



OXYGEN INFLUENCERS 2026

25 people driving positive industry
change from outside the boardroom

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WELCOME TO OXYGEN INFLUENCERS 2026

ANYONE READING IT CHANNEL OXYGEN

or the wider UK channel press would be forgiven for assuming we think CEOs are the centre of the universe.

After all, our coverage revolves largely around what vendor, distributor and partner leaders say and do. We interview these gilded executive leaders on a daily basis, invite them to our dinners and profile them extensively in our supplements.

Launched in 2024 in partnership with Nebula Global Services, *Oxygen Influencers* is our attempt to redress this imbalance.

After all, real change and positive momentum is more often driven from outside the boardroom by rank-and-file employees.

NO CEOS ALLOWED

Three years in, *Oxygen Influencers* has now profiled 75 individuals that are making serious waves without holding a top executive role.

It is a crowdsourced (anti) power list, meaning every person in it has been nominated by the industry (and not by us).

This year's crop includes a former bus driver who founded Microsoft's UK Social Mobility Network, a women in cyber champion who has been Cyber Citizen of the Year, and a former UK Asian Bollywood choreographer-turned AI solutions lead who has her own IMDb profile.

They were put forward for consideration by a wide range of industry leaders we speak to, as well as the 25 individuals profiled in last year's report.

Over the following 40 pages, we find out more about their careers to date and what makes them tick, as well as their views on how the industry can attract the next generation of talent.

As usual, we also asked a couple of more playful questions, namely on who they'd have play them in a movie of their life, and which three guests they'd invite on if they had their own chat show.



DOUG WOODBURN,
EDITOR, IT CHANNEL OXYGEN

FORGING FRIENDSHIPS

Oxygen Influencers now has its own momentum, as alumni from the 2024 and 2025 editions continue to build ties with each other.

This includes Pax8 AI ace Andy Readman, who joined us for a podcast this summer to talk through how his inclusion in the first year's edition of *Oxygen Influencers* inspired him to return to his old school to promote the IT sector (see p22).

And new bonds were forged when 24 of the 50 Influencers joined us for (virtual) clay pigeon shoot and networking last November (see p26).

Even if some have gone on to change roles (or even, in one or two cases, professions), our first half-century of Influencers have continued to inspire those around them, from outside the boardroom.

Who are the 25 new role models joining their ranks in *Oxygen Influencers* 2026?

Read on to find out.

INFLUENCE ISN'T A JOB TITLE

THERE ARE PLENTY OF LISTS

celebrating the most senior leaders in our industry. What makes *Oxygen Influencers* different is that it looks beyond job titles and the boardroom to recognise the people driving meaningful change from across the industry.

For the third consecutive year, the team at Nebula Global Services are once again incredibly proud to be associate sponsor of the *Oxygen Influencers*, helping shine a light on the people creating meaningful, positive change across the UK IT channel, from outside of the boardroom, and transcending a wide range of roles.

When we partnered with IT Channel Oxygen to launch the initiative in 2024, the premise was deliberately simple: no CEOs allowed.

Because leadership and influence have never been defined solely by job title, seniority or a seat at the executive table. Some of the most important progress in our industry is driven by people challenging convention, championing causes, mentoring colleagues, opening doors for others and simply deciding that something could, and should, be better.

That is exactly what *Oxygen Influencers* celebrates.

With the addition of this year's 25 Influencers, the community now stands at 75 changemakers. For me, that is the really exciting part of reaching year three. This is no longer simply an annual list. It is becoming a powerful community of people connected by their ability and determination to make a difference. And what a diverse community it is. Their stories remind us that leadership can start anywhere, and that progress often begins with someone prepared to step forward.

Across this year's cohort, we see individuals championing social mobility, neurodiversity, ESG, DEI, mentoring, open-source technology, AI and the next generation of talent. Their career journeys are just as diverse, reminding us that there is no single route into technology and certainly no predetermined path to

making an impact once you arrive. That matters enormously.

Our industry continues to talk about attracting new skills, perspectives and talent. But if we genuinely want people from different backgrounds to see technology as somewhere they can thrive, they need visible role models. They need to see that different experiences, perspectives and ways of thinking are not barriers to success. They are strengths.

I also love that *Oxygen Influencers* is crowdsourced. These are individuals recognised by their peers because of the impact they are already having. That makes their inclusion even more meaningful.

Three years in, we are also seeing something bigger emerge. Previous Influencers are building relationships, creating connections and inspiring one another to do more. Influence is creating more influence, and that ripple effect is exactly what makes this initiative so special.

At Nebula Global Services, we talk a lot about the power of ecosystems. *Oxygen Influencers* demonstrates that principle at a very human level. Positive change accelerates when people connect, collaborate, challenge established thinking and use their influence to create opportunities for others.

So, congratulations to the 25 *Oxygen Influencers* of 2026 and to the 50 who came before them.

You are now part of a special community of 75 changemakers helping shape the future direction of our industry from outside the boardroom.

I genuinely cannot wait to see where that collective influence takes us next.



RICHARD EGLON,
CMO, NEBULA
GLOBAL SERVICES

A FRESH APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP

By Doug Woodburn



WELCOME TO THE third edition of this crowdsourced, (anti) power list.

For anyone new to the concept of *Oxygen Influencers*, the 25 individuals we meet in this report have two things in common:

Firstly, none are CEOs.

Instead, they are noteworthy for driving positive change from outside the boardroom.

Secondly, they have been selected not by us but, rather, the UK IT channel itself.

Just like in previous years, every person profiled here was put forward by either the leaders we speak to on a daily basis, or by last year's Influencers (and sometimes by multiple people).

We asked them to nominate colleagues or (preferably) peers who are making a real difference in the industry, with a focus on any of the following characteristics:

- Young/new leaders in waiting who have made a splash in a short space of time.
- Those making a big impact in areas like ESG, DEI or bringing fresh talent into the industry.
- Have achieved something exceptional either in or outside of their day job.

WHO MADE THE CUT?

From the 100s of nominations we received, we picked the 25 we felt best represented the spirit of the Influencers concept, and asked them ten quickfire questions.

They include a former psychiatric nurse who has taken the IT sales industry by storm, a young executive feted for inspiring the next generation through her schools outreach work, and a reseller employee who has gone from managing pubs to championing UK open-source software.

Oxygen Influencers 2026 also features a butcher turned ESG pro, two hyperscaler marketplace "magicians" and a clutch of young leaders who are lighting up the industry with their fresh approach to leadership.

All of them are using their influence to inspire those around them, but from outside a lofty seat in the executive boardroom.

This includes the founder of Microsoft's UK Social Mobility Network, Steven Mullaghan, who himself left school aged 16 to build buses. In his answers, he highlighted a study of diversity in the UK tech sector which found only 9% came from a lower socio-economic background.

"I'm part of that statistic, as are many people I work with," Mullaghan said. "We are proud of where we come from and want to do more to unlock talent, open doors and advance social mobility across the tech sector."

It also includes Ross Collins, who is now seen as one of the UK's leading open-source pioneers, despite having run pubs and nightclubs until his early 30s.

The passion he has in his role at Novatech is fuelled by his "strong beliefs about fairness", he explains.

"I believe the vast majority of large proprietary platforms are working from a playbook which is designed to extract the highest amount of money for the minimum effort rather than try to build a better product," he said.

Also making the cut this year is Julia Elliott, who outside her day job at Cisco partner Ideal is "the glue that holds all the events together" for free mentoring network The Channel Community.

"Unless you work for a large organisation, mentoring and professional development opportunities are often limited," she said when asked about why she is so committed to The Channel Community project.

"The Channel Community helps bridge that gap, and it's something I would have loved to have had access to earlier in my career."

Oxygen Influencers 2026 also features several young leaders who are breaking

The class of 2026

As associate partner of the Oxygen Influencers, Nebula would like to congratulate this talented cohort of passionate people who are delivering positive change, to ensure the future success of our technology channel community.



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“Whether I’m advising a board on AI strategy or speaking to students about careers in technology, the goal is the same: helping people see opportunities they didn’t know existed.”

Mini Biswas, Cision



the mould, including WestSpring IT Head of Technical Delivery, Danny Cully.

What qualities must leaders possess in the UK MSP space today, and are they changing, we asked him?

“An awareness of how perception surrounding IT has changed, how clients are looking for a partnership rather than a transactional relationship, and how client experience sometimes trumps raw technical knowledge,” he responded.

“WE NEED TO INSPIRE PEOPLE TO USE AI FOR GOOD”

When we asked our Influencers who they would have play them in a movie of their lives, Stephen Graham, Reese Witherspoon, Tom Hardy and Florence Pugh were among the A-listers pinpointed.

But one of this year’s crop nominated themselves on the basis that they are listed on IMDb.

“I have acted in movies, and nobody knows the plot twists of my life better than I do,” said Cision AI Solutions Lead Mini Biswas, who started off as a choreographer in the UK Asian Bollywood and bhangra scene before entering the UK tech industry.

Biswas has received recognition and awards for her DEI and STEM efforts.

“Whether I’m advising a board on AI strategy or speaking to students about careers in technology, the goal is the same: helping people see opportunities they didn’t know existed,” she said.

With the UK IT channel still facing a skills shortage, how can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation

of talent, we asked our quarter century of power players?

“I think the next generation is fascinated by the power of AI,” responded Jon Bridge, Head of Managed Services at Techary, who made the cut partly on the strength of his reputation for mentoring colleagues.

“We need to inspire people to use it for good and share stories about the power of technology and how it can be used for the better,” he added.

Tina Brown, Neurodiversity Network Chair at Telefónica Tech, urged leaders to “show people there is no single personality, background or way of thinking required to succeed in tech”, meanwhile.

“The next generation will be attracted to an industry where difference is welcomed, ideas are heard and people can see that they genuinely belong,” she added.

“Show young people the range of work the channel offers: solving real problems, being creative and making a visible difference. And make sure they can see people like themselves succeeding in it,” Heather Perriam, Practice Lead, Business Applications at Trustmarque Ultima, agreed.

This year’s Influencers were also asked about the best advice they’d received in their career, as well as which three guests they would invite to appear on their own (imaginary) talk show.

What did they say?

Read more over the following pages...

MEET THE OXYGEN INFLUENCERS



MINI BISWAS
AI SOLUTIONS LEAD,
CISION



Tell us about your career to date.

I started off as a choreographer in the UK Asian Bollywood and bhangra scene before entering the UK tech industry. It was Anushka Davies who gave me my first exposure to technology and made me realise I could build a career in it.

I'm now 16 years in, having worked at three well-known organisations, joining each at the embryonic stage of the next wave of tech: cloud, hosted voice and now AI. I have not only ridden the waves but have had the opportunity to shape the practices around them, enabling technology, making complex solutions accessible and helping organisations realise the value of innovation, full end-to-end managed services. It has been a really fun and exciting journey. In fact, I recently won AI Leader of the Year, which is still sinking in.

How would your colleagues describe you? Naturally passionate, and someone who brings leadership energy into every room. I've been told I have an instant aura about me and a way of bringing people together. When there's a conversation involving AI, I'm often the person people want in the room.

You have received recognition and awards for your DEI and STEM efforts. How do you successfully juggle this with your day job? Coming from a British-Indian family whose hopes for me were to get married at 15 rather than pursue an education, I left home at 18 to figure things out for myself.

I don't juggle it; it comes naturally to me. Whether I'm advising a board on AI strategy or speaking to students about careers in technology, the goal is the same: helping people see opportunities they didn't know existed. The countless people who have approached me after panels and events to say they feel inspired, or that they can relate to some of the

stigmas associated with tech, are what keep me going.

It has been amazing to break barriers and stereotypes. Representing people like me in this industry means a lot. That has led me to become a STEM Ambassador, a Rockstar Woman in AI & Security, representing a talk at AI Week with digital leaders and an active member of a few change-making initiatives.

I'm proud not only of the recognition I've received, but also of having the opportunity to bring a different perspective into some of judging panels and industry conversations I get invited to, helping ensure a broader range of voices are represented and heard.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? I don't think it's a single achievement. It's looking back at what I've created from opportunities, setbacks, risks, redundancy and a lot of hard work. Cision gave me the chance to become the first person with AI in their title, build something from the ground up and carve out my own space in an industry that's changing by the day.

"I'm actually on IMDB; I have acted in movies, and nobody knows the plot twists of my life better than I do."

Mini Biswas, Cision

Being recognised by communities such as TechWomen100, Copilot DEI Champion and winning AI Leader of the Year has been incredible, but these days I get the biggest sense of pride from seeing the footprint I've left behind. When I search my name online and see the talks, articles, podcasts, awards, mentoring and community work all connected together, it's a reminder that the journey has been worth it.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? Be upfront about salaries on job ads and invest more time educating young people about the technology industry.

