

In celebration of



International Women's Day

2023 #EmbraceEquity

A showcase of extraordinary women

from the network of Positive Momentum



What it means to embrace equity in the workplace, in their words.

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no nonsense business expertise



**These
extraordinary
women create
action and
momentum in
support of
gender parity.**

Poppy Canning

Digital Marketing Manager, Sales Impact Academy
Host & Co-Producer of podcast series Barely Grad
Supporting future leaders

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Legal Talent – Senior Consultant | Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging – UK & Europe Chair, Taylor Hopkinson
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Poppy Canning

Digital Marketing Manager, Sales Impact Academy
Host & Co-Producer of podcast series Barely Grad



Career Highlights

- Launched the Barely Grad podcast series, to help early career individuals across the globe.
- Progressed very quickly, from a first job out of university (or still in uni in my case), through to a lead role and leading a marketing function.
- Quit my job in the hospitality sector when I knew it wasn't the right path forward for my career and secured a university place.
- Achieving a first-class honours degree whilst working full-time.
- Being part of a startup in the SaaS world. My career to date certainly hasn't been calculated, but I have been supported by some incredible people, both men and women.

“
90% of the opportunities offered to me have been made by women, so I'm confident women getting equity from women is apparent in the here and now. Collectively we could do better at offering equity across the board with equal opportunity from all.
”

Poppy has a background in both the hospitality and SaaS sectors, as well as a first-class degree in Media, Culture & Creative Practice. Joining Sales Impact Academy as Community Executive, and employee number 11, Poppy has had a fast-paced career moving up through Strategic Alliances, and into a Marketing leadership role.

Poppy is also the co-producer and co-founder of Barely Grad, a podcast series which is focused on shining a light on the reality of life after university and offering guidance to those about to graduate across the globe.

Supporting future leaders



Less than 20% of employees today believe they work in a “high fairness” environment. Problematic, given the importance of fairness to employee engagement, performance and organisational goals.

Source: [Gartner 2023, The Equity Imperative](#)



Why is Embrace Equity and IWD important to you?

I feel fortunate that I'm carving out my career in a world where more focus and progress is being placed on equality and equity. I'd say about 90% of the opportunities I have embraced have come from fellow women. This isn't to be confused with 'women only helping women', but it has made me think about the culture of women helping women. As a woman, I'm confident we can continue to see growth in this mission for many years to come.

Equality and equity don't just happen overnight. There are stark differences between sectors, with progress certainly being made around equality, but certainly not when it comes to equity.



What do you wish businesses knew about this issue?

Understanding that someone isn't incapable of doing the job just because they ask for help. Someone may need help to get to the next level, or opportunity, and that shouldn't be a strike against their name.

Communication is also key. An organisation needs to have a clear vision and plan for what needs to be done - "we are in position A and we need to get to position B" - it's a journey. The entire team/organization should be involved and be listened to and there should be clear communication of the progress being made.



What simple thing(s) could everyone do that would make a difference?

- *Breaking old habits! Language matters. Don't use 'guys', use 'folks' or 'team', or similar.*
- *Be aware and know your team members. Know them, know what is going on in their lives, know what they want to achieve and support them better based on your knowledge and understanding of them.*
- *Be proactive and offer/refer rather than waiting for someone to ask for something, as this can feel intimidating.*

Cara Dzivane

Legal Talent – Senior Consultant | Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging – UK & Europe Chair, Taylor Hopkinson



“Choose a job you love, and you'll never have to work a day in your life.”

Cara works alongside the best of colleagues, candidates and clients, heading up the legal search and diversity committee (UK & Europe) for Taylor Hopkinson; a company renowned for their 'people first' culture.

Celebrating allyship



92% of people feel allies have been valuable in their career

Source: [Change Catalyst](#)



Why is Embrace Equity and IWD important to you?

For me, IWD is a day to celebrate! My daughter and I celebrate the women whose bravery and courage broke down barriers and paved the way for us today. It is a day to celebrate the younger generation of queens who are unapologetically making huge waves in business, in their communities and in society. It is also a day to celebrate allyship; for one person to succeed, they need cheerleaders from all genders behind them who truly see them. As a mixed-race woman from a disadvantaged socio-economic background, I am so thankful for my incredible support network, both professionally and personally; without a doubt I would not be who I am today without their love, cheers, belief and constant support.



