



Breaking Barriers:

Insights and Inspiration

from Women
in Tech

Welcome to “Breaking Barriers: Insights and Inspiration from Women in Tech at commercetools” – an online coffee book that celebrates and showcases the voices of women in the tech industry.

Welcome to “Breaking Barriers: Insights and Inspiration from Women in Tech” – an online coffee table book that celebrates and showcases the voices of women at commercetools. If you’ve ever purchased a coffee table art book, you know that these usually compile the greatest works and people in contemporary times and serve to inspire conversations. Therefore, we decided to create our version featuring insights and inspiration from women at commercetools.

Despite the many strides that have been made in recent years, women still face significant challenges when it comes to achieving equality in the workplace. The tech industry, in particular, has long been dominated by men, with women often facing systemic barriers and biases that make it difficult for them to succeed.

This book features the stories and personal reflections from successful women in tech, providing valuable insights into their journeys and the lessons they have learned along the way. Through their stories, we hope to create a deeper appreciation for the role that women play in shaping the tech industry, and inspire others to break their own barriers in pursuit of their goals. With thoughtful writing and imagery, Breaking Barriers is a celebration of the resilience, creativity, and innovation of women in tech. So grab a cup of coffee, settle in, and prepare to be inspired by the amazing stories you are about to read.

With love,

Diana Fusekova & Marlies Isabella Riepl

Founders of the Women in Tech ERG at commercetools



RABEA TAMM

GLOBAL DIRECTOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

Life goes on in an accelerating speed.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

Don't worry too much, you are going to be absolutely fine.

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

I'm a mother of 2 boys and get challenged by them quite a bit. I'm learning a lot about myself in the process, and am hoping to maintain a calm and supportive approach in raising them.

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

Pitching an idea and executing it successfully.

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

When I was 16, I was an exchange student in Arkansas and it took years to lose the Southern accent and regain my German accent again :-).

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

Michelle Obama. I admire her honesty in juggling the role of a lawyer, mother, daughter, and wife. This is something I relate to very well. I have a full life and doing it all can be quite intense.





NINA JONKER-VÖLKER
BUSINESS OWNER GTM FRONTEND

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

I don't need a 2-5-10 year plan and have everything figured out right now. I can take a decision today, see if it fits me and takes me in a direction I like. If not, that's ok. I can make another decision.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

There's time. There is professional and career development after 35. Keep yourself challenged but don't put yourself under too much pressure all the time.

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

To keep harnessing my power, energy and drive while finding easier access to mindfulness when needed.

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

Developing an empathic, multi-faceted, nuanced approach to understanding the motivations of other people. Also, building a strong and diverse professional network.

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

If I have an idea for a side project, a start-up, an event or an initiative, I will simply do it. Taking an MVP approach to getting anything going is my strength.

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

Fränzi Kühne (<https://fraenzi.de/>). She is a German entrepreneur turned speaker and author. I share her enthusiasm for topics like digital leadership and transformation, entrepreneurship and female empowerment. She's also been the youngest member of a company's supervisory board ever in Germany — definitely an inspirational role model.





ADINA LÜTGE
HEAD OF DOCUMENTATION

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

I now know that it is possible to fully reintegrate professionally even after taking a break to raise children. The road is hard at first, but it gets easier over time. The really crucial thing is to find a company that supports the path 100%. Always continuing to work during the child-raising period, although with less time investment, helped a lot.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

Trust in your abilities! Even though technology is evolving rapidly, it's possible to keep up and catch up on what you missed.

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

I would like to learn even more about how I can best help develop my team members. To do this, it's important to keep practicing proven techniques, but also to integrate the latest trends into my own work.

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

Active listening!

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

I chose my current profession when I was still a teenager. I took a test which showed that I should work in the field of documentation. At that time, my godmother was busy at a university setting up a new course of

study that dealt with technical documentation. This gave me first-hand information and allowed me to make a well considered choice. In the last 30 plus years, I have never regretted it a day.