Through my STEM activities, I've found that many students – and often education establishments themselves – have no idea what a vendor, distributor, reseller, MSP or channel partner is. We have amazing career opportunities in this industry, but people can't pursue a path they don't know exists.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? You don't need to be the smartest person in the room or have a computer science degree. Curiosity, resilience and the confidence to keep learning will take you further than you think.

If you're using the technology, you can build a career around it. AI is now available to anyone with a mobile device and an internet connection, and people are building agents in their spare time. Imagine doing that at scale for organisations and helping transform how they work. Get involved, get hands on and start using the technology.

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career?

That I 'can' do it. Fear is part of growth, so work through it rather than around it. I've also learned the value of finding an executive sponsor who sees something in you and is

willing to open doors. Dave Simpson, Steve Denby and Rob Quickenden have all done that for me at different stages of my career. Their belief in me has been genuinely career and life changing.

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? I love this question. Honestly, it would be *me*, of course. I'm actually on IMDB; I have acted in movies, and nobody knows the plot twists of my life better than I do.

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? Satya Nadella for all things future tech. Diljit Dosanjh because I'm a huge fan. And Mayim Bialik because she sits at the fascinating intersection of science, psychology, spirituality and human behaviour. That conversation could go absolutely anywhere, and that's exactly why she'd make the list.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Dr Vanessa Valley OBE. What she has built through WeAreTechWomen has changed countless careers, including my

own. Creating spaces where women can be seen, heard and celebrated is incredibly powerful, and her contribution to the industry deserves huge recognition.

CLAIRE BOWERS
OFFICE MANAGER, BECHTLE



Tell us about your career to date.

Leaving school at 15, I went straight into a secretarial role on a Youth Training Scheme which led to a couple of full-time positions as a legal secretary, which I really enjoyed.

Following a break when my son was born, I joined ACS in December 1995 as an accounts person – the best thing that's ever happened. Over the years while the company grew, I moved roles and became PA to the directors and HR administrator/office manager. When we merged with Bechtel in 2024, I remained the office manager/travel manager for the company, which I absolutely love.



“One of the proudest achievements in my career was being awarded the Justin Edhouse Award at this year’s Kick Off event.”

Claire Bowers, Bechtle

How would your colleagues describe you? Wow, that’s a difficult one. The ‘Office Mum’, I would guess and maybe ‘The fountain of all knowledge’. Having been with the company for just over 30 years now, if I don’t know the answer to a question, I know the person that can help. I’m very lucky that I have a great relationship with my colleagues/friends.

You were nominated partly on the strength of your fundraising and sustainability efforts at Bechtle UK, with one leader charactering you as a company “stalwart”. How do you successfully juggle all these activities? That’s a lovely compliment! Juggling daily tasks together with fundraising and sustainability can be challenging at times, but I work with some wonderful people who are all as passionate about raising funds for our chosen charities as I am. Together, we manage to organise and run some wonderful events. Without them, I couldn’t achieve half of the things that we do.

What’s the proudest achievement of your career so far? One of the proudest achievements in my career was being awarded the Justin Edhouse Award at this year’s Kick Off event. This award was created in memory of an incredible person and to be chosen for it was completely overwhelming. I’m so proud of this and if I ever aspire to be half the person Justin was, I will have truly succeeded.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? Gone are the days when IT was seen to be a dull career choice for only degree-level candidates. I think these days IT is an exciting, attractive and achievable career for everyone who desires an ever-changing, progressive and fulfilling role that can grow in many different directions.

What’s your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? I would highly recommend any school leaver to pursue a career in IT. It is a field that is exciting, versatile, ever-changing and so diverse. For a person leaving education or for people of any age, you can develop and take you in so many different directions, being part

of a team dedicated to supporting you and your journey to a fulfilling and very rewarding life-changing career.

What’s the best advice you’ve ever been given in your career?

“Check up from the neck up” – advice given many years ago from a company director. A wonderful, inspiring, inspirational person/friend that supported and guided me through my, and many other people’s, careers over many years.

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? Mrs Weasley from *Harry Potter*. She is the most loving, caring and protective person to her family and friends. She is always happy, positive, loyal, strong and compassionate; a true role model. Woe betides you if you hurt someone she loves though.

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? Sir David Attenborough, Robin Williams and the Queen.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Carmel Haigh. Carmel has become a great friend over the years and someone that really does deserve this recognition. I work closely with Carmel on all our fundraising and sustainability projects. Without her, I really couldn’t achieve many of these things.

JON BRIDGE
HEAD OF MANAGED
SERVICES, TECHARY



INFLUENCER IMPACT
Mentor and IP enthusiast

Tell us about your career to date. I have worked in IT for 13 years, having started my career as an apprentice at the age of 17 after leaving sixth form. I progressed through support roles

before moving into management and joined Techary in January 2020. I am now Head of Managed Services, leading the continued development and delivery of our managed services offering.

How would your colleagues describe you? I would hope very positively! I would like to think they see me as someone who leads from the front and doesn’t shy away from a challenge.

You’ve been hailed as someone who is making a genuine impact from outside the boardroom, with colleagues flagging up both your work around training and mentoring graduates and apprentices, and developing IP for Techary’s customers. How do you juggle all these things? I am lucky enough to be surrounded by an amazing team of people who really care about what they do and always push and help each other to be better. I am a big believer in hard work and I think this comes from the top down.

The culture here is hugely important to me. Enjoying coming to work every day and being around people you enjoy working with makes that part of working life so much easier.

What’s the proudest achievement of your career so far? Although this was more of a physical and mental challenge, some of the Techary team, including myself, completed the Three Peaks Challenge in 24 hours last year. We raised over £4k for Mind, a charity we partner closely with, which is focused on raising awareness of mental health. For those who don’t know, the challenge involves climbing the three highest mountains in England, Scotland and Wales one after the other.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? I think the next generation is fascinated by the

HERE’S LOOKING AT YOU

We asked our Influencers who they would have play them in a movie about their life, and a variety of interesting ideas were mooted. A couple of votes went to **JULIE WALTERS** (one being as her Mrs Weasley alter-ego), along with two nominations each for **SANDRA BULLOCK** and **STEPHEN GRAHAM**.

MINI BISWAS suggested herself (look her up on IMDb), while Vicky Withey thinks that as her partner fancies himself as Daniel Craig in *Casino Royale*, **EVA GREEN** would be a good candidate to play her. Other – some would say left-field – suggestions included **DAVID MITCHELL**, wrestler **BIG SHOW** and **ELMO** from *Sesame Street* (can you find who suggested that?)



power of AI. AI is already changing how we live and work and its influence will only continue to grow. We need to inspire people to use it for good and share stories about the power of technology and how it can be used for the better.

What’s your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Do it! IT is a core and integral part of so many businesses across multiple industries. Find a place that wants you to thrive and that you enjoy coming to every day, and you won’t look back.

What’s the best advice you’ve ever been given in your career? Our CEO would have to take credit for this one: “There’s always a way,” which also translates to “there is no such thing as impossible”. This mindset has helped me massively over the years by encouraging me to have a positive outlook when facing problems. In turn, it is something I have tried to pass on to the people

around me to help them think in the same way.

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? I would have to flip a coin between Mark Wahlberg and Tom Hardy. I would be happy with either of those.

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? Another tough one but if we are going with people alive today, I would have to go for Jurgen Klopp, Mike Tyson and Elon Musk.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. For the record, I could list so many people here. However, I am going to have to go with Toby Wyatt, who is a Senior Account Manager at Techary. He started at the company a month or so before me and we have become great friends over the years. He is someone who really puts in the effort, cares deeply about the company and goes above and beyond to give his customers a great experience.

TINA BROWN
OFFERINGS DEVELOPMENT
AND NEURODIVERSITY
NETWORK CHAIR,
TELEFÓNICA TECH



Tell us about your career to date. From telephone engineer to voicemail technician, back when everyone hated voicemail, then project manager, product manager and now Offerings Development Coordinator. My career has evolved with technology, but the common thread has always been making complicated things clearer, more useful and more human.

How would your colleagues describe you? I'd hope they would say I care deeply about people and have a habit of turning "Wouldn't it be good if..." into something real. Probably also enthusiastic, persistent and never short of an idea!

You were nominated for *Oxygen Influencers* partly on the strength of the work you're doing around neurodiversity in the workplace. What's your message to leaders on how they should approach this topic? Listen before you assume and focus on what helps people do their best work rather than expecting everyone to fit one standard way of working. Small changes in clarity, communication and flexibility can remove barriers for many people, without lowering expectations.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? Choosing to join Telefónica Tech because it opened my eyes to how much positive change can begin with one idea. I'm especially proud of turning conversations from our Neurodiversity Network into practical resources, including our SharePoint site, accessibility newsletter series and the Working With Me Guide pilot, which will help anyone explain

"Start the conversation, listen to the people it affects and build something better together."

Tina Brown,
Telefónica Tech

how they work, communicate and collaborate best.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? Show people that there is no single personality, background or way of thinking required to succeed in tech. The next generation will be attracted to an industry where difference is welcomed, ideas are heard and people can see that they genuinely belong.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? You don't have to be a technical whizz to build a career in IT. The industry needs communicators, organisers, creative thinkers, problem-solvers and people who see things differently, so you may already have more to offer than you realise.

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career? I'm old enough to have received plenty of advice, but I would sum it up as: don't

wait for something to be perfect before giving it the chance to become useful. Start the conversation, listen to the people it affects and build something better together.

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? Julie Walters, because she combines warmth, determination and humour with just the right amount of "Right, let's get this sorted".

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? Melanie Sykes, Keira Knightley and Billie Eilish. Three very different, strong individuals who could bring lived experience, honesty and straight talking to a fascinating conversation about different minds.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Janice Phayre, for making ESG practical, visible and human. Her boundless enthusiasm and genuine passion are contagious, and she shows how an honest conversation, followed by action, can create meaningful change.



ROSS COLLINS
HEAD OF ENGINEERING,
NOVATECH



Tell us about your career to date. After an initial false start working in leisure retail management and running a series of pubs and nightclubs until my early 30s, I took a radical career change into IT at the grand age of 32. I started as a repair technician in Novatech after doing my A+ and worked my way through job roles and certifications until I reached my current position. During this time I worked in networking, server, virtualisation and project management, until landing on the head of department role.

How would your colleagues describe you? Passionate and energetic. I work on the projects and causes I believe in 150%. People often get sick of hearing about my latest business focus and the next product or technology I'm promoting.

You've been hailed as a UK "open-source champion". Why is this such an important area for you? Honestly, because I have strong beliefs about fairness. I think technology and systems have a fantastic potential to help companies and individuals work better and more efficiently. At the same time, I believe the vast majority of large proprietary platforms are working from a playbook that is designed to extract the highest amount of money for the

minimum effort rather than try to build a better product. Open source projects give people the option of running the projects and then making the choice to purchase professional services or support. A way out of the eternal price upgrades and software that stops working if you don't pay, even if it's your hardware.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? Honestly, probably being allowed to bring open-source projects and support to the company's business model, which allowed me to build partnerships with maintainers and vendors. This allows me to showcase open-source projects to enterprise and institutional clients.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? Become more visible and stress the benefits that a career in the channel can bring. Many young people aren't even aware of the channel or the rapid growth and development in technologies that can be achieved working within them. I lead several training and internal development programmes that make sure our next generation of solution and infrastructure engineers have the opportunity to come from our entry-level positions. My team itself is currently recruited entirely from internal positions or via university placements.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry

contemplating a career in the IT channel? Take every opportunity you can. Although I do hold a degree, it's in a completely unrelated field (Biological Sciences) and that doesn't matter in this industry; my experience and certs matter a lot more. Channel and infrastructure work is still one of those industries where getting a foot in the door with an entry-level position will allow people to gain those skills on the job and they will always be more valuable than infrastructure taught in a classroom.

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career? Good, Fast, Cheap; pick any two...

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? Looks wise, the wrestler, the Big Show/Paul Wight; flatteringly, Vincent D'Onofrio; realistically, Elmo from *Sesame Street*.

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? Obviously, Big Show, Vincent D'Onofrio and Elmo from *Sesame Street*.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Without being too corny, honestly, I think every member of my team and the people I work with every day all deserve recognition. I will shout out my immediate bosses, Jamie Wilson and David Furby, because even though they are board level, the business and opportunities I have been given wouldn't exist without both of them.

"People often get sick of hearing about my latest business focus and the next product or technology I'm promoting."

Ross Collins, Novatech





"I never contemplated this career but have since had so much fulfilment from the path I found myself on."

Danny Cully, WestSpring IT

DANNY CULLY
HEAD OF TECHNICAL
DELIVERY, WESTSPRING IT



INFLUENCER IMPACT
Leader of tomorrow

Tell us about your career to date. I left school at 16, and very much fell into IT through a family member. It was always meant to be an incidental role providing administrative support for the business while I worked out what I wanted to pursue in life, but within weeks I ended up working with the service desk team, and the rest is history. No plans, aspirations or expectations here. I had even opted out of IT in the school system, but I became enamoured by how much of a supportive impact it had in other people's daily lives, the problem solving, and the social aspect of working alongside clients.

