



## Equality Talks Podcast - Transcript

### Episode 4: Mentoring and Being a Woman in Senior Leadership

Equality Talks. Brought to you by Work 180. Where we discuss how to finally put an end to workplace discrimination. Let's talk about what it really takes to succeed, what people are doing to drive equality and what can still be done.

Samantha: Today's guest is Tracy Edwards. She has more than 25 years experience working across IT businesses. From small startups to global organizations such as IBM, NAB, and Telstra. She's worked across IT operations, service delivery and project management with a focus on cyber security for the past eight years. Now is the head of technology for business management and transformation in enterprise security at NAB, Tracy's function supports across cybersecurity, physical security and fraud from a talent and advisory perspective.

Samantha: She has a passion for growing young talent and mentoring young women in IT and cybersecurity and she also has a passion personally for her three horses, two of which are rescues and one which she rides regularly. Thank you so much for joining me, Tracy. I'm really excited to be talking to you.

Tracy: Thank you. I'm really excited to be here and talking to you too.

Samantha: So I received your bio and it was really only right at the end that I realized that you're in the talent and advisory part of the business. I had thought you were in the technical IT part of the business. So can you talk about what it is you actually do and how you made your way there through all the positive IT you've worked in to cybersecurity and talent?

Tracy: Of course. So I guess my role actually involves both. There's the technical element of understanding the technical side of cybersecurity and how that fits into the business, but there's also the talent. So as you can appreciate in security in particular, talent can be really tricky to find and the skill sets that we're looking for are changing all the time, not just from a technical perspective but from a soft skills perspective. So part of my role is really looking at what we need for now in our capability but also for the future and working out how to get that mix of talent. And that talent really comes from a diverse range of areas. So my role really does involve bringing in the right talent, but it also, from a perspective of function, I've also got a number of functions that actually deliver security services back into the business.

Samantha: Oh, okay. So you're actually support both. You have teams that do specific security, like technical work as well as the talent stuff?

Tracey: Correct. So one of my teams is the advisor in awareness team, so they actually train and educate our customers, but also our internal staff on best practices around security and that includes frauds and scams as well as cyber vulnerabilities. I've also got a team that look, that actually work with business, called divisional security officers. And they are almost mini CSOs that sit within all of the divisions across the bank and provide guidance and support on security areas and have also got the security major incident teams that manage major security breaches as well as data breaches.

Samantha: And so historically IT is a pretty male dominated environment and I've actually done work with NAB in a previous job as doing diversity consulting. And so now actually across the teams that I saw are pretty good at at diversity and bringing a broad range of people, but I'm wondering about the connection between a push within NAB for diversity and better inclusion and the soft skills that you're saying that the talent needs to display now, which is maybe a newer kind of thing. So what's happening there?

Tracey: Yeah, look, I think traditionally we've looked at diversity as just a male-female diversity issue. And that's only one element. I think it's an important element, but it's only one element. So diversity really is around different ways of thinking and that comes from gender. But it also comes from cultural and it also comes from, we have a neuro diverse program in enterprise security. So we really look for different ways that people can actually problem solve and look at a problem or an issue and come with just a different lens. And that's really where those soft skills come in and when they can blend soft skills with technical skills, that's really the sweet spot that we look for.

Samantha: And how do you test for neuro diversity within your teams?

Tracey: Well, there's a couple of things that we do. One is that we actually have a specific neuro diverse program and we've established that with a external company called DXC Technology. And what that does is we actually hire people who are on the autism spectrum and they're people that often find it difficult to get into roles just because of the barriers in interviews and role purpose statements, et cetera. So we explicitly go out and hire people who are on the spectrum to work in our, often in our technical areas because they do bring just a different way of thinking. So that's a program that we actually started up this year. So that's one area where we actually target a specific neuro diversity into our workforce.

Samantha: Right. That's pretty interesting. So I didn't actually know when you meant neuro diversity that you meant actually ... I thought you just meant different ways of thinking, and you do, but you mean it in a more targeted way than just, "I think differently from you think."

