

RACHEL CLEVERLY – HEAD OF DELIVERY

1. What was your first ever job?

My first job was working in a ladies clothes store whilst in University. I really enjoyed the customer service element of the role and it kept me fit!

2. Describe the journey you've taken to get to the role that you are in today?

After University, I decided to take a role in an Outsourcing Contact Centre in Liverpool as a Customer Service Advisor as a stop gap. I found that I really enjoyed customer service and decided that I wanted to make something out of myself in this industry. I was promoted within a year to a Team Leader position then managing Quality teams, then national teams. Eventually, I took the plunge to move to Berkshire and to lead a Contact Centre and Head of Delivery, reporting into the Board of Directors. It has taken 14 years to develop my career and I have loved every minute.

3. In your opinion working in a predominantly male oriented industry (sales) what advice would you give young women who are trying to build a career in the industry?

To be themselves and not tolerate being treated differently because of gender. To be assertive, where necessary, and always have the courage to state their opinion or fact to ensure that their voice is heard.

4. As a leader in your business how will you strive to maintain a gender parity mindset?

Ensuring gender parity in CPM is the right thing to do, not just morally but also from a business perspective. Research proves a link between success and diversity and I encourage this within my team. Asking the right, challenging questions is important. Not just looking at numbers of females and males within the team, but asking questions around how empowered they are, equality in decision making, how both genders feel included and engaged gives a good indication of how much of a parity there is between male and female staff.

5. What role do you take in life/business to help forge positive visibility of women?

In CPM that we don't have issues with gender diversity in the workplace. However, it is still important to me to ensure that all staff are treated fairly and with dignity irrespective of age, gender, race or sexual orientation. I strongly believe in equality so forging positive visibility of all of my team is paramount – this can be through celebrating successes, empowering staff to make decisions and ensuring that people feel part of a team.

6. Who was the biggest influence on your career?

In the early days of my career, my line manager at the time was a big influence. She developed me and supported my growth within the business, which was a very male dominated industry. She taught me how to see things objectively and challenge the status quo and to hold my own irrespective of the audience – which is something I practice to this day.

7. Is there any women in leadership that you admire outside of your organisation?

Sheryl Sandberg – COO of Facebook. In my opinion, Sheryl is one of the most influential female executives due to her drive, ambition and focus on female empowerment in a male dominated industry. She is a very successful and strong woman that has a lot of respect from people all over the world. Last year, Sheryl wrote a statement sharing her experiences with sexual harassment in the workplace, her thoughts on men in power, and the backlash that can arise when women speak up for themselves. This is a powerful message from a powerful and strong woman.

8. What advice would you give to anyone starting a career in sales?

To be their authentic self and practice integrity, respect for other people at all times.

9. If you could state one characteristic that makes a strong business woman, what would that be?

A strong business woman to me is someone who acts with integrity, honesty and transparency at all times. Resilience is key as there will be set backs, days that don't go to plan and undesirable news or situations that we have to deal with. A strong business woman can take an objective view of a situation and apply logic and pragmatism to resolve issues whilst respecting honesty and vulnerabilities.

10. What are the few resources (books, articles, blogs etc.) you would recommend to someone to gain insight into becoming successful in life and their career?

Forbes is always a good starting point. Reading posts on leadership qualities, keeping an interest in what is happening across industries will also go a long way in having more of a rounded perspective. Seminars are a great way to get tips and insight from people who have lived through challenges and how they have overcome them. There is a great book by Sheryl Sanberg called "Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead" which is specifically for women in leadership roles – definitely worth a read!