Roles in-house and with various IT MSPs followed and I have been extremely fortunate in that my current employer (WestSpring IT) has put so much faith and investment in me and have since seen my career flourish. I started out with WestSpring IT on the service desk but soon made my way to become

a technical consultant, leading the team, and now supporting the entirety of the technical delivery services as the head of that department.

How would your colleagues describe you? An individual that hates organised fun; a role/butt of a joke that I gladly lean into, although (I hope!) caring, selfless and supportive.

My image, I feel, that is fully accepted by everyone within the business, is that I spend most my free time sat in a garden smoking a cigarette listening to podcasts or on the Merlin app. *Bliss*.

You've been flagged by those we spoke to as a potential leader of tomorrow. What are qualities must leaders possess in the UK MSP space today, and are they changing? An awareness of how perception surrounding IT has changed, how clients are looking for a partnership rather than a transactional relationship, and how client experience sometimes trumps raw technical knowledge.

A leader should always be compassionate to their team, and to themselves. They should position

themselves to always look to lift those around them to success wherever or whatever that may be and be transformative to those they support.

Trust, challenge and consistency is key and always be passionate about what you do.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far?

In all honesty, and not to be performative here, but the journeys I have been on with my teams and my colleagues. Together we have achieved so much and have gone from success to success in recent years. Supporting and working with others is why I went into IT, and why I will remain here.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? It's an interesting one. I feel that already it is far more of an attractive proposition compared to when I was in education. Whole generations are now IT-literate, consume more technology than ever before, and have a vested interest in new, emerging technologies. AI now feels like a cornerstone of the modern workplace, and the transformation

this has accelerated is equally scary and exciting.

In a direct answer to the question: focusing more on the transformational side of IT, the impact it can have within an industry, and how far it can continue to go. I feel this is organically becoming (if not already) the perception and soon leaving us is the idea that IT is an afterthought.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Follow whatever feels right to you. I never contemplated this career but have since had so much fulfilment from the path I found myself on. The industry is exciting, challenging and ever evolving. You will never find yourself bored and it fills so many niches.

I love the sociality of working alongside others every day, but I also appreciate the moments away from others where I can get stuck in

to a problem or learn more about emerging technologies.

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career? In any instance of doubt, do what you feel is right and if you want to see change, feel empowered to be the driving force.

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? Recent Jude Law when he had a moustache.

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? Mikel Arteta, Willem Dafoe and Tom Holland (either the historian or Spiderman).

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. I would love to recognise all those I work with at WestSpring – Emma for the daily support, guidance, and coaching, and the leaders past and present that have invested in me.

DANIELLE DAVIES
SENIOR CHANNEL
ACCOUNT MANAGER,
BLUEBEAM



INFLUENCER IMPACT
From psychiatric nurse to
IT sales superstar

Tell us about your career to date.

I left university with a Psychology degree where I dived straight into an intense care worker role within mental health homes and psychiatric wards. I then found myself craving routine and I found myself within IT sales and I never looked back!

How would your colleagues describe you? Extremely passionate, loyal and funny.



"Be yourself, let your personality shine through. Don't say and do what you think people would want. As I found out, the real you will be much more successful than some boring robot!"

Danielle Davies, Bluebeam

You were nominated for Oxygen Influencers partly on the strength of the impact you've made in the IT channel following your decision to change professions. How easy was it to make the leap? I was young and eager for change. Making the decision to move careers was easy; however, there was the fear of whether I would be successful. I remember attending recruitment days where everyone had a business degree and seemed on paper to have everything recruiters in sales were looking for. I made the top three finalists out of 20+ on the day and this really boosted my confidence.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? There have been many proud moments throughout my career, but this nomination is certainly one of the highlights. The fact that the Managing Director who hired me over 10 years ago not only remembers me but has continued to follow and support my career in such a meaningful way is incredibly

humbling. I still remember that interview all those years ago, and reflecting on the journey I've taken since then makes me feel extremely proud of everything I have achieved in my career since that day.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? Get more people to understand what the IT channel is and the variety of careers available within it. It's a fast-paced industry where you can make a real impact, but many young people don't know those opportunities exist; I know I certainly didn't! I was lucky to have some amazing mentors early in my career; offering mentorship to help guide people early on would be beneficial to help them thrive in the channel and build a lifelong career.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Don't panic if you didn't necessarily study in this area; you can build your own success through

hard work, determination and most of all your individual personality.

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career? It sounds cliché, but be yourself, let your personality shine through. Don't say and do what you think people would want. As I found out, the real you will be much more successful than some boring robot!

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? Kiera Knightley. I am a lifelong fan since *Bend it Like Beckham*!

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? David Beckham – a sporting icon and lifelong idol; Lewis Capaldi – hilarious; Florence Pugh – effortlessly cool, in her career prime and not afraid to speak her mind.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Joanna Devlin – she mentored me at Jabra and has done amazing things in her career; an underrated superstar.

IT'S GOOD TO TALK...

Imagine you weren't working in the channel and instead were a TV star with your own talk show. Who would our Influencers choose as their dream guests? Well, no fewer than 68 different names were put forward. The standout was national treasure **SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH**. The football fans plumped for the likes of **JURGEN KLOPP**, **SIR DAVID BECKHAM** and **SIR ALEX FERGUSON**. Characters from the world of comedy included **BOB MORTIMER (2)**, **VICTORIA WOOD** and **ROBIN WILLIAMS**. Historian **HANNAH FRY** and former First Lady **MICHELLE OBAMA** were each nominated twice. Dearly departed **DAVID BOWIE**, **DOLLY PARTON** and **THE QUEEN** also featured on the wishlist.



CHANICE DOWNER HEAD OF OPERATIONS, HIGHGATE



Tell us about your career to date. I landed in the IT industry by chance in my early twenties, at a reseller that gave me a lot of experience across operational roles. I've been with Highgate for more than four years now and feel like I've grown with the business. I joined in a supporting role and now head up our sales operations team.

How would your colleagues describe you? I'd like to think they'd say I'm knowledgeable and someone they can rely on to help solve problems. I make it my mission to understand how as many areas of the business work as possible, so I'm often the person people come to when there's an issue. And I'd hope my team would say I'm supportive, approachable and fair.

You were nominated for Oxygen Influencers partly on the strength of your accelerated career journey in the IT channel. What qualities must leaders possess in the UK MSP space today, and are they changing? I don't think the basics of leadership have changed. You still need to be well informed and keep things running smoothly, but what's different now is that great leaders also need to see the value in their people. In an industry that's constantly changing, with so much pressure to keep up, having a happy team that feels valued makes all the difference.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? Growing a team that I have complete confidence and faith in. Having progressed through operational roles myself, it's really rewarding to now lead a team who

"Having progressed through operational roles myself, it's really rewarding to now lead a team who are strong and experienced, and share a great work ethic."

Chanice Downer,
Highgate



are strong and experienced, share a great work ethic and are a real asset to the business.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? I think a lot of it comes down to awareness. Like many people, I fell into IT without realising how broad the industry is or how many opportunities it offers. It's about being visible not only to younger people in schools and universities, but also to people in other industries. Some of my colleagues have come from completely different backgrounds, and their fresh perspectives have directly contributed to some of our biggest successes.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Do it! This industry is growing so quickly, and no year has been the same since I joined. There are so many areas in the IT channel that even if you're not technical, there will be a role

for you. If you enjoy a fast-paced environment, you won't regret it.

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career? You don't need to have all the answers, you just need to be open to finding them.

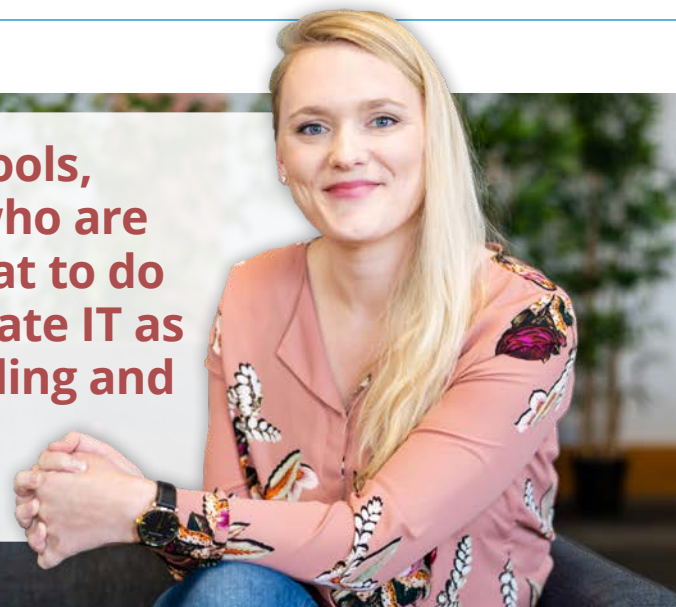
Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? Reese Witherspoon.

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? David Attenborough, Gordon Ramsay and Joanne McNally. An eclectic mix, but I'd be fascinated by the stories from all three of them.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Lucy Ledward, our Head of Finance. She rejoined Highgate after a year away and has been a huge support since she returned. Not only has she stepped up as an amazing leader of the finance team, she's been invaluable to the rest of the business too.

"I work a lot with schools, trying to reach girls who are starting to decide what to do for work to demonstrate IT as an achievable, rewarding and exciting career path."

Hanna Drew, Chorus



HANNA DREW
IT OPERATIONS MANAGER,
CHORUS

INFLUENCER IMPACT
Young leader inspiring the next generation

Tell us about your career to date.

I started in the IT industry as a project manager for a software development company before moving into operational management for the software development department at Chorus. Since then, I've moved to heading up the day-to-day operations of the IT side of the business, including our managed services, project delivery and internal infrastructure departments.

How would your colleagues describe you? I'd like to think they'd say I'm approachable and supportive but that I'm also decisive and clear with my direction and expectation. I hope they would say I am a calming influence.

Outside of your own impressive career progression, you've been praised for your efforts to encourage more young girls into tech. Can you tell us more about what you've done, and why this is important to you? I never

considered IT as an industry to work in; I fell into it by circumstance, but it's been a very rewarding experience and women have been the ones to hold the door open for me. It's important to me to repay that and demonstrate to young women that there is so much to offer in this industry. I work a lot with schools, trying to reach girls who are starting to decide what to do for work to demonstrate IT as an achievable, rewarding and exciting career path.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? The most rewarding part of the job is seeing people that I manage excel; knowing that I have played a small part in shaping their development.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? I don't think it's very clear what opportunities are available in the channel; particularly in the current climate where AI is so prevalent. I think by its nature; the channel is marketed as a very technical environment but there are so many non-technical skills required to excel that outsiders wouldn't be aware of – critical thinking, problem solving, communication and empathy to name a few.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Go for it! It can seem like a daunting environment, especially if you're not deeply technical but the pace of change is exciting; you'll get the opportunity to challenge yourself and learn plenty of new skills. You don't need to have a technical background to do well.

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career? I've built a career out of "fake it till I make it". Part of that involves another bit of advice which is: "Learn to get comfortable being uncomfortable."

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? Emerald Fennell.

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? Dolly Parton, Michelle Obama and Julia Donaldson.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Ben Davies, our Head of Business Development. No one can translate requirements, find solutions and champion end users quite like he can. His integrity and empathy are second to none.

ANDREEA DUMITRESCU
UK MD, QBS SOFTWARE

INFLUENCER IMPACT
From graduate to MD

Tell us about your career to date.

I joined QBS straight from university nearly 17 years ago, not really knowing what the IT channel was, and worked my way through the business before becoming Managing Director for the UK & Ireland. I've grown up professionally in this industry and, all these years later, I'm still learning and still love what I do.

How would your colleagues describe you? You'd probably have to ask them 😊. I'd like to think they would say I'm driven, supportive and fair. I have high expectations, including of myself, but I genuinely care about people and will always make time to help someone grow.

You were nominated partly on the strength of your inspiring

career journey. What are the qualities of an excellent leader in the UK IT channel today, and are they changing? For me, the best leaders combine empathy with accountability. You need to listen, adapt and understand your people, but leadership is also about making difficult decisions, setting high standards and giving people the confidence and opportunities to grow.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? Going from joining QBS straight out of university to leading the UK & Ireland business is something I'm incredibly proud of. Just as important to me is seeing people I've mentored and supported grow in confidence, progress their careers and become leaders themselves.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? First, we need to do a much better job of explaining what the IT channel

actually is! There are so many brilliant careers here that young people simply don't know exist. We need to reach them earlier, create more opportunities to enter the industry and then give young talent responsibility, a voice and people they can learn from.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Don't worry if you don't have experience in the IT channel – I didn't. Be curious, work hard, build relationships and say yes to opportunities that stretch you. You might be surprised where they take you.