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

There is no single role model. Many individuals together make up a role model. For every single task or situation, there is a person who fulfills it remarkably. You just need to listen and keep your eyes wide open.





ANJALI VASHISTH
PRODUCT MANAGER

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

That I'm capable of everything and things get better with time.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

I would tell my younger self not to be afraid to try new things, take risks and don't be stressed, everything will work out.

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

I always want to improve myself both personally and professionally so hoping the same to do in next 5 years.

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

Never giving up.

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

I dance well.

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

My husband. He inspires me in every way specially in handling any situation with calmness and he is the most amazing human being I know!







ASHLEY GROSS

GLOBAL CAMPAIGNS MARKETING MANAGER

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

No is a complete sentence.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

The parts of you that make you feel like you don't fit in, will be your favorite parts when you are older.

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

There is nothing specific that I hope to learn. I just hope that I continue to have the passion and curiosity to learn as I do now.

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

Empathy.

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

When I was younger, I decided to embrace a more minimalist lifestyle by living out of a bus and working at the beach. It was a great way to save money and get closer to nature!

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

So many! Nancy Wake, Sarah Breedlove, Dr. Mary Edwards Walker, RBG, Dr Mae Jemison, Claudette Colvin — just to name a few — look them up and you will see why I find all of them so inspiring!!





ANASTASIA DROUGKA
STAFF PRODUCT MANAGER

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

How much underrepresented women in tech are.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

Live and learn in any possible way, every day.

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

How to empower people better to achieve their goals.

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

Being empathetic.

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

In 2008, I trekked up to 4000 meters on Mount Everest.

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

Margaret Hamilton.





KELLY ARMELLINO
SENIOR L&D SPECIALIST

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

There are many things in this category; I know now that leaning into divergent thinking is so much fun and rewarding for me. It has helped me become a more authentic me! I have always been a positive, playful type person. Ten years ago, thinking differently or being in the moment where varying solutions were possible was considered being busy-brained.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

There is plan for you, enjoy the ride of life more!

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

How to become an even better working mom? I am doing great but I'd want to have a little 'stretched objective thinking' exercise: How can I do more?

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

Self-efficacy isn't a skill per se, but it encompasses all other skills in my toolkit. If I had to choose one, grit.

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

I practice stoicism.

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

The goddess Çşun. She is the goddess of everything feminine, beauty and love and destiny. Google her!





— **ANDREA STUBBE**
VP PRODUCT

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

You want the full list? 😊 I learned how to paint MDF wood, that skip-level-1:1s exist and how to run them. I also learned that working for brand new startups is not for me, that 50% of women in the tech industry leave it again, and that in the Netherlands, Paracetamol is considered the cure-all.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

If your environment brings you down and can't be changed, go find yourself a better one. They exist.

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

Something that completely surprises me, but in a good way.

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

Ingesting, sorting, and remembering vast amounts of information. Robots will take this over and be better than me, so my new most important skill is hiring and promoting great people, trusting them to do good, and helping them when needed.

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

As a five year old, I pretended to have an invisible friend. I didn't believe he existed, but it seemed to be age-appropriate behavior.

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

My mom. She worked as a teacher for math & physics (which were regular lunch-conversation topics) and used to sit on the council of our small town. Now she volunteers for a handful of NGOs, writing press releases and organizing events. Guess where my “Sure, I can do that!” attitude comes from?





MARLIES ISABELLA RIEPL
SENIOR GLOBAL ALLIANCE MARKETING MANAGER

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

You need to believe in yourself first in order for others to believe in you.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

You're stronger than you think. But don't let that strength get in the way of showing vulnerability from time to time.

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

Where do I start? Hosting my own podcast, composing music, pattern making, textile printing, analog photography, Portuguese to name a few.

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

Networking and keeping an open mind.

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

I'm a European champion in Vaulting and a certified yoga teacher (www.yogaliesl.com).

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Michelle Obama and Bozoma Saint John. They have all achieved huge success in their careers whilst driving change for the greater community.





ASHLEY QUIRK

TEAM LEAD GLOBAL MARKETING OPERATIONS

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

That it is perfectly fine to say no and set limits!