Tracey: Yeah. Absolutely. So I think when you've got to target a program like the program that targets people on the autism spectrum, it also starts you thinking about when you're hiring other people who aren't necessarily on the spectrum that think differently. Like we have a habit of hiring people who sound and think like ourselves, this challenges that notion and it takes it to a whole new level. So I think when you're then out hiring for alternate roles, you just have more of an open mind about bringing people in who think a lot more diverse than perhaps the people that you've had in the roles and certainly to yourself as a people leader.

Samantha: Yeah. And so how does that affect then the working culture of the teams when you're bringing in a number of people are on the spectrum and obviously, as you alluded to, one of the reasons

that they might find it harder to get roles is because of the interview process and the soft social skills that you need to demonstrate in that kind of scenario. So has that affected the cultures of the team or the ways of working or ways of interacting that people have?

Tracey: It absolutely has. But it's had such a positive impact. So one of the things that we've found that the team that's the, we call them trainees, because they're on a traineeship program for three years with us, that we bring in, have number one, from just a productivity point of view in the first two to three months of working in the team, it was a 26% productivity gain across the team that they brought to it. But there was also an engagement for the engagement score, the diversity engagement score was 83%. So the team, and just from speaking with the team, they actually really value having the trainees work with them because it shows that NAB appreciates diversity and the team get on really well. And some of the practices they've influenced, one of the things with people with autism is often because they get sensory overload, they can't be ... while they're working, they like to focus on work.

Tracey: So our usual having somebody tap you on the shoulders and, "Can I have five minutes of your time?" They've asked if we can not do that practice and if we want to talk to them either Skype them or set up a meeting. And that's actually spread across the team so that the team actually function a lot more productively. And when they do want to, instead of just interrupting somebody halfway through their work, they actually respect their time a lot more. Which I think is just a really good work practice that to be honest, I think a lot of us could adopt greater.

Samantha: That's really fascinating. I was actually talking about a similar kind of thing. So there's the idea of people not liking being tapped on the shoulder because they're focused on what they're doing. And I had, I'm pretty extroverted and I really like to think out loud and, and I think on the fly and I find that for me it's the best way. But obviously that's one, I'm quite an extreme extrovert. And I used to have a manager who was quite introverted. And for ages we just couldn't connect properly when I needed help with stuff. And then over time I was like, "Oh, it's because he doesn't think in the same way that I do." He's a really smart guy. But he needed prep times so that he could think and get his thoughts together, whereas I get them together out loud.

Samantha: And so I got into the practice of sending him an email saying, "I would like to discuss this thing with you that I'm having some problems with blah, blah, blah, and here's the detail of the issue," and our book time into a calendar for tomorrow. And then book the time in, and then the conversations were just so much more productive because we both got the chance to think the way we needed to think to get the most out of it. And that's just such a small example of how it actually makes a really big difference to getting the best out of people at work.

Tracey: That's a really powerful example, isn't it? So because it really does, it respects the different ways that people operate. And with the trainees they're very ... we would probably call them blunt. But I think it's more direct in them actually asking for that. So where you worked it out and you kind of by trial and error, the trainees will actually say, "Would you mind not interrupting me because this is what it does? And would you mind doing this?" Which I think creates a really healthy ability in the team to have some pretty direct conversations that isn't offensive in any way, but it just sets the boundaries and people understand how they need to address and respect people's time and just their mode of operating.

Samantha: Yeah. That is interesting because the fact that permission has been given because people are neuro diverse and need different ... just have a different approach. So that gives permission

to everybody to be a bit more direct and potentially ask for what they need a bit more clearly in a way that you can't necessarily do if permission hasn't explicitly been given.

Tracey: Exactly. Exactly. It just, I think, promotes a culture where people can speak up and say how they prefer to work and it be respected. And that's just ... the team have really, I think grasped that and respected it. And it's, as I say, the engagement score I think is a direct contribution to that.

Samantha: Yeah. How fascinating. So can you tell me a bit about your transition from ... Well I'm assuming it's a transition, from just technical expert and working your way through different parts of IT to becoming a people person as well and being part of the talent acquisition.