What do you wish businesses knew about this issue?

That there still is one! Take a deeper dive into your own businesses; analyse the data and have the discussions - one conversation can change everything. The importance of treating everyone fairly and having their voice heard (and truly valued) still impacts gender diversity - it does not stop at your gender headcount split. Challenge yourself to look deeper into your pay gap, working environment, culture, leadership, recruitment, parental leave etc.



What simple thing(s) could everyone do that would make a difference?

Create a culture where everyone's voice is heard, then actively listen, learn and act.

Career Highlights

- Leading the Legal search for Taylor Hopkinson's Offshore Wind sector.
- Being named Chair for Taylor Hopkinson's DIB committee for UK & Europe.
- Being named a Black Professional Scotland ambassador.

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IWD is also a day to celebrate allyship; for one person to succeed, they need cheerleaders from all genders behind them who truly see them.

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Simona Germanaviciute

Head of Client Services at JBR Capital



Simona's advice is to be passionate about what you do, be willing to take a risk and to learn everything it takes to be successful. Advice she has taken to heart, transforming her love of cars into a thriving career, with experience at Volkswagen and Audi in her native Lithuania, and now JBR Capital where she has risen to run Client Services with a bright future ahead of her.

Overcoming imposter syndrome



3/5 workers experience imposter syndrome with women and younger people disproportionately more likely to have feelings of self-doubt.

Source: [Indeed's Working on Wellbeing report](#), based on a YouGov survey of 2,500 UK workers.



Why is Embrace Equity and IWD important to you?

It's important to know that when I go for a role, I will have exactly the same chance as anyone, regardless of gender. It's a simple, basic, equal right for every human being. After all, once we're in the company we're defined by our skillset, for example as a subject matter expert, rather than just by our gender.



What do you wish businesses knew about this issue?

If a group of people are very alike, they may not make the best possible decisions for the company. You need to hire people with different viewpoints and perspectives, who can challenge the team with new opinions and suggestions. It's not just about gender, it's about different experiences and backgrounds around the table, adding to the conversation and driving better outcomes.



What simple thing(s) could everyone do that would make a difference?

- I think people need to be open in how they look at things and how they recruit. Don't close your mind because you think you already know what's best. The world is changing so quickly, and many people try to hold on to what worked in the past, when it's holding them and their businesses back. It doesn't allow you to progress, and progress is always something different from what we've done before.*
- For all the women out there, forget about your imposter syndrome, just go for it. There are so many talented, great women but they're stopping themselves more than anyone else is. If they all went for the roles they want, the market would change quickly. We need to be braver than we are and to go for opportunities. We can do it; don't stop yourself, don't analyse yourself too much, you can learn almost anything, and fill in any gaps along the way.*

Career Highlights

- Head of Client Services, JBR Capital, the UK's only independent lender dedicated to high-end vehicle finance, funding over £1bn to date.
- Sales Advisor, Audi, selling more than 50 cars per year, including to the president of Lithuania.
- Master's degree in Criminology, Mykolas Romeris University. Although Simona moved into a different field, this background trained her to analyse cause and effect and understand human psychology, all useful in a business career.

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We need to be braver than we are... Don't stop yourself, don't analyse yourself too much, you can learn almost anything, and fill in any gaps along the way

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Natasha Holland

Member Experience Director, Graphic Change



Natasha has a background in Project and IT Management in the Financial Services and Banking industry. She is a creative, collaborative change management consultant, helping organisations deliver remarkable results with happier humans. Natasha stopped working for The Man in 2015 to join her wife in Graphic Change. Natasha created the Graphic Change Academy and Community online platforms, helping people learn to communicate better with visual thinking skills.

Career Highlights

- My first big Project Management job was Y2k for nightclubs, bars, bingo halls, fitness clubs and even Blackpool Tower. Luckily the world didn't end.
- Taking a career break: I left work for a year in my 30s to travel round the world on my own.
- Looking out over the hills in Guadalajara as the Programme Lead securing Mexico as a new market for IKEA.
- Taking redundancy from a company I loved to join my wife in her graphic recording business. It was a big learning curve to work out how to build an online learning platform and online community forum without resorting to the Big Boys (literally). Our member experience is better for it.

A more intersectional lens to equity



At the current rate of progress, it will take 132 years to reach full parity across the four dimensions (Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment).