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

Buy bitcoin. 😊

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

On the tech side, there is so much happening right now that it's hard to say. Five years is a long time —especially with Web3, AI, etc.!

Professionally, I would like to further my own personal knowledge of innovative marketing software, solutions, and tactics. Also, I would like to progress my management skills to further expand my team members knowledge and support their growth.

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

The ability to take initiative.

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

I love skiing.

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

My dad, he is the number one go-getter I know!





KEMBA NEPTUNE

SENIOR DIRECTOR, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

Ten years ago I was so focused on getting my foot in the door anywhere. I didn't think about culture or sponsorship. If I did, I likely would have better navigated biases and workplace nuances.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

Work smarter, not harder. Invest in building a strong network, and continue to nourish those relationships. Avoid burning yourself out trying to prove yourself —our work speaks for itself.

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

I'm a people manager, so I think it's important for me to be the leader my team needs at every stage of their growth. To me, an exceptional leader is one that is committed to constant learning and growth, and one that reliably expends their political capital. I aim to be that leader.

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

It sounds simple, but knowing your audience is so important. Whether it's your manager, your colleague, a client, a mentor, the press – understand what the ROI is for your audience in every situation. This should always guide your approach, and it's a great way to ensure that you're not wasting anyone's time.

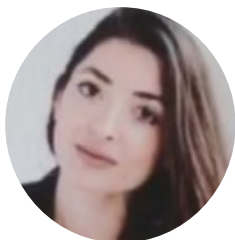
5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

I'm pretty shy and quiet unless provoked. Many assume I'm more naturally outgoing due my role as a communicator, but I think my general apprehension allows me to be a better active listener. In turn, I'm able to be more thoughtful in my approach in social situations and 'read the room' to have and foster better dialogue.

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

It's tough to pick one role model, but I have had some incredible female managers and colleagues in the past few years that have impacted how I approach mentorship, sponsorship, and allyship.





DANA SARCONA
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE CMO

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

Everything will make sense someday.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

Laugh at your mistakes and keep going! Rejection is sometimes redirection.

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

Patience and positivity.

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

I'd like to travel to new places to learn more about different cultures.
Patience and positivity.

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

I used to day trade cryptocurrency.

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

My mother. She is plant-based, health conscious and taught me everything I know. She approaches the world with kindness to humans and animals.





JENNY HENTRICH
PRODUCT SUPPORT TEAM LEAD

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

Asking questions does not show weakness or laziness, it is a great conversation starter as well as a main pillar of my everyday work life. The same goes for asking for help. It gives you and your team opportunities to learn from one another. Also, sharing mistakes is the best way to learn as a team and ensure mistakes aren't repeated. If all of the above isn't part of the culture at your current job, find a job with people who do.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

Don't be afraid to look aside. There is no perfect path and nothing is completely straightforward. A small detour can lead to the best job you could have ever imagined.

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

Being vulnerable is a strength, not a weakness, and will make you a better human (daughter, sister, friend, colleague, coach, team lead).

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

Learning excites me because there is always something new to learn. One thing I want to make sure of is that I gain the skills needed to integrate learning better into my everyday life, so I can have a better balance of work, learning and life. I also want to better understand how others learn and how to foster an environment that supports learning and sharing helps everyone grow. I would say that adaptability and patience with

myself and others along with the ability to show vulnerability have helped me the most. Think about starting a new job for example. You never have all the knowledge you need from the first day. First, you take your prior experience and knowledge and adapt it to your new environment. Then, you have to be patient with yourself and to find ways to get the information or ask others if necessary. This requires showing some vulnerability. Being good at these skills makes you better at life. They are much harder if not practiced regularly

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

Some people may not know that even though I am not very tall, I play basketball. I've also also coached and refereed. It gives me so much joy to see my teammates put in hard work and effort during practice and put it into action during a game.

