

Jobs for the Girls: shifting the stereotypes

The world of IT and technology might in the past have taken on the stereotype of being a male-dominated business area. But as Sharon McGrath, an Associate in the Technology and Operations division at Deutsche Bank in Jersey, has discovered, not only is it an area opening up increasingly to women, it can also provide some attractive career opportunities...



Pursuing a career that is interesting, rewarding, enjoyable, plays to your strengths, offers variety and gives you an opportunity to learn new skills is, of course, something that everyone aims for. The good news

is that, for women, there is a growing range of career options that could satisfy precisely those criteria, with the types of roles that might in days gone by have been stereotypically reserved for men increasingly being taken on by women.

The area of technology and IT is one such example. Since joining the 'Information Enterprise Services' department, part of Deutsche Bank's Technology division, in 2009 Sharon McGrath has been involved in a number of high level projects and had the opportunity to work across technical, management and financial areas of the technology world, dispelling the myth that technology is all about having an irrational passion for wires and programming computers in a dark room!

Playing to Your Strengths

Having grown up and completed her education in County Clare in Ireland, Sharon started working for a scientific publishing company. However, she soon realised that she wanted to move into a different area.

'I felt I needed a bit of a challenge,' says Sharon. 'Having grown up in a large family, I was forever helping my brothers and sister to fix things that they had broken – gadgets, electrical appliances and so on. It got me thinking that maybe I had a natural gift for something more technology-based, so I decided to play to my strengths and started exploring what options were open to me.'

So, as an introduction to the world of IT, Sharon took a Diploma in Computer Science and then moved to Jersey in 1997, when she started working in the IT department of an accountancy firm, providing technical support for the Jersey office. After four years in that role, she moved to another local firm where she took on a variety of roles, still within the technology area but not just dealing with technical issues – she was also responsible for managing the technical teams, overseeing their support function and taking care of the financial side of the department.

More than technical

Although only having joined Deutsche Bank in 2009, Sharon has already been involved in a number of interesting projects. Working within the Information Enterprise Services department, Sharon works specifically within a team responsible for all IT issues within several of Deutsche Bank's locations – essentially, making sure that the Bank's operations in the Channel Islands, Cayman and Mauritius are all adequately supported by its technology infrastructure.



This is more than just helping fix computer and desktop problems, though. For Sharon, it's also a case of project managing significant shifts in the way the Bank is run due to changes in the technology it uses. This involves calculating the costs, finances and logistics of carrying out projects, and she regularly has to talk things over with the Group's project management team based in Switzerland.

Recently, for example, she was responsible for a major project involving the relocation of a Data Centre, something that brought together teams from across the business and other jurisdictions. Her team also plays a role in helping drive forward the Bank's commitment to sustainability by, for example, introducing energy saving devices, reducing its carbon output and decreasing the need for air conditioning in the local offices.

'There's a misconception that IT and technology is purely highly technical,' explains Sharon. 'In fact, there are a wide variety of roles available within technology. IT is a service support role that helps give a foundation to any business, and this can open up some really interesting avenues, as my role at Deutsche Bank demonstrates. In fact, in many ways, my role now is much more that of a business analyst than your traditional 'techy'.'

In the fast changing world of technology, one of the things Sharon has found to be most beneficial since joining Deutsche Bank has been the support she has received for her own professional development and career progression. Despite having only been at the Bank for a relatively short period of time, she has been encouraged to make the most of the Bank's structured training and

development resources. Recently, for example, she undertook a three week project management course, which she has found incredibly helpful in her current role.

Complementing this, Sharon is also a professional member of the British Computer Society, which enables her to keep up to speed with current technological standards, and provides support and guidance for women working in technology.

Positive Attitude

So whilst the perception might in the past have been that a career in technology was male-dominated, the variety of roles that come under the 'technology' umbrella actually means that there is a demand for a wide ranging skill set and plenty of opportunities for women.

Of course, there has to be a drive and a positive attitude on the part of the individual to be successful, something that Sharon has certainly shown. A keen sportswoman, having represented her county in the Irish sport of 'camoige' and Jersey in softball, she has been able to translate this enthusiasm to the workplace:

'I strongly believe that if you put your mind to something, you can achieve it. The technology industry is certainly opening up to women, which is good news for women and great news for the industry. Women do have a different way of working to men, and the industry is, as a consequence, benefiting from a more balanced range of skills. I absolutely love my job – it is rewarding, exciting and offers excellent future prospects and I would certainly encourage more women to consider roles in technology.'

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