

International Women's Day

Interview with Head of Strategy & MDU,
Katie Bean

Can you tell us a little about the beginnings of your career path (what job did you aspire to do when you were young, and how this may – or may not – have changed throughout the years)?



"Believe it or not, my passion when I was young, was in Arts and Textiles which resulted in me obtaining a Degree in Textiles (specialising in weaving) so I couldn't have ended up with a career further away from where I started. I took a summer job as a customer service rep to save some money and pay for an exciting gap year of travelling, and then never left (a story I hear very often). I tried my hand in many roles at EE before my current role in Community Fibre Limited. I have always been attracted to strong leaders who care for their people, which led me into the technology sector and resulted in the exciting role I have now with CFL."

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Is there anyone who inspired you throughout your career? If so, please tell us a bit about them and what effect they had on you.

"I'm very lucky to have had some mentors that certainly influenced the person I am today.

David Holt – From my very early days as a Customer Service rep, I had the best people manager there was, who invested everything in the team and their development. I try every day to bring those very skills into how I manage my team.

Glenda Jowsey – I was very lucky to secure a role on a fast track scheme in EE which saw me try my hand at different roles and gave me great exposure around the business and it was here my next manager was a true inspiration. (cont.)"



"(cont.) I had never seen such a strong, independent, intelligent and challenging woman. I left the scheme early, eager to learn as much as I could from her; an amazing time in my career.

Lynne Toogood – Probably my biggest inspiration was Lynne Toogood, at the time Head of Deployment at EE. We had worked together in Customer Service, and she saw something in me, took me under her wing and that's when the move to Technology happened. She took a personal interest in my development. I feel I learnt a lot about business confidence, assertiveness and stakeholder management. Working with her led me from Project Management to where I am today.

It would be unfair not to also mention those outside of work – **my family and friends** who have supported me and spurred me on at every step allowing me to get to this point. I'm very lucky indeed."



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Let us know your role at Community Fibre and how it interacts with the broader company.

"I head up Strategy and MDU Build, responsible for looking at our build plans and how we can achieve the ambitious targets we have. I'm also responsible for the delivery of the MDU build within that plan. The team and I work alongside Customer Service, supporting build enquiries that come in, and Business development supporting wayleaves and building in London to help build great Landlord relationships.

We also work with IT on tools and systems needed to allow us to deploy at scale, as well as Finance and Procurement to get the funds and materials needed to complete jobs. They are but a few as we have touchpoints across the whole business which is unique and not common in bigger companies."



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Why did you choose to take up this role, and what drew you towards a role in telecoms?

"I joined Community Fibre as I really resonate with their values and that's very important to me in my working life. The role I have today has been an exciting one I helped create as the business has evolved by putting together a team to ensure we can deliver what we need. **It's never the job that attracts me.** I've always thought I could turn my hand to most things, but **I'm very much led by people.**

I've got to where I am today by choosing to work with some truly best-in-class, amazing people. That's certainly my number one consideration when taking a new role; who will I be working for and with? Will that bring the best out of me and challenge me to grow further? It's an exciting way to approach things as who knows where it will lead you"



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What do some of the International Women's Day slogans, like #BalanceForBetter or #EmbraceEquity, mean for you in your work life?



"For me, it's about **creating a culture of belonging** where anyone could come into the team/company and feel comfortable, and for this, I believe you need more women represented at every level"

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Have you faced any barriers in your career or in performing a role due to being a woman? If so, how did you overcome them?



"I've personally been very fortunate. Being born in the UK and due to my age, I work in a time of great equality. Throughout my career, **I felt supported and propelled as a woman in business.** I think due to my strong nature and the inspirational women I have worked with, I've never really felt inhibited but rather, empowered. Don't get me wrong, there are barriers along the way for many women such as sexual harassment and pregnancy discrimination, however I've been very fortunate to work with supportive leaders who helped me walk through those barriers."

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Do you think there is currently enough visibility and resources to ensure that more women can take advantage of career opportunities commonly underrepresented by women? If not, how can we all do our part to improve this?



"I have been lucky in my career to work inside and outside of the UK, and I would say there are other countries that are much further behind on this journey. So taking part in such great initiatives such as international women's day is a great way to get this message out there and support change.

Female managers have a responsibility to pass on their experience and knowledge to younger women and ensure they have the tools and exposure to succeed themselves."

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What is the most important advice you have been given throughout your career?

"The simplest and best advice I was ever given was **"Just don't be a jerk."** I have a huge passion for people and engagement and always remember and try to live to this one.

As I've progressed in my career I would say the next one was **"You're only as good as your last delivery, so just keep delivering"** This drove me to take full accountability of everything I do and remain results driven a skill which I think has been a huge part of my success."

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What advice would you give to women pursuing specialist careers, entrepreneurship or senior leadership roles.



"If you have enough passion and drive for what you want to do, you will get there – just don't stop. **Never be afraid to make mistakes**, what you learn along the way will make you stronger."

Happy International Women's Day

What final message would you
like to send out, Katie?



"Dream big."



You can check out more experiences from Community Fibre's female talent [here](#).