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

That would definitely be my mum. She is not only the loveliest mum, she is a powerhouse — always evolving, questioning and changing her career as well as herself professionally. She has worked in sports education and as a primary school teacher since graduating from university when the inner German wall fell. She started the Special Olympics program in her region and ultimately became the national coach for the figure skating team – taking them to 2 World Games events. She almost burned out after working in a toxic work environment but now she is back working in sports while helping sports clubs in her town and working with the city sports council. She also coaches the biggest group of Special Olympics athletes in all of Germany and the biggest group of amateur figure skaters in the state. I can only try to touch and positively impact as many people in my life as she did and is still doing.



DASHA CHERNIAVSKAIA
SENIOR MANAGER, PRODUCT MARKETING

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

The world is much more unpredictable than you think. Sometimes it's a good thing, and sometimes it can be very challenging. Value every moment with your close friends and family, as there will be times when you won't be able to see each other regularly, no matter how odd it may sound to you now.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

I'd tell myself, (1) Live a life driven by creativity and curiosity, don't let fear get in the way. (2) Watch "*Why some of us don't have one true calling*" | *Emilie Wapnick*" TED Talk at your earliest convenience — it will help answer some of your questions and make you feel so much better about having too many interests. (3) You'll have many adventures and exciting life in different countries: you'll meet amazing people, visit incredible places, and get exposed to many different cultural experiences. Write a diary or capture all of that somehow!

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

I'd love to be fluent in French & Hebrew.

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

Emotional intelligence, focus on quality results, continuous learning and development.

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

I lived in Bangkok for four years, have a master's degree in software engineering and am always with my photo camera. My dream profession was to become an architect, but in high school, I was too sure I didn't have the required drawing abilities. A couple of years later (when I was in uni studying C++), I went to evening art classes and discovered I was actually good at it – if only I had tried to follow this path! I didn't become an architect, but I'm still fascinated by architecture and enjoy exploring it as a viewer.

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

I love how Ruth Bader Ginsburg drove a tremendous change through influence rather than confrontation: one of her quotes is, *"Fight for the things that you care about but do it in a way that will lead others to join you."* I'm also very inspired by Howard Roark (from "Fountainhead" by Ayn Rand) and his integrity, non-conformism and independence.





LAURA DIMAIUTA
FIELD MARKETING MANAGER

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

That it's better to work smarter and not harder.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

To wisely choose your future, think about your dreams and follow them — don't let anyone take that away from you.

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

How to make an impact professionally and personally.

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

Empathy, teamwork and directness.

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

That I'm very clumsy and love to laugh.

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

I don't have one role model however I do admire people who believe they can succeed and do so. Thinking is destiny and it's hard to keep motivated when you get battered. When I see someone coming from nothing, not taking NO as an answer and learn from their failures, that's the kind of role model I look up to.





JACQUELINE STOKLAS
PARTNER MARKETING MANAGER

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

The only thing determining your path in life is your mindset and willingness to work for your goals.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

My creativity and penchant for dreaming big things are no drawback. Having out-of-the-box ideas and being open-minded can open you the most interesting doors, keep that!

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

Learning patience, establishing healthy habits to make the most space for my personal development and learning to invest my time in the right things like broadening my expertise in what i do/work and finally, learning to speak more languages that open new opportunities to travel for me.

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

Understanding what drives the person next to you. It is always the best starting point to broaden my own perspective and find ways to effectively communicate with others. Not only is it more fun but always more effective when you want to grow, learn and succeed to have friends and peers joining you.

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

Having the freedom to work and live in other countries, packing my bags and seeing new places around the world gives me more stability than having a fixed home and a big household.

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

Cheesy, but my mother is my biggest role model. She always finds a way to travel the world, learn and educate herself every day and stay open minded. This is how she lives and what she has taught me.





— **ROSEMARY MOMOH**
SOLUTIONS ENGINEER

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

Two things, nothing is truly permanent and just that there are many questions you're just not going to be able to answer. It's definitely always humbling to realize that. 10 years ago, I definitely thought I would have more concrete answers to many parts of life and the world.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

I would tell myself (1) Uncertainty can be terrifying but embracing the unknown can actually work out well at the end of the day. At least so far; maybe ask me in a few years again — haha. (2) As an individual, but especially as a woman, don't spend your time in spaces where you can't build trust and your voice isn't welcomed and won't be amplified. It's amazing what support and the space to thrive would do to your growth. (3) You're truly always enough and remember to not underestimate what you're capable of and where you are.