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career? Don't wait until you feel completely ready, because you probably never will be. I've always pushed myself to take on more responsibility, often before I felt ready. Once I say yes to something, I'll do everything I can to make it a success.

"We need to do a much better job of explaining what the IT channel actually is! There are so many brilliant careers here that young people simply don't know exist."

Andreea Dumitrescu, QBS Software



SPREADING THE CHANNEL MESSAGE TO SCHOOLS



A PAX8 EXECUTIVE earlier this year opened up on how he was inspired by his inclusion in *Oxygen Influencers* to begin promoting the IT industry in schools – despite characterising his own school years as “traumatic”.

Pax8 AI Platform Lead Andy Readman appeared in the first edition of the report back in 2024.

In a special *Oxygen Influencers* podcast that aired in June, Readman revealed his attendance of a subsequent *Oxygen Influencers* lunch inspired him to look into schools outreach work.

“I was inspired by so many people there that were doing schools outreach programmes,” he said during the podcast.

“School was a bit of a traumatic time for me, and I wasn’t looking forward to getting back inside a school any time soon.

“But it was the realisation that I have achieved things maybe against the odds a little bit.”

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? Sandra Bullock.

She’s strong, funny, doesn’t seem to take herself too seriously – and she’s a fellow Leo, so it feels like a good fit! She may need some help with the Romanian accent though.

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? Michelle Obama, Trevor Noah and Loredana Pădurean, a Romanian professor at MIT. Three

incredibly intelligent people with very different perspectives – I think the conversation would be very

interesting and a lot of fun!

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Carmen Ciobotaru, our Operations Manager at QBS. She joined us in 2014 with no IT experience and has worked incredibly hard to build the career she has today. She’s one of the smartest and most capable people I know, the first person I turn to when there’s a problem that needs solving, and she balances all of that with being a brilliant mum of two – I find her truly inspiring.

RYAN EDMONDS
CLOUD MARKETPLACE
OPERATIONS MANAGER,
BYTES SOFTWARE
SERVICES



INFLUENCER IMPACT
Marketplace magician

Tell us about your career to date.

I came into the IT channel just over four years ago with very little experience of the industry and, if I’m honest, no real idea where it might take me. I was curious, willing to learn and keen to take opportunities as they came.

Since then, I’ve gone from learning the basics of the channel to helping build and grow Bytes’ Cloud Marketplace capability, working across customers, vendors and the hyperscalers. Marketplace quickly became a genuine passion and has introduced me to some brilliant people, new ways of thinking and opportunities that have played a huge part in shaping the career I have today.

How would your colleagues describe you? I’ve been called the Marketplace Wizard or Marketplace Guru more than once and, to be fair, I probably am a little Cloud Marketplace obsessed, but I think you have to be in this role!

Beyond that, I’d like to think my colleagues see me as approachable, supportive and always willing to help or share what I know.

You were nominated partly on the strength of the pioneering work you are doing around hyperscaler marketplaces. What is the golden rule for success when it comes to this emerging route to market? For me, the

golden rule is never lose sight of the customer. It’s easy to get caught up in the technology, processes and commercials, but ultimately Marketplace has to help the customer achieve something.

That means getting the

foundations right, staying curious and being open to new ways of thinking and working. Marketplace moves quickly, so you need to be able to move with it, but customer value should always be at the centre of what you do.

What’s the proudest achievement of your career so far? Public speaking has never come naturally to me, so one that really stands out was delivering my first Cloud Marketplace presentation at a customer event at the top of the Cheesegrater in London.

I was outside my comfort zone and incredibly nervous beforehand, but once I got going, I genuinely enjoyed it. It might not be the biggest achievement on paper, but personally it was a big moment and made me realise how far I’d come, not just in my career and my knowledge of Marketplace, but in my own confidence too.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? For me, it starts with making the channel more

visible. Before I joined the industry, I had no idea just how many opportunities existed within it.

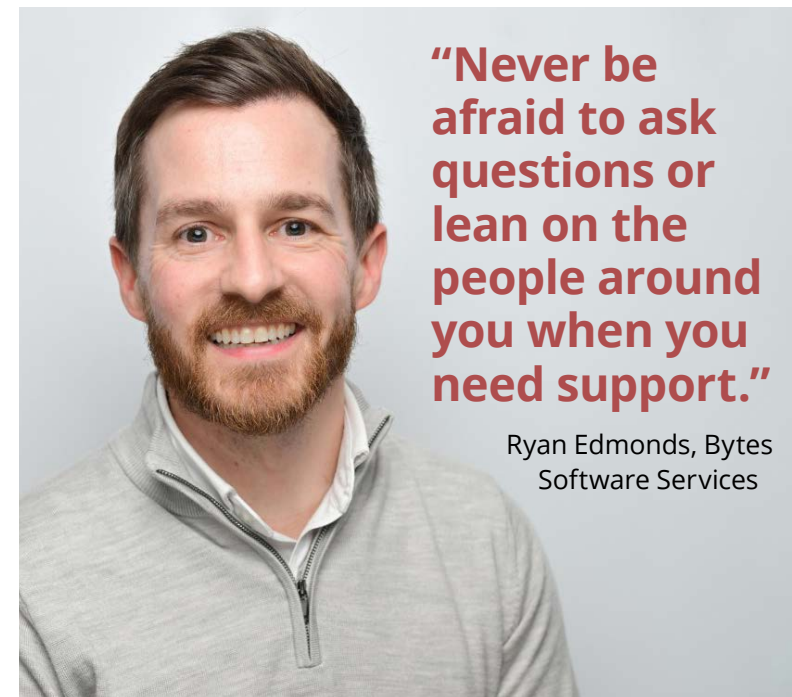
You get exposure to some of the biggest technology companies in the world, real customer challenges and a huge variety of careers across technology, sales, marketing, operations and partnerships. We need to do a better job of showing the next generation what the channel actually is and just how many different directions a career in it can take you.

What’s your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Don’t be put off by what you don’t know or feel like you need to arrive with all the answers. I came into the channel completely new to the industry and found a world where I could learn, contribute, build relationships and ultimately build a career around something I became genuinely passionate about.

Sometimes all you need is an opportunity, some curiosity and, of course, a willingness to learn.

“Never be afraid to ask questions or lean on the people around you when you need support.”

Ryan Edmonds, Bytes Software Services



What’s the best advice you’ve ever been given in your career?

I’ve been lucky to have a lot of great advice and support throughout my career, so picking one piece is almost impossible. But the common theme has always been to be honest about what you know and what you don’t. Never be afraid to ask questions or lean on the people around you when you need support. It sounds simple, but that approach has never failed me and has helped me build the relationships and career I have today.

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? I’d love to say someone like Tom Cruise, but realistically David Mitchell is a better fit. Slightly awkward, highly analytical and with a pretty dry sense of humour!

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? Hannah Fry, because I love the way she thinks and makes complicated things feel simple. Tom Holland and Dominic Sandbrook from *The Rest Is History* podcast, who I’m absolutely counting as one guest! And Bob Mortimer, simply because he’s one of the funniest people on TV and I’d have absolutely no idea where the conversation would end up.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Marketplace success never sits with one person, so I’d have to nominate Charlotte Bunker, who now heads up Bytes’ Cloud Marketplace Operations.

Charlotte plays a vital role in making Marketplace work in practice. She does a huge amount behind the scenes to turn opportunities into something we can actually deliver and scale, supporting our sales teams, customers and vendors throughout the process.

A lot of what we’ve achieved with Marketplace at Bytes simply wouldn’t have been possible without her, and I think her contribution deserves real recognition.

JULIA ELLIOTT
PARTNER AND MARKETING
MANAGER, IDEAL



Tell us about your career to date. I often joke that I've had several careers in one lifetime! I started out as an overseas holiday representative before moving into recruitment sales. Later, while raising my son, I coordinated school groups for a language school, which gave me the flexibility to work part-time at a time when five days a week in the office was the norm and flexible working was virtually unheard of.

For the past 11 years, I've been working for Ideal, a VAR/MSP that has become known for the work we do with 'Smart Buildings and Construction', but you'd be surprised how many very well-known brands we work with delivering a whole host of IT solutions.

How would your colleagues describe you? I'll borrow the exact words of a colleague, who recently described me as Miss Rabbit from *Peppa Pig*! Apparently, the comparison comes from the fact that Miss Rabbit seems to turn her hand to just about every job imaginable.

I'd like to think it was meant as a compliment! In reality, it's all part and parcel of working for a smaller organisation that's competing with some of the IT channel's largest partners. There's always a new challenge to tackle, a new opportunity to seize, and inevitably, a new hat to wear. The variety is what keeps it interesting, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

You've been characterised as "the glue that holds all the events together" for The Channel Community. What is The Channel Community, and why are you so committed to making it a success? Unless you work for



"We all need trusted sounding boards throughout our careers, and The Channel Community provides exactly that. I'm hugely proud to be part of an organisation that makes such a positive difference."

Julia Elliott, Ideal

a large organisation, mentoring and professional development opportunities are often limited. In smaller businesses, support typically comes from your line manager, and there can be times when you don't feel comfortable asking someone you work closely with the more challenging or awkward questions.

The Channel Community helps bridge that gap, and it's something I would have loved to have had access to earlier in my career. It has been incredible to see the impact it has had on individuals, particularly those who have flourished through the Buddy programme. Dan Evans and Kate Auchterlonie, both former *Oxygen Influencers*, are two fantastic examples of people who have benefited from that support and gone on to achieve great things.

On the flip side, and perhaps unintentionally, the community has also created an invaluable network for people at every stage of their careers. The Marketing Peer Group is a great example, providing a forum where experienced professionals

can share ideas, seek advice and support one another. Mentoring and development don't stop once you reach a certain level. We all need trusted sounding boards throughout our careers, and The Channel Community provides exactly that. I'm hugely proud to be part of an organisation that makes such a positive difference.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? I'm not sure there has ever been one standout moment in my career. For me, it's always been about the small wins that build up over time. Being the trusted pair of hands people turn to, the go-to person to solve a problem, or, as we've established, the 'Miss Rabbit' who picks up something completely new when it needs doing!

I suppose all of that comes down to trust. Looking back, one of the things I'm most proud of is joining Ideal with no IT experience and being given the opportunity to succeed by people who believed in me. In particular, Moto Shakoori and

Claire Hopkins saw potential in me and trusted me to learn, grow and take on new challenges.

That makes me proud in two ways: proud of what I've achieved, but also incredibly grateful for the people who gave me the chance to prove myself. Their belief in me has shaped the career I have today, and that's something I'll never take for granted.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? The IT channel is about so much more than just technology. Of course, having an understanding of technology is important, but the opportunities within the industry stretch far beyond purely technical roles.

We need to create more pathways into the sector through apprenticeships and entry-level opportunities for school and college leavers. We also need to do a better job of educating young people about the huge variety of careers available within tech, from marketing and sales through to operations,

customer success, finance and leadership.

Perhaps most importantly, we need to help people understand the impact technology can have. It's not just about the technology itself; it's about the outcomes it enables. Rather than saying, "Come and work in tech", maybe we should be saying, "Come and work with the technology that's shaping experiences, solving problems and helping organisations achieve more".

Ultimately, it's as much about how we position the opportunities as it is about the opportunities themselves. If we can broaden that conversation, we'll attract a more diverse range of talent and strengthen the future of our industry.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? If you'd told 21-year-old me – having studied European History and Spanish and with absolutely no interest in STEM subjects – that I'd one day

be working in IT and loving it, I'd probably have laughed.

My message would be: don't let pre-conceived ideas about the industry put you off. The IT channel is about so much more than technology. Yes, there are technical roles, but there are also opportunities in marketing, sales, operations, finance, customer success, project management and leadership. There's genuinely something for almost every skill set and interest.

It's also an incredibly exciting industry to be part of. Technology is constantly evolving, creating new opportunities, new career paths and new ways to make an impact. You don't have to be a 'techie' to succeed, but you do need to be curious, willing to learn and open to new challenges.

Take the time to look beyond the stereotypes and explore what's available. The career opportunities within the IT channel are far broader than most people realise, and you may be surprised at where that curiosity can take you.

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career? For me, there has never been a single piece of advice that stands out. Instead, it's been the people who believed in me, gave me opportunities, and occasionally pushed me outside my comfort zone that have had the greatest influence on my career.

I've always been motivated by those who saw potential in me, even when I didn't necessarily see it in myself. Looking back, their actions often meant more than any words of advice. Sometimes, simply having someone trust you, champion you, or encourage you to take on a new challenge is the most powerful guidance you can receive.

After all, actions can be every bit as impactful as words.

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? I think it would have to be Jennifer Saunders. I've loved her humour ever since I first

watched *Girls on Top* in the 1980s, and I've always admired her ability to find comedy in everyday situations.

