Article

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Outstanding Women in Cyber

On International Women's Day, we asked Sarah Cunningham, our information security consultant, more about her story as a woman working in cyber security and her journey into the sector.

For as long as I can remember I have had an interest in computers and technology. Growing up and throughout school I excelled in STEM subjects – especially maths and computing - so naturally, I found myself strongly gravitating towards this industry.

After leaving school, I spent some time as a desktop engineer, working with the physical side of computing before moving on to pursue a degree in Ethical Hacking. This, for me, is where I really found my passion and love for cyber security.

Now, almost six years later, I work full time as an information security consultant for Waterstons, where I have the opportunity and freedom to build on my interest in cyber, work with like-minded individuals and help others along the way.

At the beginning of my journey, I found it intimidating walking into a room knowing less than 10% of the people there would be women. Looking back these experiences have helped me to grow and appreciate the position I am in now.

While yes, cyber security is an industry dominated by men, I have always preferred to focus on the quality of incredible women in our field, rather than focusing on the quantity of them. There are so many inspirational women in STEM that it would be difficult to believe you are alone.

Last year I was honoured to have been shortlisted for the Outstanding Woman in Cyber Award at the 2021 Scottish Cyber Awards. I was very humbled to be standing alongside three other very talented and hard-working women which was prize enough, but to then go on and win the award, I felt overwhelming joy.

While we are still the minority in the cyber security field, awards and events like these – focusing on the female talent in the sector - are a fantastic way to showcase and highlight the exceptional work of women out there.

Surrounding yourself with positive role models who will help you succeed and build a career is the foundation to a successful beginning in this field, and I'm passionate about not only looking to these role models, but aspiring to be one.

In this digital age, we need to move away from the stereotyping of women in our industry and instead focus on inspiring the next generation of young women to enter into the field.

International Women's Day is a phenomenal opportunity to highlight the efforts of thousands when it comes to fighting these stifling industry stereotypes.

The main piece of advice I would give to all women out there, not only those in STEM, is: Don't be scared or shy to speak out. Don't be hesitant to promote your work, and never worry about standing up for yourself and your ideas.

I have learned that by highlighting the amazing work you have done, you are inspiring the next generation of young women to follow in your footsteps!

Find out more about Sarah here