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

Learn to set even bigger or seemingly unachievable goals. As someone who tends to be very logical and analytical in how I think, that also reflects the goals I set for myself. I hope to learn to be 'less realistic' in the goals I set and just focus on exploring all the things that interest/excite me.

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

Curiosity. Empathy. Staying genuinely curious about people, technologies, businesses, etc. I (try) to go into every interaction with an open mind and

I've always been fascinated by different things in my career. While I initially struggled with not always having the answers when it came to my career journey, I slowly realized that choosing curiosity and wanting to learn about areas I was interested in has helped make what might seem like a confusing journey a truly enjoyable one!

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

I like to believe I can sing :) Most importantly, music is actually a strong anchor for me and how I spend a lot of my free time.

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

Janelle Monae. She's an amazing black female artiste who continues to redefine stereotypes and push boundaries while facing her career as a singer, rapper and actress.





— **ALYSSA SOSA**

HEAD OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT - AMERICAS

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

'Best Practice' is a template, not an answer! Let me start by saying I am a huge advocate for sharing tips, tricks and best practice knowledge. But the key point that always seems to be overlooked is that *we're all different!* I mean, would Simone Biles be Simone Biles if diet, exercise and lifestyle could be replicated with the exact same results? No way! Personalities, communication styles, areas of excellence, passions, career goals and ambitions — they all play a factor in identifying your best practice. Always remember what works best for someone else, may not be what works best for you! Adjust 'best practice' to meet your needs and align with your skills and strengths.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

"Take the time, before you need the time." I used to schedule my day with no end of meetings and tasks in sight. I always wanted to cross off "just one more" item from my to-do list before allowing myself to end the day. Then one Friday afternoon after crossing the last thing off my list, I naturally let out a sigh of relief. That sigh led to 10 minutes of unsolicited, yet valuable parental advice and what has become a core principle I live by daily. *"Take the day before you need the day."* Flash forward to now, the first things I schedule on my calendar each week is times to read/reflect and time to connect with my team. On a sunny day, I encourage my team to take an extra 30 minutes and go outside to read a book, take a walk, practice a new skill they're learning or play with their children and/or pets. I know not everyone is as fortunate to have a job and organization

that gives them this freedom. Since implementing this practice routinely, productivity and enjoyment at work has significantly increased and our team has been able to connect with one another and those around us on a more human level.

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

In the next 5 years I hope to learn more about who I am to others. I strive to be a 'people first' leader — my number one goal is to help others identify their strengths, areas of improvement and 'next steps' in their career journey, while at the same time make our work environment memorable, valuable and enjoyable. I hope to discover my efforts made a difference and had a positive impact on my team members in their careers and personal lives!

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

Trust! I am not sure that trust is a 'skill' however, it has definitely played the most important role in my career journey! Trusting myself to make the right decisions for me. By offering clear communication, transparency and reliability, I've earned the trust of those around me.





SIMONE SMYTH

HEAD OF PRODUCT - EXPERIENCE & EXTENSIBILITY

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

Having an expectation that people think, act, feel or respond the way you do is a surefire way to misread how to manage situations and empathise with people. Once you can park your own self and how you perceive the world, it gets a lot more interesting. Then, you're able to recognize the difference between being curious and just being challenging. It opens up more avenues of discussion and thought than always just coming with your view or opinion on things. Learning and knowing this has made life much more colourful and fun.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

That getting older is the best feeling in the world and that will be a complete surprise to you. Every year that passes brings more experience and more security. Whoever said your 20s are your best years was nuts! The more years and therefore the more failings you get under your belt, the taller you stand and more sure you are in yourself. That's a wonderful feeling. You start to care about what really matters and the surface insecurities like what people think of you melt away. And that feels really good, look forward to it.