I'd also like to think she'd do an excellent job of recreating some of the questionable facial expressions I seem to pull, which invariably get captured in photographs! Given the variety of roles I've taken on throughout my career, and my tendency to wear many different hats, she'd probably have plenty of material to work with too.

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? Weirdly, all three of my choices are music legends who are no longer with us.

George Michael, Elvis Presley and David Bowie. If I could put them all in a room together and spend an hour talking to them about their careers, creativity and the impact they've had on music and popular culture, it would be absolutely fascinating.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. There are a number of colleagues I could name, but if I had to choose one person, it would be someone outside of my organisation: my Cisco PAM, Kanisha Chavda.

In my opinion, Kanisha is a rising star at Cisco. She is incredibly in tune with us as a partner, taking the time to understand our business, our goals and the challenges we face. More importantly, she doesn't just listen, she helps drive initiatives forward and turns ideas into action.

One of the things I admire most is how quickly she grasps what we're trying to achieve. You never have to tell her something twice and, more often than not, she's already one step ahead, anticipating the next conversation before it happens. That level of engagement, insight and commitment is rare, and it makes a real difference.

For me, great partnerships are built on trust, understanding and a shared desire to succeed, and Kanisha embodies all of those qualities.

DEBBIE FARRELL
PARTNER DIRECTOR
CLOUD & APPS
AND DATACENTRE,
COMPUTACENTER



INFLUENCER IMPACT
Marketplace pioneer

Tell us about your career to date. I started my IT career aged 19 in customer services at Microwarehouse before finding my way into partner management with a little vendor called Apple and its colourful PCs. Since then, I've worked with some fantastic partners, navigated everything from software and marketplaces to datacentres and cloud, and discovered that just when you think you've figured this industry out, it changes again.

Today, I lead teams across the Computacenter cloud, apps and datacentre partnerships, and the last 18 months have probably been some of the most fascinating yet as the industry continues to transform.

How would your colleagues describe you? I'd hope my colleagues would say I'm approachable, practical and someone who gets things done. I care about building strong relationships, supporting the people around me and finding a way through challenges. Most of all, I'd like to think I'm someone who's always willing to help.

You were nominated partly on the strength of the pioneering work you are doing around hyperscaler marketplaces. What is the golden rule for success when it comes to this emerging route to market? For me, the golden rule is to focus on building strong partnerships. Marketplaces create some fantastic opportunities, and the organisations

seeing the biggest success are the ones that invest the time to understand the ecosystem, collaborate closely and embrace change as things continue to evolve. It's still a relatively new route to market, so staying curious, being adaptable and learning along the way is key.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? Becoming a partner director has been a real career highlight, as has receiving recognition such as CRN Unsung Hero and Employee of the Year. What means the most to me, though, is that those achievements reflect the support, encouragement and opportunities I've had from some incredible leaders, colleagues and teams throughout my career. I've been fortunate to learn from some great people, and they've played a huge part in helping me get to where I am today.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? I don't think



enough people realise just how many opportunities the channel offers. There are roles across sales, marketing, operations, finance, partnerships and technology, all giving people the chance to make a real impact and build a great career. I certainly didn't know where the industry would take me when I started out, but it's given me the opportunity to work with amazing people, be part of some exciting changes and continually learn along the way.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Go for it! You don't need to have all the answers on day one, but you do need curiosity, a willingness to learn, self-belief and the drive to work hard. The opportunities in this industry are huge for people who are prepared to keep learning, put themselves forward and make things happen.

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career? One of the best pieces of advice I was given early in my career was to treat everyone with the same respect and professionalism, regardless of their role. People remember how you make them feel, and as your career progresses, you'll often find that the relationships you build along the way become some of your greatest supporters.

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? I'd like to say Cameron Diaz, but the reality is

"For me, the golden rule is to focus on building strong partnerships."

Debbie Farrell, Computacenter

"Take the leap, and you will not look back, but start in sales!"

Dean Gardner, Softcat



DEAN GARDNER
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR,
SOFTCAT



INFLUENCER IMPACT
Reshaping the services world

Tell us about your career to date. I began with hands-on technical roles, driven by a love of tinkering with technology. School was not always the best fit for me, but technology suited the way I think. After moving into the IT channel in 2007, I've spent around 20 years building my modest channel career, initially developing the virtualisation and end-user practice at Basilica, which later became BT Engage through an acquisition made that same year.

I had the opportunity to join OCSL in 2011, where I developed the end-user practice before having to the opportunity to evolve its managed service business. I brought together vendors and propositions and built a technical presales function that helped win major contracts and from my perspective supported a team that pushed the boundaries at that time by providing true hybrid cloud environments. That role certainly taught me how to unite sales, marketing, technology and services around a compelling customer story.

I certainly took those lessons to Softcat when I joined the newly

probably more Sandra Bullock. Her characters often find themselves dealing with a bit of chaos, occasionally doubting themselves, but somehow still managing to get to the finish line with a sense of humour intact. I'd like to think there are a few similarities there.

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? I'd invite Marilyn Monroe because I'd love to hear her perspective on the conspiracy theories that still surround her life and death. I'd also invite David Attenborough for his perspective on the world, and after starting my partner management career managing Apple, I'd love to hear how Steve Jobs turned such bold ideas into one of the world's most iconic brands.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Honestly, I'd struggle to name just one. Throughout my career, I've had the privilege of working with Graham Noel, Maya Purkayastha, Clare Hall, Lisa Birse, Louise Malone, Nina Stylianou, Darryl Marusic and Angela Spicer, as well as many others, who have challenged, supported and encouraged me along the way. The channel is full of unsung heroes, and I've learnt over the years that success is rarely about one person; it's usually the result of great people working together.



Some 24 of the 50 Influencers across the first two editions descended on Clays in Soho last November to celebrate their inclusion in the prestigious list.

Among those grabbing a gun was a teacher-turned-top-tech seller, a channel social media influencer, as well as the past and current winners of the Channel Reality Show.

Also giving it their best shots were a gaggle of channel pros making an impact in areas such as ESG, DEI, schools outreach and free mentoring.



formed OCTO team in 2016, helping to shape the cloud business, expand OCTO and develop the technology tower model used across the organisation. Today, supported by an incredible team, I lead the Technology Group as Technology Director at the most incredible company.

How would your colleagues describe you? What a question! They'd probably describe me as balanced and thoughtful, perhaps a little intimidating on occasions but with the right intent. Certainly, the old man of the group, but always keen to combine humour with delivering the objective, whatever that objective is. Right now, it's surviving in an AI developing world.

Colleagues have said you are "reshaping the industry" with the team you are building. What's your ultimate goal? That's lovely to hear if reshaping the industry is a good thing. I don't have an ultimate goal really. I do take a lot from sport and specifically the art of coaching. From my perspective, you're only as good as your last match, season or year, so you learn, reset and aim to improve.

My immediate priority is to help Softcat and the Technology Group stay ahead of the competition, while personally remaining in the game for as long as possible. Whether that counts as reshaping the industry, I'm not sure, but I'll happily take the compliment, and if I've stumbled on a secret, I'm keeping it to myself.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? I'm proud to be where I am, but my greatest career achievement has been turning a plan/vision into reality, which has influenced the creation of new departments, jobs and providing opportunities for people to develop. There's real satisfaction in being able to say: "This is what we set out to do, this is what we

delivered, and these are the results and benefits for the customer, our business and our people." I'd like to think I've done that a few times in a few places.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? Softcat does an excellent job of developing talent, but the wider reseller and IT services industry needs to be more visible in and across our educational institutions, as technology literacy is crucial to every industry. Too few people understand the breadth of careers available or that our industry is a great place to learn about technology, business and service; we simply need to promote that story more effectively.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Take the leap, and you will not look back, but start in sales!

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career? Two ears, one mouth. A classic but a good one.

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? Ray Winstone.

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? Christopher Nolan, Pep Guardiola and my Mum, who passed away a few years ago. My Mum would ask if Pep knew what was going on behind the scenes at Man City for sure.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Rhys Lawson – a Softcat legend who operates on another level while juggling countless priorities. He does it all with a smile, discipline and professionalism, making him one of the most accomplished leaders I've worked with.

BENN HEGARTY
ENTERPRISE ACCOUNT
MANAGER, JABRA



INFLUENCER IMPACT
Out-of-industry rising star

Tell us about your career to date.

I have been at Jabra for the past 10 years. I started off in inside sales, and am now an Enterprise Account Manager looking after our financial service and insurance customers.

Before being in the IT world I had a stint in retail and then in car sales.

How would your colleagues describe you? I'd like to think they'd describe me as someone that gets things done. For a salesperson I'm probably more on the quiet side, probably slightly introverted but you have to play into your strengths. Given most salespeople are more extroverted, being different is a strength in my eyes.

You were nominated for Oxygen Influencers partly on the strength of the impact you've made in the IT channel following your decision to change professions. How easy was it to make the leap? I've been at Jabra for 10 years now (so something is going right). Before this I was in car sales, pretty much fresh

out of school. I tried that for a couple of years but really needed a culture shift.

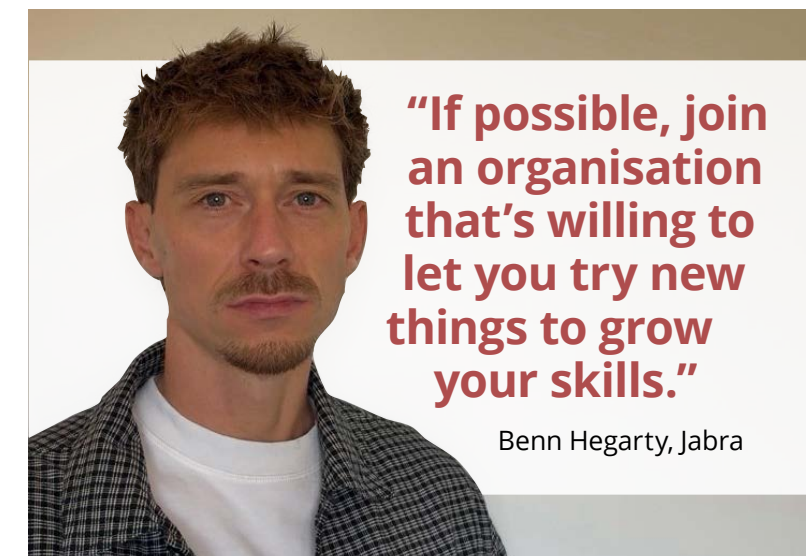
At the time I didn't know if I was going to stay in the industry too long but ended up here ever since. I enjoy the idea of being able to take ownership of my customer base and witness the fruits of my labour.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? Being part of a UK team that when I first joined had around 20% market share in the audio world. That same team grew the UK market share to around 50% and became the market leaders.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent?

I think it's already quite attractive to the next generation as the next working generation will already be massively into AI and have a passion for tech. But for those getting into the industry next I'd say have a willingness to learn and adapt as things are moving pretty quickly. The more opportunities an organisation can give their people to evolve, the more attractive they will be to the next generation.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the



industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? There are so many different paths within the channel, I'd say try as many as possible early on in your career to see what best suits your personality. And if possible, join an organisation that's willing to let you try new things to grow your skills.

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career? Listen more than you talk.

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? I really do not have an answer for this one. I'm not a massive movie person; I genuinely cannot remember the last film I watched. I'm more into sports and consuming endless hours of health content on YouTube.

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? Andrew Huberman – I have a huge passion for health, wellbeing and how we can best optimise our bodies and minds. It's fascinating listening to his podcast with science-backed suggestions so it would be great to hear from him first hand.

Grayson Hart – probably a niche pick but I think his views on the world and spirituality are quite profound and interesting. I recommend searching for interviews with him on YouTube!

Josh Kerr – I had to pick someone in sport and after the year Josh has had, it's him for me. He put all his efforts into breaking a record, called it months out and told the world he was going to do it. With loads of pressure, he broke the mile world record in front of his home crowd. And I went to watch it. It would be interesting to get into the mind of someone that confident in their ability.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Adam Smith, the best manager I've had in my career. He cares about his people more than himself.



“What makes me proudest is hearing from colleagues who feel something has improved because of work I've been involved in.”

Polly Jacob, Softcat

POLLY JACOB
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT
LEAD, SOFTCAT



INFLUENCER IMPACT
Driving D&I across the channel

Tell us about your career to date.

I'm a 'Softcat lifer', having joined the business as a receptionist at our Marlow headquarters in 2015. It didn't take long for me to find my home in HR, starting as a co-ordinator across HR and recruitment before moving into internal recruitment. From there, I specialised in diversity & inclusion and employee engagement, which ultimately led to my current role as Employee Engagement Lead in 2025.

How would your colleagues describe you? It's changed throughout the years; when I first started at Softcat I was quite fun but I'm not sure I can claim that now. I'd say I'm now known for being positive. We all have our down days, but on the whole, I like to bring enthusiasm to what I do and the people I work with.

