



CAREERS MENTORING PROGRAMME CASE STUDY

Julie Osborne, Head of Cyber Security at Vodafone

Julie Osborne is Head of Cyber Security at Vodafone, managing cyber risk across Vodafone Global Digital IT and Vodafone Business. Before starting in cyber security 12 years ago, Julie was a civil servant, working in governance, risk and compliance roles.

She is a keen advocate of transferrable skills, saying that a lot of the key skills she brought to her career, such as learning how to interact with others and having diplomacy, come from being a mother.

“Emotional intelligence, understanding others and being able to listen to what that person needs, conflict management, time management. These are all things I developed as a mum, but you would see these on any leadership programme.”

What makes a good mentor?

I think somebody who can open someone's mind to explore. I'm a mentor in Vodafone and I have mentored quite a few females in tech outside of Vodafone too. The best conversations I have with those individuals, is around understanding what their skills are and what motivates them.

Once you've identified those skills, you then look at how many different roles you could do with them. So it's not about the role itself, it's actually about finding something that you are fulfilled in, and which naturally then drives your career.

What makes you a good mentor?

I really love it when someone I've mentored achieves a personal goal that I have worked on with them, because that is the confirmation that I've been doing the right thing for that person. I mentored a person who was trying to decide whether to go for a promotion or to take a sideways move to a different role. I asked them to tell me about their career. When they were talking about certain aspects of their job, they were lighting up; for other aspects it was less so. I pointed this out to them and recommended they go away and think about which of these two roles is going to offer them those aspects that they enjoy, where they excel as a result. They chose the sideways move and then thanked me for opening their mind to consider it from a different perspective and are doing a brilliant job in their new role.

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How have the mentoring sessions been going?

We've been really focused on skills. We talked about gaming and looked at the skills around that. For example, strategic warfare games involve being part of a team and being able to communicate and knowing that your role plays a vital part in delivering something. Then I aligned that to working in agile and having a scrum team where you have different people that deliver into your space. There are other people who said they prefer a leading role, which aligns to different roles, such as leadership or program management.

Most of them have no clear view of what they want to do long-term, but are clear on their next step, just not perhaps the details of it yet! They do have interests, so asking them to write down all the things they enjoy, alongside what they see their barriers as being will help them to look deeper at some of the courses or jobs that would fit with that.

What do you hope your mentees get out of their time with you?

That the choices they make next are the right choices for them, not to be influenced by what they think is the right thing to choose. My advice to them is that doing what you enjoy is probably the most important thing, because you'll be successful, and it might take you to a job you've never even thought about and that you enjoy.

Did you have a mentor?

I network a lot. I think networking and maintaining connections is really vital. Starting out I networked with people who would have the knowledge and skills that I needed to understand or who would be able to give me the advice that I needed when I needed it.

Any other advice?

Just to pursue the path of happiness and find the right fit for you. My son really struggled in mainstream education. Moving to UTC Reading genuinely changed him as a person because suddenly he was immersed into an environment with like-minded individuals, who were also really interested in computers.