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

How to achieve better self-care. Being career-oriented for so long and working hard is something I'm extremely proud of and it's got me where I am. But, at times it can blind me to things beyond work that I need or miss. Not even big things. Just learning when to put down work and pick

up a book, for example. So, taking what I've learn about improving from a professional perspective and applying the same thinking to my personal development.

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

Empathy. I always recommend to everyone I work with to read "*How to win friends and influence people*" by Dale Carnegie. Not the most thrilling read, fair warning! However, it flipped the script for me on how to perceive others and myself in relation to them. That book changed how I behave fundamentally and that's been a hugely positive influence on my work life. If empathy sounds like one of those newfangled hippy soft skills that you don't know where to begin with, then this book is definitely for you.

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

I hate fruit. Hate it. Phobic. Disgusted fundamentally to my core by it. I'm also highly allergic to dogs and have a pit bull. I'm sure you were looking for something more professional and insightful but here we are. 😊

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

I don't tend to subscribe to role models if I'm honest. I have people instead I consider my mentors and admire and want to learn from for different reasons. Some of them are at commercetools and others I've collected along the way.





ANITA JAN TEMPLE (FINKELSTEIN)
CORPORATE STORYTELLER

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

I could write a book on that answer! But the most important thing I learned is that I can create engaging content on any topic. In 2018, when I told Kelly Goetsch I didn't know anything about technology, he said, "It doesn't matter. I'm not looking for a technology writer." So, I started writing about technology. Today, I can define microservices, APIs, cloud-native, headless, Json, Kubernetes and GraphQL. I can explain the difference between a monolith platform and a composable commerce solution. I can even draw what a modern tech stack looks like and go online and with accuracy tell you which brands are on monoliths and which brands have embraced modern commerce.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

"They," i.e. the people you meet may make assumptions about your intelligence and potential value based on what you look like, but there's no greater reward than proving them wrong. When I graduated college, I got a job as a reporter at Women's Wear Daily. I looked younger than I actually was. Being short and blonde didn't help. I found sometimes when I'd meet someone to interview them, initially, they wouldn't take me seriously. I would then proceed to prove I was actually smart and good at my job. At first, it upset me, but I ultimately got pleasure out of winning them over. I'd also tell myself that you can't make everyone happy – just focus on doing what you believe is the right thing to do.

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

How to not feel guilty whenever I say "No."

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

My eternal optimism. I have a tattoo on my ankle that reads, “*Believe in goodness.*” I’ve always focused on the positive, so whenever I fall down, I get back up again.

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don’t know about you*

Most people don’t know I believe every person that comes into my life appears for a reason. Even if I don’t like them in the beginning, if they keep showing up, I know in my heart they have something to teach me. Sometimes it takes a while to figure out what the lesson is, but thus far I haven’t been wrong.

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

My mom. She played by the rules and did what was expected of her as a young woman in the 1950s and 60s. Ultimately, my father/her husband died and she was left to raise 3 young children. She found a job that could give us security and spent her days ensuring we were loved and nurtured focusing on nurturing us and ensuring we felt loved, and spent every day. Today at 90, she’s living her best life. — her home overlooks the ocean, she swims 10 laps a day and takes Zumba classes. She deserves every minute of happiness in the world!





ALBA MUÑOZ
PARTNER MARKETING MANAGER

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

Every experience is an opportunity to grow and learn.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

Don't be scared to make decisions.

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

How to trust myself more, becoming more inspiring and assertive.

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

Adapting fast and understanding feedback is a gift and not a personal attack.

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

I am naturally very curious and I like to explore very diverse topics and try new hobbies.

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

It might sound cliché but my mother is a true inspiration to me. Not only has she been an unwavering activist for women's rights during the early days of Spanish democracy, but she has also worked her way to the top of her chosen career. The combination of her commitment to fighting

for equal rights and her ambition to succeed is something I strive to emulate. She is a shining example of how we can all make a difference and reach our goals. I will always admire and look up to her courage and determination.