You were nominated for Oxygen Influencers partly on the strength

of the work you've done with TC4RE around its 'See it, Be it' campaign. Why is this topic important to you? I loved working with the TC4RE team. They're such an inspiring group of people and I learnt so much from their different experiences and perspectives. The topic itself is important to me because I've always been passionate about helping people grow their careers, especially those who may not always have the same opportunities to have their voices heard. The 'See it, Be it' message is powerful because representation means people see what's possible and gives them the confidence to aim high.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? I find this question difficult, but what makes me proudest is hearing from colleagues who feel something has improved because of work I've been involved in. Whether that's feeling more included, more listened to, or more connected to the business, those moments remind me why I do what I do. Reading feedback about what makes our culture special is always a great reminder of what an incredible place we've built together, and knowing I've played a small part in that makes me incredibly proud.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? In all honesty, I think the IT channel already does a lot of this well. It's an industry that's innovative, future-focused and full of opportunity, which naturally appeals to the next generation of talent.

The key is not losing momentum on the progress we've made in recent years, particularly around diversity, equity and inclusion, and flexible working. These are topics that matter greatly to emerging talent, and continuing to invest in them will help ensure the industry remains an attractive and accessible place to build a career.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? At the risk of sounding repetitive, I think it's a smart move to join an industry that will continue to play such an important role in shaping our future. What's great about the IT channel is that there's a place for people with all kinds of skills and backgrounds. As someone with very little technical expertise myself, I can confidently say there's still a need for what I bring to the table.

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career?

I don't want to diminish the importance of our careers or the sense of purpose they can give us, but I've always found the phrase "It's just a job" incredibly grounding. Especially on the tougher days, when work can feel all-consuming, that simple reminder helps me keep things in perspective and focus on what really matters.

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? Florence Pugh.

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? RuPaul, Alex Ferguson and Bob Mortimer.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Keisha Ffrench, Softcat's Diversity & Inclusion Lead. Keisha took over responsibility for diversity and inclusion when I moved into my dedicated Employee Engagement role, and it's been a pleasure to watch her make such a meaningful impact in a relatively short space of time. What's even more impressive is that she's done this in an organisation that was already highly regarded for its work in this area. Her passion, expertise and drive have helped take that work to the next level.

DR. CLARE JOHNSON
FOUNDER, WOMEN IN
CYBER UNLIMITED



INFLUENCER IMPACT
Women in cyber champion
(and Cyber Citizen of the Year)

Tell us about your career to date.

While my first degree is music, my passion for technology and knack for helping people learn was where

I really found my niche, so I quickly found myself working in academia, teaching IT and cyber, and then leading cyber programmes and outreach for almost 20 years before joining the commercial sector to lead the cyber security strategy at ITSUS Consulting, a defence SME.

How would your colleagues describe you? I've been told that I'm very diplomatic, and I think they'd probably also say "firm but fair". I'd also like to think they see me as approachable and trustworthy, with a dash of good humour.

You were nominated for Oxygen Influencers partly on the strength of your work championing women in cyber. Why is this topic so important to you? Cyber resilience is vital to the security of our nation, and, closer to home, our way of life. Having as many people as possible looking at cyber problems is the best way to improve our cyber defences. Plus it is a fascinating area and I want as many people as possible to enjoy what it has to offer.



“Having as many people as possible looking at cyber problems is the best way to improve our cyber defences.”

Dr. Clare Johnson,
Women in Cyber
Unlimited

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? I have two – completing my PhD was a massive achievement after seven years of cramming it in between a full-time job, the Women in Cyber network I run and various other things. Winning UK Cyber Citizen of the Year in 2025 was also a massive highlight: the external, peer reviewed, recognition that the work I do is valued was very humbling.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? We really need to contextualise the areas of cyber that we need talent in. Getting the next generation to see cyber through a lens that makes sense to them is the best way to inspire them to want to get involved. We also need to be more welcoming and lower the barriers to entry.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Work out what area of IT you are interested in and learn things related to that outside of your mainstream education. Blog, build things, do online courses and challenges, and grow your network. The more you can demonstrate your passion for the subject, the better.

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career? Someone once said that the best thing you can do if a situation is bad for you is to walk away from it – they likened it to advice they would give a child – and that made a lot of sense to me at the time. It was definitely something I needed to hear.

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? Haha, what a question! I think maybe Olivia Colman. She does serious roles, but has a bit of a wicked 'I don't care' streak about her, which resonates with me. If I'd toed the line on everything throughout my career, and accepted the 'no's' when I was

told them, I certainly wouldn't have achieved half the things I've done.

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? After much thought, I'd invite Felicity Oswald, OBE, who I met when she was interim CEO at the National Cyber Security Centre, and who took the time to chat to me about my work. She's now Chief Executive of Girlguiding.

I'd also invite Demis Hassabis, as someone who is shaping the future of AI. And finally, my wildcard, Lady Gaga. From finding her early music annoying (as a teacher of teenage boys at the time, who liked to recite the lyrics of her songs in class), she demonstrates incredible talent, alongside a rebellious streak, while remaining incredibly kind. All characteristics I admire.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. I'm going to suggest Madelaine Thomas. She founded a digital watermarking company, Image Angel, after personal images of her were shared without permission. She has gone from a non-technical background, to experiencing a devastating breach of confidence, to

doing something about it. And she's doing that as a woman in a male dominated sector. She's also set up some philanthropic activities, and is definitely someone to watch.

**FREYA KNIGHT
HEAD OF TALENT
DEVELOPMENT, NATILIK**

INFLUENCER IMPACT
Inspiring the next generation

Tell us about your career to date. I followed the apprenticeship route, so early careers are close to my heart. I completed this with a large logistics company, and then a few years later found myself at a small recruitment agency specialising in CaaS and telco.

Fast forward a few more years, I joined Natilik as an in-house recruiter where I was first responsible for our sales recruitment. That then became our entire non-technical hiring strategy, and then career development and training, then early careers and emerging talent. Along the way I also became a qualified careers practitioner, and neurodiversity trainer.

"Don't wait to be presented with opportunities for growth and development; you must proactively go and find them!"

Freya Knight,
Natilik



How would your colleagues describe you? "She has a lot of pets"... Otherwise they'd maybe say positive, supportive and passionate about what I do.

You were nominated for Oxygen Influencers partly on the strength of your success creating an early careers campaign with local schools. Can you tell us more about that? Our focus on emerging talent, and making careers in tech more accessible (and visible) to them, is the driver behind these school partnerships. Not only is this important for giving back to our communities and opening doors for the next generation, but it actively builds us a pipeline of amazing, motivated talent. They have so much to offer, and just need the opportunity to offer it. We've learnt just as much from them as they have been able to from us, so the value from these campaigns and partnerships is two-fold.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? I think this would have to be creating Natilik's Career Pathways approach. Seeing how much internal mobility and development this has facilitated, creating more opportunities for emerging talent to join us, fills me with so much pride.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? Welcome change, prioritise agility and make people development part of your everyday language. This next generation of digital natives won't settle for 'this is how we've always done things', they have far too much insight and energy to offer, and they want something in return for it.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Remember that you don't need to be 'technical' to have a career in the IT channel.



"I have a side hustle as the founder and co-chair of Upward, Microsoft's social mobility network."

Steven Mullaghan, Microsoft

Whether your focus is sales, finance, project management, HR or anything else... you'll benefit from the fast pace, growing investments, forward-thinking and ever-evolving opportunities in the channel regardless of the role you do.

I imagine most education leavers or career changers have never even heard of the IT channel, so we must do more to showcase the amazing careers you can build here!

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career? "The only person in charge of your future is you" – I live by this in both my personal and professional life every day. Don't wait to be presented with opportunities for growth and development; you must proactively go and find them!

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? I've previously been told that both Kat Dennings and Diane Morgan would be good choices. I'm not sure what that says about me.

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? There's no theme to this list, but I have my reasons: Sarah J. Maas, Derren Brown and Anya Hindmarch.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. My whole team. They're all incredible at what they do, steadfast advocates for our people and communities, and do it with so much passion. I'm lucky to work with them!

**STEVEN MULLAGHAN
STRATEGIC SOFTWARE
DEVELOPMENT –
FINANCIAL SERVICES,
MICROSOFT**

INFLUENCER IMPACT
Social mobility champion

Tell us about your career to date. I left school at 16 to build buses, before later returning to higher education. I got my break in tech through a part-time university job as a Windows 8 ambassador. That opportunity led me to spending more than a decade working in the channel at Microsoft.

My day job involves building strategic partnerships with software companies and helping them scale and grow with Microsoft. I also have a side hustle as the founder and co-chair of Upward, Microsoft's social mobility network.

How would your colleagues describe you? I'd hope they would describe me as purposeful, energetic and someone who brings people together to get things done.

You were nominated for *Oxygen Influencers* partly on the strength of your work around social mobility. Why is this such an important topic for you? Potential should not be limited by where you start or where you grow up, but all too often it is.

A study of diversity in the UK tech sector found that only 9% of those surveyed identified as coming from a lower socio-economic background. I'm part of that statistic, as are many people I work with. We are proud of where we come from and want to do more to unlock talent, open doors

and advance social mobility across the tech sector.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? Founding Upward and seeing it grow from a passionate employee community into something that highlights pathways and creates practical opportunities for talented young people, helping them see and build a future in tech that might otherwise not have felt possible.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? Be intentional about making the industry more inclusive, easier to understand and easier to enter. We need to showcase the breadth of careers available, recruit for potential as well

as experience, and give young people meaningful access to networks, mentors and opportunities.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Be curious, be proactive, work hard and back yourself. You don't need to have followed a traditional route or be the smartest person in the room, but you should be the one that's keen to learn. Our industry needs different perspectives, and there is a place for yours.

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career? Do the work. A strong work ethic and a proactive mindset are the best ways to build confidence and overcome imposter syndrome.

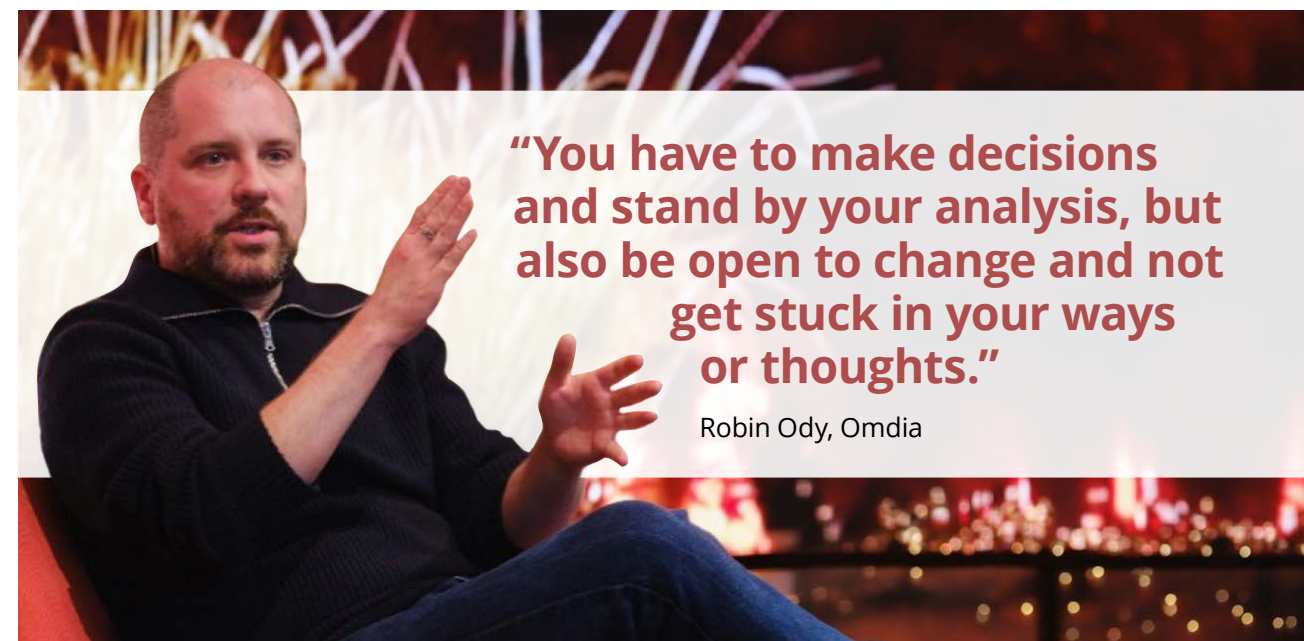
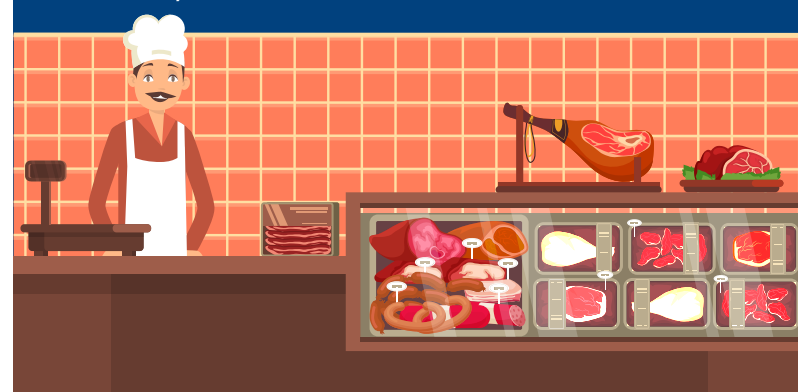
Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? I'm not quite sure how it would work, as he's older than me, but given the choice, Stephen Graham. He's a national treasure, an actor at the top of his game who remains humble, decent and unafraid to show vulnerability. He clearly loves his family and uses his position to pay it forward.