Tracey: Sure. So I guess 25 years is a long time and my first probably 10 years was really as a certified network engineer. So I was really keen to understand every technical element of networking and that was a passion of mine at the time. And I have to admit, 25 years ago I was probably the only female working in a technical role in that area. So over those 10 years, I maintain my levels of technical certification. And then I think you get to a point with ... and we all get to this point in our careers where you're offered roles that take you away from that technical element.

Tracey: And it was a tough decision. I think it's a tough decision for any technical person because you know as soon as you move into a more management focused role, you automatically lose that technical skill because it's something that you lose if you're not doing it every day and keeping yourself up to date with the latest technologies. So it was a decision I made based on a offer of a management type role and after 10 years in technical, it was probably the right time for me and I was fortunate enough to be able to be given that opportunity. And it's just been an experience from then to move into management role, to then move into a more service management type role that didn't involve people leadership and then to move back into a people leadership role at NAB, which I've really enjoyed over the last eight to nine years.

Samantha: Yeah. Right. And what do you find the most rewarding about the people component of your work?

Tracey: I think just the variety. I've got a team of close to 30 people and every one of them brings a different talent, a different character, different lens to a team. And I think when it works well it's just, it's magic that people can just bounce off each other and leverage each other's skill sets. So I think having that level of harmony in a team where they can bounce off each other and grow with each other is a really nice thing. And I've got people who have worked for 20 years in the industry and those that are just starting out and it's really good when I guess you've got people who are just starting out in the industry who can buddy up and mentor with people within the team and external to that. And that's one of the things about enterprise security that I've found.

Tracey: It's a very buddied up area in that it's supportive of people coming into it and it's supportive of people learning. And part of that is that it is fighting the good fight and so people aren't precious about the knowledge they have, they really want to share it. And they really want people to come into this industry more and more. It's not an overly protected industry where you're protective of your job, you actually want new blood to come in and bring different ways of thinking. So it's culturally really rewarding to have teams like that that are helping each other to grow.

Samantha: Yeah. One of the things, so I interview a lot of people and I've talked to a lot of quite a number of women recently who work in various roles within it or in development. And almost all of them have said unprompted that one of the things that they've really enjoyed about their work and their job and their workplace is the fact that people are so helpful. And so if they have ... A few of them came in pretty junior and didn't have the technical base initially and just said, if you ask the question people that they have come across in worker were so happy to help and help them learn and help them grow.

Tracey: Yeah. And look, I find that also in enterprise security, if somebody asks a question, people stop their work and will take you into room, draw diagrams, whatever it takes to get people up to the level or comfortable with the knowledge. So we see that across the board. And I think it really is in technology because knowledge is really what it's all about. And in technology, in particular security, it is always changing and so it is never, learn it once and you're good to go. It is, there is something new every day and there is something to learn every day. And whether that's learning from somebody who's been in the industry for 30 years or from somebody who's just coming out of school on their first day, they bring something different and something valuable to any problem that they're trying to solve. But also to the culture of the teams.

Samantha: So on the flip side, one of the same women who said that people can be really helpful. She does. She's done some talks at various IT conferences. And one of the talks she did was after she did a shout out on Twitter asking women what their experiences had been working in IT. And she put together a talk called something like Stories ... Women's Stories from the Tech Trenches. And some of the stories she put out were actually pretty horrifying. And so I wonder, in your decade of being the only woman and then in time since then, have you had any experiences that would fall on the Women's Stories from the Tech Trenches and what's that been like for you?

Tracey: I think we could all have some horror stories. So in my early days when I was in a technical capacity, I actually had ... And unfortunately it was a fellow woman when I went to assist her with a technical issue, she did actually refuse my help because she wanted my male colleague to help her because I wasn't ... I'd never met her before, so it's not like she'd had a bad experience with me, but she assumed that I couldn't actually assist her in a technical issue because I wasn't male.