DIANA FUSEKOVA
SENIOR PARTNER MARKETING MANAGER

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

Nothing in life is more valuable than good health. Without health there is no happiness, no peace and no success.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

There are no problems, only solutions.

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

That we have achieved gender equality. 😊

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

Confidence. Knowing that I can achieve anything that I set my mind to even if I encounter obstacles/ I believe in my own ability to find a solution. Networking. Learning from and with others, is a powerful tool to progressing in life.

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

I ran a marathon and yet I hate running.

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

Oprah Winfrey —I admire her strength and power to positively influence others despite her traumatic childhood. Oprah is a self-made woman who rose from extreme poverty and climbed the heights of success because of her own merit and is now one of the biggest philanthropists in the world.





MONIA SPARTA
HEAD OF INFRASTRUCTURE ALLIANCES

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

I've learned not everything in life can be planned and not everything in life can be controlled rationally or decided with certainty. I've learned to be comfortable in my skin. You don't have to be perfect or to do everything perfectly, you just need to do things with your heart and feel the things that make you happy. My quest for perfection in the past didn't allow me to appreciate the skills I have or my path in life. It didn't allow me to be merciful with myself. My mental and personal wellbeing is more important than any job, role, or goal in life. Being comfortable with who I am and loving myself makes me a better person at work and privately as well as able to fully love my relevant others.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

I would like to tell her: *"Monia, you should plan less and live more in the moment (Carpe Diem). Don't focus on smart goals and objectives, instead give more emphasis on exploration in the present moment. Don't constrain yourself to strict goals or pillars or you run the risk of thinking that happiness exists only when you reach said goal. Thinking this way causes you to fail to enjoy the present moment and the journey. If you can't not enjoy the process of reaching the goal, then what is the point?"*

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

From a career perspective, I would like to improve my mentoring/coaching skills to help my people manager career grow further. I would like to grow my team within commercetools. From a personal perspective, I would like

to focus a lot on my family and spend more time with them. After many years of practice, I would like to take a yoga teacher training to consolidate my knowledge of yoga philosophy and learn more.

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

I believe I have two important skills: humility and diplomacy. Being humble in the workplace and in my private life has always been rewarding. Encouraging humility through openness and honesty makes relationships more transparent, gets misunderstanding out of the way and creates space for easier solutions. Diplomacy is focused on creating long-term positive relationships with both business and non-business stakeholders through communication and engagement. In most cases, acting with diplomacy mitigates potential difficult situations and leads to a more positive experience and outcome. These two skills have been key at every step in my career.

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

I don't particularly like to be put in the spotlight or on stage. It's something I will do if I am forced to but I don't feel comfortable with it. It's definitely a skill I should work on!

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

My mother is my most inspirational role model. She is the strongest woman I know and despite a hard life, full of obstacles, problems to solve and challenges, she has always taught me to never give up on my dreams, always smile and never lose hope. Today I've achieved most of my dreams in life personally and professionally and my life is so wonderful and. I have to give her a lot of credit because she raised me to be a strong woman.



SERENA CHAUDHRY PANDEY
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

That planning is good, but flexibility is even better. Life is a journey that is meant to be lived day by day, in the present moment. If you're currently rushing from one thing to the next, you lose appreciation for what is right in front of you. So always remember that it is worth having a plan, whether personal or professional, but to allow for the natural ebbs and flows is more important.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

You did well to follow and believe in your dreams! It all worked out well, from marrying the man of your dreams, to being a war correspondent in Iraq, interviewing your favourite Bollywood actor, and travelling the world and experiencing the diversity of humanity.

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

The art of slow living - it's a journey! I am quick to say yes, but learning to take a step back and saying no, without feeling guilty, is very important.