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? Kevin Bridges, Jennifer Lawrence and Larry David. Each hilarious and iconic in their own way – Kevin, explaining 'hoose rice' to JLaw and Larry David would for sure go viral.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. I'd like to recognise my colleague Ruby Hamilton, who founded and leads our Digital Unlock programme. She brings together volunteers from Microsoft and partners across our channel to deliver workshops in prisons around the UK, helping people build the digital skills and confidence they need to prepare for life after release.

NICE TO MEAT YOU...

A number of our Influencers didn't actually start their careers in the channel. Indeed, some started out in rather different industries. **ROSS COLLINS** ran a series of pubs and nightclubs until his early 30s, while **MINI BISWAS** was a choreographer in the UK Asian Bollywood and bhangra scene. **STEVEN MULLAGHAN** left school at 16 to build buses and **BENN HEGARTY** had a stint selling cars. **JULIA ELLIOTT** started out as an overseas holiday rep, while **EMMA SIMPKIN** entered the channel with a linguistics degree and background in retail management. **DANIELLE DAVIS'** psychology degree saw her dive straight into an intense care worker role within mental health homes and psychiatric wards. Maybe the biggest pivot came from **JON STEGGLES**, who started work as a butcher.



"You have to make decisions and stand by your analysis, but also be open to change and not get stuck in your ways or thoughts."

Robin Ody, Omdia

ROBIN ODY
RESEARCH DIRECTOR,
MSP, OMDIA



INFLUENCER IMPACT
MSP MVP

Tell us about your career to date. I joined what was then Canalis in 2015 as a research analyst working for Alastair Edwards on the EMEA channels team.

Back then all I knew of channels was they were something on TV. But with a lot of patience and determination my colleagues helped me become slightly less bad at the job over time.

Today I lead the MSP research globally for Omdia, with three fantastic colleagues (Devan Adams, Jessica Davis and Jonathan Ong). I have no idea how that happened. One day someone will notice they have made a terrible mistake, and I'll be out on my ear, but for now I am really enjoying the work.

How would your colleagues describe you? Hopefully supportive, and not a complete idiot once you get to know me, but still prone to bouts of foolishness.

You were nominated partly for your influential analysis of the MSP market. What's the hardest part of your job? Trying to predict the future, which is what people are often asking of you. Gathering all the data to provide an educated analysis is incredibly hard, and there is always the knowledge you're missing something.

You have to make decisions and stand by your analysis, but also be open to change and not get stuck in your ways or thoughts.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? Just making it this far. Something I tell new analysts joining: "It takes at least three years in the job to realise how much you don't know. You cannot get to good without going through bad, so get used to being bad at this because it's a really hard job."

If you can remove your ego from the equation and just focus on listening to the market, you'll be on the right track. You won't always be right, or even right most of the time, but you'll be operating with the right attitude.

How can the IT channel make

itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? Improving the diversity of the hiring avenues is important, because work as a whole is much more fun and worthwhile when you have different people with different ideas. Technology is a global concern, so it concerns all the globe.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? It is fun, you will get to travel a lot, and if you try hard, you will move fast. But make sure you don't let it change you. Technology is an ever-evolving thing that needs agents of change, so try to change it in whatever big or small way you can.

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career? "Don't try and impress anyone" – Steve Brazier. It took me a long time to work out all the ways in which that phrase can help you.

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? Stephen Graham. Not because I look like him, but I just think he's one of the best around.

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? Billy Connolly, Victoria Wood and Eddie Murphy. Can you tell I am a child of the '80s? I reckon they'd all work well together, and they would have the audience howling with laughter.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Rachel Brindley. She is the force and the brains behind our channels research and is both a good leader and a great person.



HEATHER PERRIAM
PRACTICE LEAD,
BUSINESS APPLICATIONS,
TRUSTMARQUE ULTIMA

INFLUENCER IMPACT
Neurodiversity and
inclusive workplace advocate

Tell us about your career to date. I've built my career around helping organisations use technology to make work better for people. I build inclusive, high-performing teams who put people at the centre of technology, using inclusive design to create solutions that work for everyone.

How would your colleagues describe you? Curious, energetic and positive, with a willingness to challenge the usual way of doing things. I care about making

technology work for people, not just making it work.

You were nominated for *Oxygen Influencers* partly on the strength of your advocacy for neurodiversity and championing more inclusive workplaces for neurodivergent talent. Why is this so important to you?

Because no one should feel they can't succeed simply because their brain works differently. I want to help create inclusive workplaces where neurodivergent people can be themselves, use their strengths and thrive, shifting the story from 'hindrance' to the value that people who think differently bring.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? I'm proud to have built diverse, inclusive teams where people from different backgrounds can thrive. I'm also a passionate advocate for accessibility and neurodiversity, and I help others learn to build inclusive teams and workplaces too.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? Show young people the range of work the channel offers: solving real problems, being creative and making a visible difference. And make sure they can see people like themselves succeeding in it.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? You don't need to know everything before you start. Bring your curiosity, your people

"I'm a passionate advocate for accessibility and neurodiversity, and I help others learn to build inclusive teams and workplaces too."

Heather Perriam, Trustmarque Ultima

skills and your willingness to learn. There are many routes into tech, and your different perspective is an asset.

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career?

The best advice I was given was to stop trying to be who I thought people wanted and trust who I am. Once I did, I could use my own voice and strengths to make a difference, and show that you can be successful in a senior role while being neurodivergent. It changed my career, and it's why I'm so passionate about advocating for change.

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? Drew Barrymore. She's fun, energetic and wonderfully human, and she's overcome a lot without letting it define her. I think she'd bring out the best parts of me.

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? I'd invite Monica Lewinsky, Pamela Anderson and Jada Pinkett Smith. They've each had to find their own voice in the public eye, and I'd love to hear them talk about how they've shaped their stories and what they care about now.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Claire Mironik deserves recognition for helping found WITBHAM and building a community that brings women in tech together in Birmingham and beyond. Her work has created more opportunities for women to connect, support one another and feel they belong in the industry.

PETER RISING
SENIOR PARTNER CLOUD
SOLUTION ARCHITECT:
CYBERSECURITY,
MICROSOFT

INFLUENCER IMPACT
A giver of knowledge,
mentorship and advice

Tell us about your career to date. I've spent my career helping organisations protect their data and get the most from technology, specialising in Microsoft security, compliance and information protection. Along the way I've developed a passion for sharing knowledge, whether that's with partners, customers, colleagues, exam candidates or the wider IT community.

How would your colleagues describe you? Hopefully as kind, approachable, knowledgeable and genuinely willing to help. I'd also like to think they see me as someone who can explain complex subjects in a way that makes sense to everyone.

You were nominated not only for your knowledge and expertise, but also the work you've done around diversity and inclusion, in areas such as men's mental health and the menopause. How have you managed to successfully juggle those two things? For me, they're not separate things. Technology is about people first, and helping people feel supported, included and able to bring their whole selves to work is every bit as important as technical expertise.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? The impact I've had on others. Whether that's helping someone progress their career, pass a certification, gain confidence or feel supported through a difficult time, those are the things that stay with me.

How can the IT channel make

"Build your network early. It's never too early to start. And always be generous with your time!"

Peter Rising, Microsoft



itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? By showing the human side of technology. Young people want purpose, flexibility and opportunities to learn, and our industry has all three if we do a better job of telling that story.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Don't be intimidated by the technology. Curiosity, communication and a willingness to learn are often more important than what you already know when you're starting out. Build your network early. It's never too early to start. And always be generous with your time!

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career? Never stop learning. Technology changes constantly, and the people who stay curious are the ones who continue to grow and create opportunities for themselves. I have found Active Listening is the key. You don't have to be the one who is always talking!

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? I would say Charlie Hunnam, as he's a fellow

Geordie lad, and I think he could rock the long white hair and beard I've adopted in recent years.

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? I'll take the liberty of choosing two of these from those who are sadly no longer with us. First, the philosopher Alan Watts. The opportunity to question such a mind would be really compelling to me. Second, Chester Bennington, one of the co-lead vocalists of my favourite band Linkin Park. Such a kind, caring, gentle soul, who gave so much to the world until he could give no more. Finally, Gillian Anderson. What a unique woman with an incredible perspective on life. Whenever she is a guest on a podcast, I always stop to immediately hear what she has to say.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. My friend and colleague Gemma Dyer from Microsoft. She puts so much care, energy and attention into everything she does, and has already built a deserved reputation in the IT Industry. She is only going to get better and better in the years to come.

EMMA SIMPKIN
LEAD SERVICE ARCHITECT,
NATILIK

INFLUENCER IMPACT
Relentlessly pushing for
higher standards

Tell us about your career to date. I came into the channel from outside it, with a linguistics degree and background in retail management across Melbourne and London. I joined Natilik in 2017 working various services roles before building our service design practice. I now lead service architecture, developing our managed service portfolio and bringing new services to market, and setting how they're designed, governed and delivered with partners.

How would your colleagues describe you? Full of ideas and fully invested in the people who translate them into reality.

You were nominated for Oxygen Influencers based on your "relentless energy to push for higher standards in everything you do". What motivates you? Knowing there's always a better version, whatever the situation. Every service I've designed has taught me something the next one should do better, and behind each one is a business relying on it.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? Building Natilik's service design function from scratch in 2023, with Oonagh Sargentson and Kayley Ball now at its heart. It enabled a mindset shift across the business: that how a service is designed and run matters as much to the outcome as the technology. More recently, Beta testing the new ITIL version this year was a privilege. Contributing to a framework I've seen shape how so many organisations run, sharpened how I design services especially for experience and AI governance.

"Every service I've designed has taught me something the next one should do better."

Emma Simpkin, Natilik

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? Show people the work, not acronyms. Many roles in the channel depend on communication, judgement and problem-solving more than a computer science degree. We're in an industry that disrupts itself by nature, so you're relearning the technology within five years – or months – anyway. Hire for the skills that last and teach the rest. If you're a leader, keep creating genuine entry-level routes in, even when it's tempting to hire only for experience.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? I know it's a hard time to be starting out, and if you're still looking, that says more about the market than it does about you. My route in wasn't a straight line. Don't rule yourself out of roles because you're not technical yet, reach out to people doing the jobs you want. More of us are willing to help than you might think. It's an industry that rewards curiosity.

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career? In the middle of a major incident, a client

quipped that their philosophy was: "Be kind to individuals and ruthless on systems." I adopted it. Most challenges with technology systems or services start with decision design, meaning who decides what and with what information. That's where I start. It's especially relevant now that it might be an AI agent rather than a person making those decisions.

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? Cate Blanchett. She could make a dry governance review look like high drama.

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? Hannah Fry, for making maths and systems genuinely entertaining. Anne-Marie Imafidon, for what Stemettes has done to widen the talent pipeline in STEM. Linguist David Crystal, to settle once and for all what 'managed service' actually means.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Darren Parkinson, Natilik's Principal AI and Software Architect. He's challenged who sees themselves as technical, encouraging me and many others in non-technical roles to start coding.

JON STEGGLES
ESG STRATEGIC LEAD, CDW

INFLUENCER IMPACT
ESG trailblazer

Tell us about your career to date. I started work as a butcher, which amongst other things funded my economics degree, which was the launchpad for my career in IT. Subsequently I've spent 28 years in commercial and management roles, delivering innovation and outcomes mainly across the public sector.

Transitioning to sustainability nearly four years ago provided the platform to lead organisation-wide strategy and activation, while continuing to leverage my customer first and build a purpose-led, performance-driven culture.

How would your colleagues describe you? Continually accountable and trusted to deliver outcomes. Innovative, adaptable and focused on driving change. Commercially astute and capable of operating across micro and macro environments. People, purpose and outcome focused, always.