Tracey: So that's a rarity, but it only takes once, I think for that to happen to leave a little scar in your professional memory. And I've certainly got a few of those, but I think those are the ones that they either make you or break you to a degree. And it probably made me a little bit more determined to do a better job, just to prove people like that wrong. Not that I should have to do it. So but unfortunately I would say we all have some war stories, some worse than others. And it's a shame that we do, but it's the reality I think sometimes of human nature. And of where we've come from and when you're trying to enter a male dominated profession, it's not always men that are the barriers. I think it can just be a general cultural issue.

Samantha: Yeah, for sure.

Tracey: And I think-

Samantha: That's such a good illustration of how it's just ingrained bias that everyone has. I don't think that's a story necessarily of a woman being mean to other women. It's a story of a woman having really deeply ingrained biases that we all have culturally and she's just demonstrating it.

Tracey: Absolutely. Yeah. It wasn't anything personal against me. I didn't know her from a bar of soap and she was about the same age as me back then. It was purely that her first assumption was, "You couldn't possibly fix my technical issue."

Samantha: Yeah. So I work in the diversity field and I'm really passionate about this stuff and I've actually been guilty of doing the same thing where a woman that I was friends with who was working at Unilever is the head of Europe IT or something. I don't know. She knew what she was doing and IT anyway, and I was trying to set up a computer or something and staying at her place and she was like, "Oh, let me have a quick look." And I was like, "Oh, let me just get my boyfriend to look at it." And he was like, "I'm pretty sure she knows more than I do about this." And I was like, "Oh my God, I'm really passionate about this. And still we can fall prey to these internal biases that we are just totally unaware of."

Tracey: Absolutely. We're all capable of it. So it's good that you were conscious of it even though it was after it came out of your mouth.

Samantha: Yeah. Yeah. Well, and I think with stuff like biases, the reason it's called unconscious bias is because it's not conscious we don't know about it when we're doing it. And I think you can only change that stuff by starting to become aware, which only happens after the fact usually. Like you can't become aware of an unconscious bias before you've displayed it in some way, I think.

Tracey: Correct. It's interesting, isn't it?

Samantha: Yeah. So one of the things he said in the bio that you sent to me is that you really have a passion for mentoring young women in developing their careers in IT. And so what do you do? Are you mentoring people at the moment? And what are your mentor arrangements look like? How do you support people?

Tracey: Yes, so that's an interesting one because it's at different levels. So we do a lot of engagements with universities and TAFE so that we can bring obviously fresh talent in the door. So often when we do events ... there was an example yesterday where we had a number of people who went out to the La Trobe at an expo where there was about 350 post grad students talking to different industry people around your careers. So at a lot of those types of events you'll get students or people just looking to be students come up and ask you how you got into the career, what does a job in security look like? And often they'll take your details and probably 90% of the time you won't hear from them again. But then we get that 10% who then are actually really keen and take you up on your offer of actually having a meet and greet, sit down, have a coffee and talk about what a career looks like. And they're generally ... I've probably got four people at the moment.

Tracey: Four women, a couple of men as well who I'm having those ongoing conversations with where they've either come into roles in NAB because they've shown talent and they've also taken the direction that was given that said, "If you want a role in this area, this is probably the skills you need to hone in on. This is perhaps the course you need to do, this is what you should be doing." And they've done that

and come back and said, "I've done it. Would you now consider me for roles?" And often there won't be roles at NAB. There might be roles somewhere else in the industry, but they still want, they understand the importance of networking and that's one of the things that you find with students now.

Tracey: They are, it's drilled into them, that networking in the industry, especially in an area like technology and security, it's so important to get your next role, not necessarily through [cic.com](http://cic.com) but through your networks. So a lot of my mentoring is really either careers advice in how to get your foot in the door, but also how to progress your career and determine what you want to do. Because in an area like security, often, especially coming straight out of school, they don't actually know what a job insecurity looks like until they're in the door. So it's really providing that guidance.

Samantha: So who are the types of people that you most enjoy mentoring?