Source: [WEF Global Gender Gap Index](#)



Why is Embrace Equity and IWD important to you?

As a third wave feminist, I've been celebrating IWD for 33 years now, since doing (then named) Women's Studies at Uni. Even though Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw's term Intersectionality existed then, 30+ years on we're still struggling to gain gender equality in the workforce in terms of pay and senior representation, let alone achieve more nuanced notions of equity. I'm disappointed at how far there still is to go and how slow systemic change has been. I want to hope my young nieces will experience more equity in the future.



What do you wish businesses knew about this issue?

Women make up half the population. We are not a Special Interest Group. We are not a homogeneous community. My experience of work as a white, cis, able-bodied, out lesbian is different from other women's experiences. Only by everyone taking responsibility for their own potential biases and privileges will we change organisational cultures.



What simple thing(s) could everyone do that would make a difference?

- *Mind your language! Stop calling a group of people 'guys'. It's a perfect example of Male as Default shorthand.*
- *Review your visual assets. Are your company photos, posters, icons, clipart, etc. diverse and inclusive? (hint if you're still using that bald person from toilet signs as a default person, they're probably not).*
- *Celebrate women's achievements regularly, not just once a year.*



Clare Martin

Strategic supplier management that enables company strategy and maximises value



Clare started her career in the telecommunications industry, navigating her way through the ranks from analyst to senior management. During this time, she has experienced vendor management as an end client and most recently at Paragon, a client and supplier, where Clare and her team are building a world-class vendor capability. Clare is an experienced senior leader, managing negotiations for large, complex outsource deals.

Clare is mother to Isabelle and Oliver when she's not at work and, having danced from an early age, she likes to keep active with either running or yoga.

Career Highlights

- Leveraging my experience to transition into an environment at Paragon that encourages and enables companywide cultural development. I'm leading a change programme that will transform operational and behavioural values, and enable efficiencies thanks to a clear strategy and a more effective third-party engagement strategy.
- Successfully led the negotiations for a £700m IT outsource, delivering improved IT stability (50% improvement) and enhanced vendor productivity. Also negotiated a £100M+ first generation outsource at the business.
- It's hard to choose career highlights because I'm passionate about what I do every day. One thing's for certain – it's the people I work with who make it enjoyable. I quickly learned that communication and cross-functional working are key to success. I feel fortunate to have the chance to operate across all areas of the business, aligning ambitions and expectations of supplier governance so they complement Paragon's vision.

The importance of psychological safety



\$600 billion a year is lost on employee turnover. In contrast, companies that engineer high psychological safety experience many benefits, including: 27% reduction in turnover, 76% more engagement, 50% more productivity, 74% less stress.

Source: [Accenture](#)



Why is Embrace Equity and IWD important to you?

It wasn't until recently that I really realised how many assumptions are being made in businesses. Assumptions about what women are, what they want, their drive, ambition, and ability to achieve. It's really important to me that women are enabled and heard and not just squeezed into a stereotype.



What do you wish businesses knew about this issue?

I understand the importance of giving visibility to this issue – as businesses do with other initiatives like mental health, sustainability etc. I think they need to stand up, acknowledge, and act. For me, Paragon is a real example, genuinely identifying where the company isn't perfect and openly acknowledging where it needs change. Most importantly, Paragon is taking action to address where there are opportunities to improve the impact diversity can have on the business moving forward.



What simple thing(s) could everyone do that would make a difference?

- *I think people should be more curious and really understand what will make the difference, and take action to make it happen. At the same time, senior leaders across all businesses can be more transparent and open about where there needs to be improvement and what is expected from them.*
- *Most importantly, I believe businesses should make a conscious, consistent effort to provide the psychological safety that will enable women to feel comfortable, and that their perspective is truly valued.*

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Businesses should make a conscious, consistent effort to provide the psychological safety that will enable women to feel comfortable, and valued.
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Evenna Ottey

Group FP&A Director, Sage



Evenna is a finance leader at Sage, market leader for accounting, payroll, and payment systems, supporting the ambition of the world's entrepreneurs. With almost 15 years' experience, Evenna's strength is in helping leaders to make data-driven decisions to achieve optimum P&L performance. When not at work, Evenna enjoys spending time with her family, taking the dog to the beach, and supporting Manchester City.

Returning to work



Fewer than 1 in 5 of all new mothers, and 29 percent of first-time mothers, return to full-time work in the first three years after maternity leave.