You were nominated for Oxygen Influencers partly on the strength of the impact you're having around ESG. How does it feel to be an ESG pro in the IT industry in 2026? There are so many adjectives I could choose: exciting, impactful, challenging, innovative, collaborative... the list goes on. A growth mindset is critical, as is the ability to partner, influence and prove impact. Delivered well, ESG can shape whole business strategy and outcomes. There are few roles that have the same level of influence or chance to build legacy, and I wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? Being trusted with the role I hold today, and subsequently being awarded co-worker of the year in 2024. I

genuinely believe I have one of the most diverse and impactful roles in the industry, where I hope one day (in the very distant future) to be able to look back on a legacy change achieved.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? The channel needs to continue to build businesses, practices and policies that align ever more closely with the expectations of today's talent; this is different to 5, 10 and 15 years ago. Flexibility, progression, sustainability and purpose are now critical decision-making criteria. Adapting talent approaches to demonstrate how the channel meets these criteria, alongside place-based, strategic and intentional approaches.

The channel also needs to continue to iterate upon early year career programmes, providing multiple entry points including work experience and placements, internships, apprenticeships and graduate programmes, providing new routes into the sector. Each with defined short, medium and long-term progression pathways that are flexible to meet changing ambitions, skills growth and life events. Demonstrating a focus on careers rather than roles and long-term investment in people and business.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? You don't need to be technical to have a great career in the channel. Knowledge and skills can be taught, but attitude cannot; you shape your own journey

through how you collaborate and deliver. Build your own worth, then seek out mentors and sponsors to help you develop further and grow faster. And remember that different perspectives drive better decisions; share your opinions and be ready to challenge the status quo.

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career?

I have two: "How you do anything, is how you do everything" and "If you always do what you've always done, you will always get what you always got."

For me, the first speaks to approaching every task with the same care, attitude and commitment, which centres on dependability, accountability and outcomes. The second quote keeps my focus on change and growth and recognising today's skills and approaches won't work in tomorrow's world, and so maintaining performance requires learning, development and growth.

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? Damien Lewis. Each character he plays seems authentic and unique, which is testament to his talent. Plus, I feel you need a 'real ginger' actor to play me!

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? Lewis Hamilton, to talk about resilience and maintaining performance over decades in sport. Richard Branson to discuss the creation and success of Virgin as well as overcoming neurodiversity. Ariana Grande to explore addressing her



mental health while managing a successful music career.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Steve Finnegan of PNZ Advisory, who alongside his team, is supporting a plethora of organisations across the sector to build, deliver and activate robust and defensible decarbonisation pathways.

VICKY WITHEY
GRC DIRECTOR, BELL
INTEGRATION



INFLUENCER IMPACT
GRC and ESG expert

Tell us about your career to date.

I've always been interested in how businesses grow, change and make good decisions, and how you I can support that ambition without losing sight of people. I've spent much of my career in technology and the managed services sector and over time, my career has evolved into senior leadership across governance, risk, compliance and assurance.

Today, I lead GRC at Bell Integration, working across the business and with executive leadership on everything from enterprise risk and AI governance to business resilience, internal audit, sustainability and external assurance.

What I enjoy most is taking something complex, bringing the right people together and making it practical. I'm naturally curious: I ask a lot of questions and I'm not afraid to challenge when it matters. But I also believe the best challenge is constructive. It should help move things forward, not simply point out what is wrong.

How would your colleagues describe you? I think as open, honest, caring and someone who genuinely wants the best for people.

Kindness is really important to me. "Kindness costs nothing" is a mantra I've always stood by, and I try to bring



"I care about creating an environment where people feel comfortable speaking up, being themselves and knowing that their contribution matters."

Vicky Withey, Bell Integration

that into how I work with people every day. You can be honest, ask difficult questions and have challenging conversations without losing kindness or respect.

I'd hope people would also say I'm approachable and supportive. I care about creating an environment where people feel comfortable speaking up, being themselves and knowing that their contribution matters.

You were nominated for *Oxygen Influencers* partly on the strength of your success driving GRC and ESG for one of the UK's largest tech providers. What's been the most challenging aspect of those efforts? One of the most rewarding parts has also been one of the most challenging: being given a blank sheet of paper and being asked to build something from the ground up.

Creating a framework or a process is the relatively easy part. The harder part is building something that people genuinely understand, use and take ownership of – something that becomes part of how the business operates and remains resilient and fit for purpose as the organisation changes. That has been particularly

important across GRC and ESG, because both areas cut across the whole business. You need structure, accountability and consistency, but you also need enough flexibility for the model to grow, adapt and mature.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? What makes me proudest is giving other people the opportunity to shine.

Building a team has been incredibly rewarding because you get to watch people learn, grow in confidence, solve problems, find their voice and sometimes surprise themselves with what they are capable of.

I've always believed that leadership is not about having all the answers. It is about creating the space for other people to step forward, take ownership and succeed.

Sometimes that means giving someone support, sometimes it means asking the right question, and sometimes it means having the confidence to step back and let them work it out for themselves.

Seeing people grow into their own strengths and knowing that, in some small way, you helped create

the opportunity for that to happen is probably the thing I am most proud of.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? This is a really interesting question because the next generation is entering a world of work that is changing incredibly quickly. It is more global, more diverse, more connected and increasingly shaped by AI. For me, that means the IT channel has an opportunity to do more than simply attract talent. It can help shape the kind of workplace people want to be part of.

Technology is often seen as an industry for highly technical people, but the future needs much more than that. We need people who can think creatively, solve problems, communicate well, understand different perspectives and bring empathy and human judgement to the technology we create and use.

That feels even more important in a world of AI.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Don't wait for the

future to happen to you – come and help shape it.

That is what makes a career in technology so exciting. You do not need to fit a stereotype or arrive with all the answers. You can come from a completely different background, bring a different way of thinking and still make a real impact.

The industry needs people who are curious, who ask good questions, who care about outcomes and who are willing to keep learning.

And with AI changing the way we live and work, there has probably never been a more interesting time to join. The decisions being made now will shape how technology is used for years to come.

So my message would be simple: bring your curiosity, your ideas and your perspective. There is room for you here – and you might just help shape what comes next.

What's the best advice you've ever been given in your career? Don't mistake vulnerability for weakness.

That advice has stayed with me because, particularly as you become more senior, there can be a pressure to feel that you should always have the answer.

I've learned that being able to say "I don't know", "I need help" or even "I got that wrong" takes confidence. It creates trust, opens up much more honest conversations and gives other people permission to do the same.

For me, vulnerability is not about having less confidence in yourself. It is having enough confidence to be open, human and honest about the fact that none of us gets everything right.

Some of the strongest relationships and best conversations I've had in my career have come from allowing that vulnerability to be seen.

Who would you have play you in a movie of your life? Eva Green. My partner has always joked that he is Daniel Craig in *Casino Royale*, so naturally I've decided that makes me Eva Green. I'll happily take the

elegance, intelligence and a little bit of mystery – and who wouldn't want a touch of James Bond glamour in their life?

If you had your own talk show, which three guests would you invite on? Brené Brown because I'd love to talk to her about courage, vulnerability and why being human is often one of the most important qualities we bring to leadership.

Fei-Fei Li because AI is going to shape so much of our future, and I'd want to explore how we make sure people, ethics and good judgement stay at the heart of that progress.

And David Attenborough because he brings something we can all lose sight of when we are busy moving forward – perspective. He has spent a lifetime reminding us that progress means very little if we forget the world and people we are trying to protect.

If I could get all three around one table, the question I'd really want to ask is: "How do we keep moving forward without losing what matters most?"

That feels like a conversation worth having.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. I'm going to struggle to name just one, because there are so many people doing brilliant things who probably never realise the impact they have on others.

For me, recognition shouldn't only go to the loudest voice or the most senior person in the room. It should also go to the people who quietly make time for others, share what they know, open doors, offer encouragement and help someone believe in themselves.

Sometimes one conversation, one introduction or simply somebody saying "I believe in you" can change the direction of a person's career.

So if I'm allowed to bend the rules slightly, my recognition would go to all of those quiet influencers. We probably don't thank them enough, yet their impact can last a lifetime.

THREE YEARS OF OXYGEN INFLUENCERS

75 individuals driving positive change, but from outside the boardroom



Kate Auchterlonie



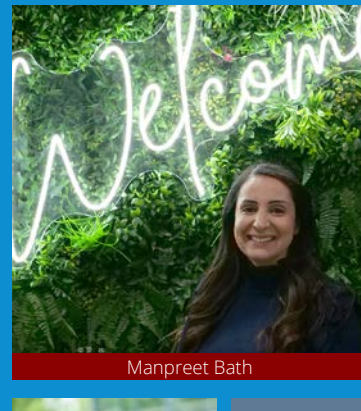
Shola Sullivan



Jade Easton



Karlton Gray



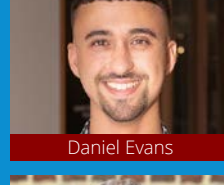
Manpreet Bath



Natalie Hailey



Ian Kilpatrick



Daniel Evans



Jenny Latimer



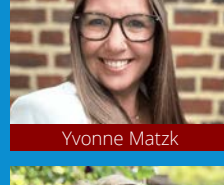
Andy Readman



Apay Obang-Oyway



Janice Phayre



Yvonne Matzk



George Lavender



Olly Jefferey



Hayley Mooney



Elsa Jasmine Nightingale



Ben Watkin



Anushka Davies



Rebecca Monk



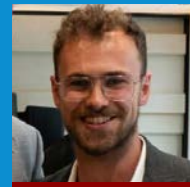
Dr. Colin Williams



Daisy Pike



Natalie Noor



Ted Stroud



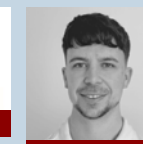
Lorna Burman



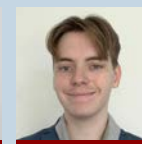
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Jamie Brothwell



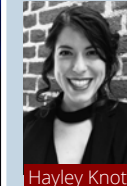
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Ben Caddy



Jonathan Griffiths



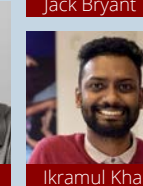
Hayley Knott



Anna Webb



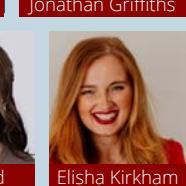
Bob Pigott



Ikramul Khaled



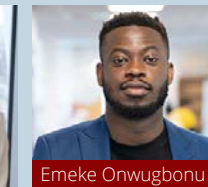
Fab Bird



Elisha Kirkham



Tiffany Nelson



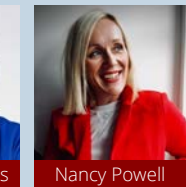
Emeke Onwugbonu



Jane Ashworth



Joshua Lewis



Nancy Powell



Bharti Lim



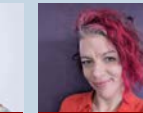
Joachim Mason



Harriet Robbins



Darren Sharpe



Nicola Tiffin



Jack Hinchcliffe



Anjana Srinivasan



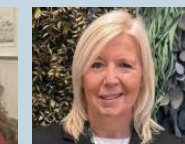
Kieran Hignett



Steph Wiwsiany



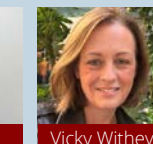
Mini Biswas



Claire Bowers



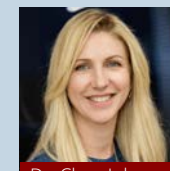
Danielle Davies



Vicky Withey



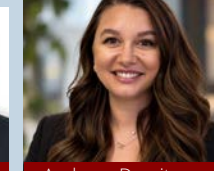
Peter Rising



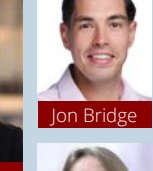
Dr. Clare Johnson



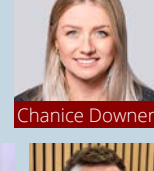
Ross Collins



Andreea Dumitrescu



Jon Bridge



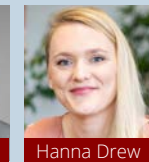
Chanice Downer



Debbie Farrell



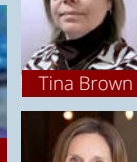
Jon Steggles



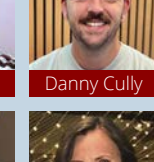
Hanna Drew



Robin Ody



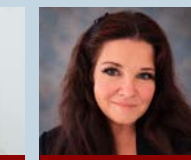
Tina Brown



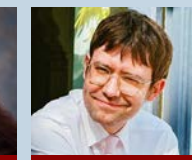
Danny Cully



Ryan Edmonds



Heather Perriam



Steven Mullaghan



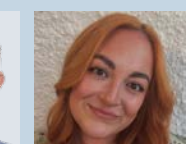
Julia Elliott



Polly Jacob



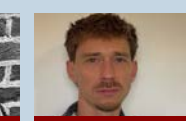
Dean Gardner



Freya Knight



Emma Simpkin



Benn Hegarty



OXYGEN INFLUENCERS 2026

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