Tracey: People that are passionate about what they do. And that's when I said that 10% are the ones that follow up on actually contacting you and actually follow up on doing what you've advised them to do to either up their skill to network further. It's really those people that you know are going to succeed because not necessarily the smartest people in the room, but they're the most determined and the most passionate about getting into the industry and really thriving in it. And they don't actually ... a lot of them don't care where they start in the industry. It's not about the status, it's not about where on the org structure, it's just that they want to be involved in an area like security that they are passionate about. And that's really rewarding.

Samantha: And back to the networking thing, because I thought, what you said about your network being really important for your next role is an important point to draw out a bit more because there's actually research into how broad people's networks are. And so some people, they work in a little silo at work and most of their network is in that very small silo and they don't have a very broad network. And having an open network is one of the best indicators of career success because of exactly what you're talking about, which is that your network can help you find roles that are outside your current company or things that you might not have thought of and you can get opportunities out of that.

Samantha: And then the other thing about networking that I find really fascinating is Catherine Fox and Kristin Ferguson co-wrote a book called *Women Kind*. And in it they talked a bit about networking and they talked about the fact that women's networks in general are actually much more broad than men's. And because of the connection between open networks and career success, our networks, the breadth of our networks has a big impact on our career opportunities. If one of your mentors is coming to you and trying to figure out how to broaden their network, what would you suggest to them?

Tracey: Look, it's an interesting question because I don't think there's one answer. I think it depends on the individual. There are some people who are great at networking and reaching out to people that they've never met before. And then there are other people who just aren't good at that, so it really is dependent on the personality. One of the things that, especially in security, which is such an open community, is to often advise them to join organizations. And organizations that have regular meetups, that have forums to actually communicate with, the write papers, that do podcasts. All that sort of thing is a really good way to network. And there's an organization that NAB actually partner with called AISA, which is the Australian Information Security Association, that I'm also a company director at, which is a not for profit, but it is one of the biggest organizations in Australia that has around 4,000 members and in that it meets up once a month across Australia.

Tracey: They then have a national conference each year where they had three and a half thousand participants. And the best thing about that conference for three days, you get to meet nearly everyone in the industry in Australia. It is the best networking event. So I would recommend any of the people that I'm mentoring or even supporting to go to those events and just talk to people. It's got vendors, it's got industry, it's got security specialists. And not just in Australia. They also bring global speakers out so that they can get some new knowledge.

Tracey: So those are the kinds of things, but also to leverage things like my networks It's that spider network where you put somebody in contact with somebody who then puts them into contact with somebody else. So often I might only talk to somebody once and put them onto the right person who will then connect them with somebody else and I think that's what it's about. It's not maintaining an ongoing relationship all the time. It's just knowing who the right people to talk to and connect the right people with.

Samantha: Yeah. Actually what you said about it's not about being in contact all the time is a really important thing to remember. Because we feel like people are thinking, you might get in touch once a month, whatever and it feels like, "Oh it's so often and I don't want to bother them," but people aren't really ... actually probably it's more the opposite, where you haven't reached out to someone for eight months and it's like, "Oh, they're going to be annoyed that I haven't been in contact." And in fact people are busy and they're not really thinking about it.

Samantha: And someone who I used to manage, I don't think I've heard from him for six years, reached out the other day and asked me for some help and I was like, "Totally I'll help you." Of course I remember him. I really enjoyed having him in my team. We got along well personally and professionally and so the time that has passed doesn't actually ... Like we're still part of each other's network even though all that time has passed.

Tracey: And I think that's the thing. I've got 25 years of networks, I don't meet up with the hundreds of people that I worked with every year, every month. It could be, as you say, you might be in contact with them or just over LinkedIn. You might be in contact with them every six years you have a coffee. And I think you do personally, you think, "Oh, I actually need something. I'd love to reach out to so-and-so because I think they can help me. But I feel rude doing that because I haven't spoken for so long." I think from a professional point of view, that is absolutely fine and people are more than happy to hear from you after six years and help. I don't think I've ever, certainly I've never had the experience where somebody has said to me, "I don't want to help you. I haven't heard from you for six years." That's just not what the industry is about.

Samantha: Yeah, yeah, exactly. Exactly. That time doesn't actually make any difference.

Tracey: Exactly.

