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Article

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IWD: Celebrating Our Women

We chatted with Charlie Hales, Managing Director of Waterstons to discuss her goals for women in the industry, what she would tell her younger self and more.



It's International Womens Day & we want to celebrate the women of Waterstons Australia. We chatted with Charlie Hales, Managing Director of Waterstons to discuss her goals for women in the industry, what she would tell her younger self and more.

At Waterstons Australia, we have a larger % of men vs. women in the office, have you noticed that it's been harder to get women involved in the tech industry here comparatively to the UK?

It's definitely been hard getting women involved in Australia but I wouldn't generalise, it's an issue globally. I would say that the UK is slightly ahead though with the work they've been doing in the STEM sector garnering interest in younger generations.

Waterstons overall has made a huge effort to get in front of young women and girls in schools and Higher Education to get them involved & excited about the industry.

Personally, I've met women along my career who are incredibly diligent and think they need to tick every box on a job description. But, this isn't the case at all. I think these traits can sometimes be a barrier from them just applying.

Organisations like Waterstons want to see more women because the skills like organisation and diligence is what makes them great for this sector.

We're only going to see improvements if we get women involved earlier and from a young age. They need to see representation and role models to feel encouraged to put their feet in the doors.

If you could talk to young women thinking about starting in the industry, what are the 3 top things you would tell them?

Don't Be Scared: It's not a scary industry and it isn't as hard as people think it is to get into. There are so many organisations that are truly committed to changing the narratives. We're one of them.

Play To Your Strengths: In my experience, it's the women that have a natural talent for organisation, management, leadership and great analytic thinking. I want to see more women tap into their feminine strengths, never discount them.

Not All About The Tech: It's not all about the tech! I know it sounds funny but, the industry is vast. It's like a Mariana Trench of opportunity if you know where to look. The misconception is that it's all computers and networks, it's absolutely not.

How do you empower women in the tech space?

I speak at as many events as I can, getting out to schools and Uni's as well. I want to get in front of women first hand and talk to them about my experience. It's imperative we always keep the conversation going.

We need to break down sub-conscious biases people hold.. For example, labelling women who are good at tech as an anomaly rather than a norm. I feel strongly and when I see or hear something like this, I say speak out.

Even if it's a passing comment. Even if it's a joke. It doesn't help, it hurts.

Keeping the conversation open, empowering other women to speak up are two ways I think I empower the women I meet.

How is Waterstons committed to creating more diversity and inclusion for women throughout the organisation?

The biggest thing is being committed to having an open mind as a company. Being open to learning and being open to change. Our organisation welcomes any feedback from all corners of it. We don't just dictate from the top, all our contributions are truly valued.

I know a lot of companies preach this but when I was pregnant, I was promoted. Something like this virtually never happens.

In Australia, we're looking at new avenues to get in front of and directly speak with women and girls to provide guidance and mentorship to those looking to get into the industry.

What is your favourite thing about working in the tech industry & why?

No day is ever the same. It's never rinse and repeat. Who wouldn't love that?!

If you could talk to your younger self, what are the 3 best pieces of advice you would tell her?

- Don't worry about failing, it's how you'll learn and grow.
- Speak up for yourself. Fight for what's right & have your own back.
- You can't know everything, and don't try to... Build the best team possible around you.

Thanks Charlie for your contributions and your consistent inspiration to women in the tech industry and across Waterstons Australia.