Source: [UK Government Research, Government Equalities Office](#)



Why is Embrace Equity and IWD important to you?

Before I became a mother, I didn't really have an appreciation for some of the challenges faced by mothers in the workplace. Now, as a mother myself, I have a very different perspective and I've adapted the way I operate. I have become much more ruthless with my time – simply because I have another job to start at 5.30pm! I've become much more tolerant about progress over perfection in order to maximise my impact. I want to be the leader that delivers that support to other women. Whilst I feel better equipped having first-hand experience – it does leave me curious about how others, without first-hand experience gain this perspective.



What do you wish businesses knew about this issue?

For me, it's the importance of making it as easy as possible to return to work, being vocal about recognizing continued commitment and acknowledging the critical role trust plays in supporting a successful return. Inevitably a lot happens whilst you are on maternity leave – finding the right way to stay informed and 're-onboarding' back into the workplace is critical and very different for us all. You are the same person with the same skills but now one with a different set of priorities. Working smarter (not longer) is a real demonstration of that commitment.



What simple thing(s) could everyone do that would make a difference?

- To support the return to work there are a few things businesses can do. More regular feedback; a buddy in the first couple of weeks; someone who could answer questions and bring you up to speed on anything that's been missed; make the effort to really understand what support is needed and recognise that everyone is different.
- Trust is crucial, women need the business to trust them and also they need to be able to trust the business to do the right thing.

Career Highlights

- Organised and facilitated the inaugural Finance Development Programme for key talent at Sage.
- Finance support to Chief Marketing Office – advising on optimising annual budget spend of c£300m.
- Business-supported volunteering - helping children with their reading, and supporting girls from less-privileged backgrounds to identify and capitalise on opportunities available to them.

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Return-to-work support is crucial. I wish businesses would work actively to adapt their support to the individual. Creating an environment of trust enables women to thrive, reach their potential and deliver benefits to the wider business.

”

Nicola Porter

Head of Employee Relations and People Transformation, Direct Line Group



Nic joined Direct Line Group straight from school, starting in the call centre. She worked her way up, in what some would describe as a 'squiggly career', collecting experiences to build a real diversity of skills. Having set her sights on a move to HR, she took the difficult decision to move into what looked like a less senior role on paper. That approach paid off. Nic is now a member of the HR Senior Leadership team and DLG's Enterprise Leaders Network. Nic believes passionately that you're missing a trick if you fail to see the potential in people who've followed a different path in their life and career.

Seeing the potential in difference



It only takes a tenth of a second to form a first impression of someone. Like it or not, judgement based on appearance plays a powerful role in how we treat others and how we get treated.

Source: [Association for Psychological Science](#)



Why is Embrace Equity and IWD important to you?

For me, IWD is the opportunity to celebrate different voices in our business and our lives – and the real benefit that brings. Throughout my career, I've struggled with feeling like I don't really belong – worrying that I'm just that girl from Dartford, with the blonde hair and the 'common' accent, who's trying to influence a roomful of senior execs, with brains the size of watermelons. It's important that we're all conscious of creating an environment where people feel a sense of belonging and can fulfil their potential.



What do you wish businesses knew about this issue?

Difference can be brilliance. Whether visible or not, people's unique experiences generate values and capabilities that organisations should want and need. I came from a single parent family, where my mum relied on benefits and struggled with her mental health, and no one had been to university. I might not have a degree, but my background means I'm incredibly empathetic, I'm strongly driven, and I want to fix things – to find the best solution.



What simple thing(s) could everyone do that would make a difference?

Sponsorship is important. Those in leadership positions should take every opportunity to lift someone up – to believe in them and help them believe in themselves. Never underestimate how difficult it can be to feel different from your colleagues so look for ways to show how that difference is a positive. Also it's particularly important to explain to people that coaching, mentoring and helpful advice isn't about changing who you are but about being the best version of yourself.

Career Highlights

- Leading the People Workstream for organisational Agile Transformation.
- Designing and creating the People Change Hub in HR, introducing Agile for HR and moving away from traditional HR models.
- Re-designing and launching a market-leading suite of 'My Life' policies, supporting employees with what matters most to them.
- Successfully moving from operational leadership to HR SME and Leader.