Samantha: So I know that you are one of the first women on the leadership team within IT security. So can you tell me a bit about that experience and what it was like?

Tracey: Yeah, so look, I guess it was interesting because the leadership team at the time that had been in place for a number of years was very much a middle aged male dominated ex military. So just to add that element to it, the ex military factor. And then they had ... this was a few years ago now, about six



years ... sorry, five or six years ago. And there was, then diversity came into play with targets being on GMs. And so there was a requirement for the leadership team to bring a female in. So I was nominated to come onto the team. And the first thing with that was it should have been a joyous thing that it was a promotion for me to come onto the leadership team. But part of the issue was I wasn't actually asked if I even had that as an aspiration. It was just assumed that I would just take the role.

Tracey: So that that was, it's an interesting dilemma where you're given an opportunity but you're not actually asked whether you want the opportunity. It's assumed because you've given it that it's a positive thing. So I took it to be that positive thing thinking, "Well this is, this is going to be great opportunity for me. Good learning, it's a promotion, et cetera, et cetera." But then when I'm in the room, it really did feel like I was a fish out of water and not necessarily in there for the right reasons.

Tracey: I was in there to fill a diversity target and part of that could have been my own insecurity around it. But I think there was also definitely an element of what value do I bring to this? So it did take me probably a good year to work out what value do I bring to a forum that I just have no real professional or personal connection with the people in this room? So it was a really difficult initial 12 months for me to get my confidence in that room, to have a voice and think that that voice was heard and appreciated. So that was probably the biggest challenge that I've had at NAB in my eight years here. I think it was a good learning experience for me, but it's not a learning experience I would ever want to go through again.

Samantha: That is such a good story for so many reasons. So I'm going to start with the bit about that you weren't even really ask, they just assumed that you would want to take it. And I was actually talking to another friend of mine who works in the diversity space last week and we were talking about the fact that there's a lot of focus on the percentage of women in really senior leadership and the number of CEOs in the ASX-500, that kind of thing. But actually being the CEO of an ASX-200 company is a single minded pursuit and not many people at all want to do that or are capable of doing that. And we were talking about the fact that actually women, through research have shown to have a much broader range of hobbies and often broader social circles as well.

Samantha: And so often don't have that same singular drive. And there's a problem with the fact that as a society we measure success in one way. Like it's one route to success and that's the only one. And so I think it's so fascinating that this opportunity came up and there was not even really a consideration that you might want to do something else more than you want to do this and that's something else might be spend time with your horses, because this kind of thing takes up time that is limited in all of our lives, but it's just ... this is a step towards our one definition of success. And so you would therefore definitely would take it.

Tracey: Absolutely. And there absolute is an assumption that that's a career path that everyone wants and that as a female being given that opportunity is a great thing. And in theory actually it absolutely is a great thing the way you go about it takes away from what should be a positive thing. I wasn't interviewed, I wasn't asked. I came into work one day and was told I'm no longer working in a team. I'm now reporting onto the LT and I was in shock. It was just a very bizarre experience. And when I look back I think, I don't think any male would be put in that position. It would be a job interview. It would be, is it in your IDP? It never crossed my mind back then, because I actually loved my job back then. Did I actually want to be ahead of and did I want to be on a leadership team?

Tracey: And I think if somebody had asked me, I probably would have said, "Maybe eventually." I wouldn't have said yes at that point in time because I knew I'd be walking into a room of relatively, and

I'll say the word hostile, and I don't mean that personally towards any of the people that were in that room, but as a culture I was not welcomed into that room. So it made it personally and professionally challenging for me to accept myself as being in a leadership position. I saw myself as somebody who was in the room because of diversity target, working out what can I actually do to add value to feel personally that I was valued.

Samantha: That's such a good anecdote as well. So, imposter syndrome is something that comes up all the time with women that I'm talking to and it's a really real thing. And there's the Dunning-Kruger effect where you know enough to know you don't know enough when you're at an imposter syndrome phase and at the beginning when you know nothing, people think they know everything.

