no longer need to talk about women in tech because it no longer needs to be talked about.

BR: Great, thanks Sherry!

Sherry's Recommended Podcast Bar Drink

- White wine Sauvignon Blanc

Useful Links

- Sherry on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/sherrybevan/>
- Website: sherrybevan.co.uk
- Podcast: "closing the gender pay gap"

Bar Bio

- Sherry is driven by a passion to help people become better leaders, with her focus especially on women leaders, gender pay equality, and all things supporting women in tech. She's a coach, a speaker, a podcast coach, a president, a trustee and more. She also likes an ice cold glass of white wine and was another great podcast guest!