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I love the fact that we're shifting to a world where people can make choices based on what's important to them – regardless of what society might expect of them

”

Dr. Filipa Soares

Senior Leader in Science and Technology



Filipa is passionate about developing new technologies that have real world impact. She has more than 15 years of experience in commercial R&D and Product Development in Biotech and Pharma. Particularly in the field of Biologics, Regenerative Medicine and Cellular Agriculture. She holds a Biological Engineering Degree and a PhD in Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine from the University of Cambridge. Filipa has authored numerous publications and has been awarded several scientific grants.

Succeeding in a male-dominated environment



Just 35% of STEM students in higher education in the UK are women.

Source: [UCAS data provided by HESA](#)



Why is Embrace Equity and IWD important to you?

More awareness must be raised to embrace female equity; in all honesty, I believe that we shouldn't need an IWD but we have one, so let's really embrace the day as an opportunity to raise awareness and promote healthy and much needed discussion. IWD is an opportunity for everyone to get involved in the equity discussion and to lean into differing experiences, the huge opportunities and the barriers that get in the way of igniting infinite potential in all of us.



What do you wish businesses knew about this issue?

Basically, men and women are different, and this should be embraced as a strength and really valued in a business. However, I have noticed and personally experienced that as you go up into the more senior leadership levels of an organisation these positions are usually male-dominated. I've noticed men usually end up mentoring other men and I believe this is a huge miss for diversity of thought, creativity and innovation. I wish businesses could see that having a mixed pool of men and women at all levels of the organisation is a competitive advantage.



What simple thing(s) could everyone do that would make a difference?

Being aware everyone will have different needs at different stages of life. If everyone could be more compassionate to bring about a culture of trust, this would make a massive difference to gender equity. If we could all make an effort to be open, listen and be flexible this would allow women to flourish and overcome particular challenges like PMS, menopause, picking up kids etc. Women are very dedicated and if they are given the right support and flexibility this will enable them to push through the perceived glass ceiling into more senior leadership roles.

Career Highlights

- I realised that the science I wanted to pursue wasn't as advanced in Portugal, so I decided to take up an Erasmus internship in the UK. This was a turning point in my career as I loved the different cultures and having to fend for myself, meeting wonderful people and of course the opportunity to immerse myself in amazing science.
- Finding my passion in Stem Cells and Regenerative medicine drove me towards doing a PhD in this area. I knew I didn't want to be an academic and that I'm more driven by the application of the science. I also knew that to succeed in my chosen path I'd need a PhD. This led to me leaving my pharma job of four years and starting my new adventure at the University of Cambridge.
- When my son, Oliver, was born my world changed. I continue to be as dedicated to my professional life but I have learnt how to be more efficient, flexible and spend time on what really matters. I have a new passion and as much as I want to grow professionally, I also want to be there for him.

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Be determined and follow your dreams, don't be discouraged by what others might say. Get some great mentors and role models. You don't have to be perfect and tick all the required 'boxes', just go for it.

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Embracing Equity at Positive Momentum



Matt Crabtree
Founder, Positive Momentum

We are proud to support International Women's Day each year and in doing so, try to play a small part in highlighting the important moral, social and economic reasons for gender balance.

Since we were founded 20 years ago, Positive Momentum has been actively advocating for more diverse and inclusive workplaces, and particularly for far greater numbers of talented females being recognised and taking a more active role in key leadership positions. It's one of many reasons that we chose to become a Certified B Corporation.

At Positive Momentum, we can see continued evidence of increased diversity and equity in the companies we support. In the last 12 months we have:

- Co-created and delivered a number of DE&I programmes, including a Women in Tech programme at a global payments provider
- Assisted a UK bank in creating and delivering a diverse and inclusive talent programme
- Four of our partners (Karen, Linda, Julian and Jeff) have immersed themselves with Cambridge Judge Business School to learn and discuss the latest insights in designing, developing and delivering programmes that deliver sustainable change.

On IWD 2023, we want to celebrate extraordinary women. We are providing a platform to showcase great leaders, individuals with bucket loads of potential and women who are doing all they can to create a more equitable and inclusive world.

Whilst people across the gender spectrum do this day in and day out, today on IWD we specifically want to celebrate those people who identify as female, in all that they have achieved.

Each of the women featured here are role models not just for other women but for all of us as we work tirelessly towards the goal of balance, understanding and inclusivity as the norm.

Happy International Women's Day

From us all at Positive Momentum



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