Samantha: And so imposter syndrome is real, but there's also a really important connection to make there to the culture within which we're operating. Like it's not just up to the individual to feel more confident because you're walking into, as you said, a hostile environment. So of course then any feeling of imposter syndrome that, I mean men and women get imposter syndrome feelings, but then taking that feeling into an environment where you haven't been through a proper interview process, they haven't even really checked if you want to be there and then the onus is on you to then just be more confident. And I don't think that ... yeah, I just think that's an unreasonable expectation of that scenario. And it's not because of the individual that there's a problem there.

Tracey: Yeah, absolutely. And I guess it was about six months into it was the first time that I walked into one of the weekly leadership meetings, which I have to say I dreaded going into, that I walked in early and there was one other of my colleagues in there and it was the first time somebody had actually turned to me who was in my new team, because you have to think, I'm walking into a leadership team that is now my new team. And you really, you want to be able to get along with your team and be appreciated and have a bit of banter. And there was just none of that. I didn't feel like I was part of the team. And so one of the colleagues in there turned to me just said, "So how's it going?" And it was the first time I was actually asked that question and I stepped back and I said, "Oh okay. Well to be honest, I feel like I've walked into a movie halfway through every time I walk into one of these meetings."

Tracey: Because they already had an operating rhythm. They already had a banter, they'd had four years of relationships and I'd walked in and had none of that. And certainly nobody brought me into any of those. So I was very much on the periphery. So that's a really challenging thing when, as you say, if you've got the imposter syndrome, which I have had all my life, which I think a lot of us do, that just amplifies it times a hundred

Samantha: And what was his reaction to you saying that?

Tracey: It was actually an interesting reaction and and I have to say it did make me feel a little bit more relieved. He laughed and he said, "Don't worry, we're all just good at faking it."

Samantha: That is it. That's a nice inclusive have answer, isn't it?

Tracey: It was. And to be honest, after six months of being in that team, I appreciated the sentiment that he was providing me.

Samantha: Yeah. Yeah. And another thing that I want to talk about with this example is the idea of targets for women in leadership. And so I personally, I support the idea of targets and I think that when things ... I don't think the issue is a pipeline issue, I think that there's a permafrost in senior levels. And so what do you think about targets? Your experience of having a position because of a target? But then also more broadly whether you think they are positive for driving equality and equal opportunities?

Tracey: I think they're an unfortunate necessity. So I actually think they are a good idea because they do force diversity. Otherwise I honestly don't believe we would ever get it. But, as I said, with my experience, it's how we go about it and just plucking somebody because they're a female and throwing them into a role is not the way to do it. I think there's still needs to be a way you should to assess that the person is still the right person for the role and that it's what they want and it's part of their career path and that it's actually going to be the right fit. Because you can throw people in as high as you want to put them for a diversity target and fail.

Tracey: And I could have easily failed. And to be honest, I thought of leaving nearly every single day. But because I'm a bit of a stubborn bugger, I thought, "I'm going to stick out. And I'm either going to learn an awful lot and grow or it's going to break me." So I do think they are a necessary evil.

Samantha: I also really identify with you saying you're a stubborn bugger because I think it's through this type of movement you need people in all different roles. And I'm also someone who's happy to be at the apex. I'm happy to have that conversation, those difficult conversations and fight the good fight. But not everybody is. And it's okay if you also are like, "You know what? I don't want to be the person who's put in a room because there's a target and then feel uncomfortable for a year and have it be really hard." And that's fine to not want to do that too. I agree that they're a necessary evil for sure.

Tracey: Yeah. I just think we could go about it a lot more inclusively so that you are not seen as solely in a role because of the diversity target. That's when it just becomes a really negative experience. And not just for the person, but the perception of people around you who see you as being in that role purely for that. And I know that my colleagues, when I was put in that leadership position, the people that I was working with, that I have really good relationships with, when it was announced, and the announcement was literally an email saying, "We've met a diversity target. Tracey's now on the leadership team."

Samantha: Oh god. That's terrible.

Tracey: Well, I know my colleagues were joking, but I got a lot of flak for it. And I just had to take that. But it was an obvious choice for the wrong reasons.

Samantha: Yeah. Yeah. And how does that experience link back to what you said you would tell to younger Tracey around speaking up and being more confident?

Tracey: Yeah, and I think part of it is, at the time when I was told I was going onto the leadership team, I wish I could have turned around and said to myself, "Ask a question. Ask why. Why am I on here? What do you want out of me? What's the expectation? Is it purely because I'm female?" And challenged it. Not necessarily to not get the role, but to challenge the thinking so that when I walked in the door, it was under a little bit of my own merit rather than just put in a position that I was nominated for. So I

wish I'd spoken up about it. Instead I was very quiet about it and understood that I should have been grateful for it. So acted grateful and just went home miserable most nights.

Samantha: Oh wow. And it's such a good point that basically anytime we do something because we think we should, then the end result is not one that serves us really.

Tracey: Absolutely. And I think we have so many examples of that in our life professionally and personally. But when it's a professional decision not to speak up or challenge, it can have longterm consequences, certainly to your confidence.

Samantha: So if you could go back in time and talk to young Tracey about what was about to unfold, what advice or insight would you give to her?

Tracey: That is such a good question. And I have asked myself that I won't go down the path of whether I would choose this career or not. I think it's more that I would tell myself as a 20 something year old starting in an industry where it is an area to easily not have confidence or if you walk in with confidence, have it knocked out of you very quickly. I think what I would say, because I am a very introverted person and I certainly was even more introverted in my early twenties, I would say, "Have confidence and speak up."

Tracey: And I think it's just having the confidence to have a voice that you're actually allowed to have a voice. And I think for so many years I didn't feel like I could have a voice. And I think that's the advice I would give myself. I feel like I've got that now, but it's been a relatively recent feeling within me to have that level of confidence to be able to express myself. I would love to have had that in my twenties.

Samantha: What changed? What could have been different to make you feel like you were allowed to have a voice from a younger age?

Tracey: I think it's experience. And I think we are in a different environment now. I know 20, 25 years ago having a voice probably I would have been seen in a very different light rather than being fairly, I'll say almost subservient and doing what I'm told and coming into my job and not challenging as a female working with a lot of middle aged white males, it wasn't the done thing to actually speak out. I think that's a different environment today and I think if I was the same person walking into NAB today, I think I would have that confidence because the culture says that you should be speaking out and it's actually valued that everyone has an opinion.

Samantha: How do you think you go about creating a culture like that where it's valued for everybody to have an opinion?

Tracey: No, look, and I think it does start with that appreciation and respect and valuing diversity.

Samantha: And so if we could close out by talking a little bit about what you would say to someone who's young and coming through into it security, cyber security at the moment, what would you say to them about the possibilities and the pitfalls?

Tracey: I think what I would say to them is, understand what you're passionate about and follow that no matter what anyone else believes you should be doing. And what I mean by that is often when people

see talent in somebody in the early days, they might give them direction in an area that is potentially not the best area for them longterm. And I think if you're happy doing what you're doing and you're passionate about learning and it really is about learning and technology, then stick to that path and learn and experience as much as possible as part of a career path.

Tracey: But don't look at it as an org structure. Don't look at as, "I want to be in position X, Y, Z earning six figures." I think look at it at what are you good at, what are you passionate about? And go with that. And I know that's really easy advice to have and I've heard it all my life. And I haven't necessarily taken that advice. I've gone the more practical route of either accepting, for example, the leadership position or accepting the fact that I should take a role or move to another position because that's the next step for me rather than questioning, is it actually what I want to do? And I think that's an important thing to remember is, is it actually what I want to do for the next, whether it's 12 months or three years or five years? Otherwise you're making the wrong decision.

Samantha: I really hope you enjoyed today's chat. If you can help us spread the word by giving us a review on iTunes, that helps even more people find equality talks. To find out more about our mission, check out current opportunities with WORK180 endorsed employers. And to read and listen to more inspiring stories please head over to [WORK180.co](<http://www.work180.co/>) that's WORK 1-8-0 dot co. See you next time.