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

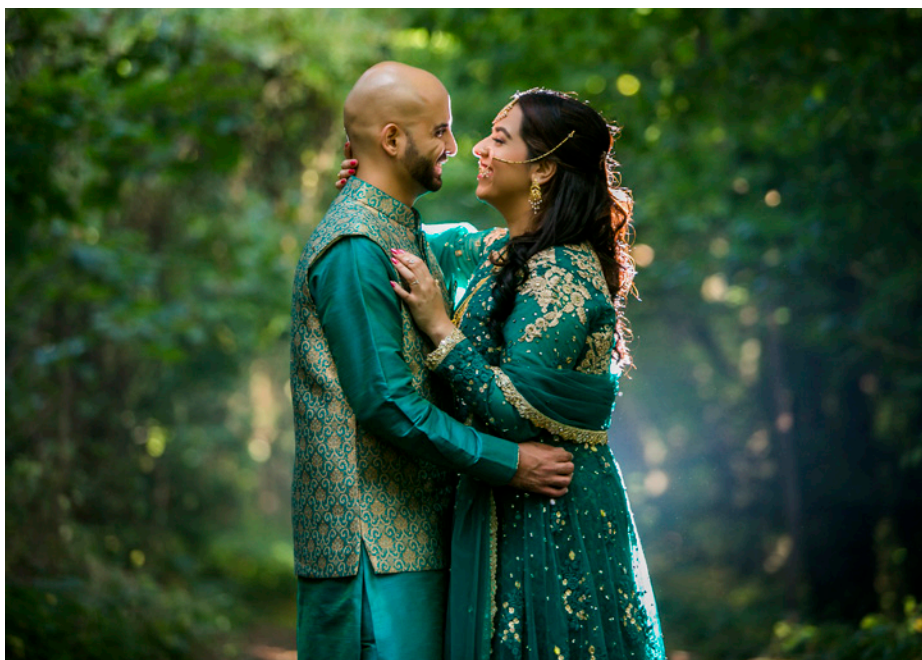
There's two important skills: networking and authenticity. The power of a network - mentors, sponsors, connections - has been key to my career journey and success and I cannot emphasise the value of building a network. The second critical skill is authenticity - if you are not showing up as your true self, you are doing a huge disservice to both yourself and the people who do not get to meet the true you.

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

I'm a deep sleeper. I've slept through fire drills at university and explosions in Baghdad. So if you're ever around when there's an emergency, you'll need to bang the door down to wake me up! I believe in the power of sleep though - it's a great way to reset at the end of a day, especially one that's been a bit challenging.

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

My parents! They have inspired me to live fully and to follow my heart. From collaborating with Nelson Mandela to pitching projects to Richard Branson, being pioneers in bringing African Art to Europe, and leading the way on solar and wind projects in Africa - they are real powerhouses! What I love most is that they always have time for others and live from a human-centric approach. That philosophy deeply inspires me because at our core, we all need to connect with others.





MICHELE KUHN
GLOBAL SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER

1. What do you know now that you didn't know 10 years ago?*

You don't always need a plan. In the end, everything will exactly work out how it is supposed to.

2. What would you like to tell your younger self?*

Don't be afraid to stand up for yourself, don't care too much about other opinions, make mistakes and most importantly, understand that it's okay to put yourself first. This is your life and you decide which path you're taking! Learn to make priorities, expand your network and sometimes just breath, be happy and enjoy the moment!

3. What do you hope to learn in the next 5 years?*

I am blessed with a lot of different interests. Therefore, I hope I am able to find a way to bring all of them together, connect the dots and find my true passion in this ocean of possibilities.

4. What is the most important skill that helped you succeed in your career?*

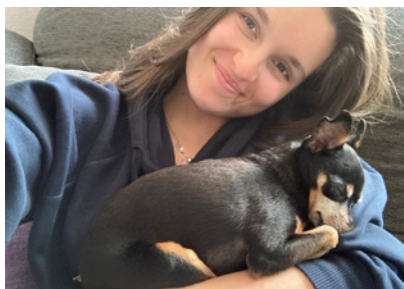
The understanding that everyone — it doesn't matter if it's the CEO or an intern — has something important to say and deserves a seat at the table. Treat everyone equally with respect. In my opinion, communication, especially listening, is one of the most powerful tools we have. Some things are not even said loudly and in words, but if you listen carefully, you learn to read between lines and letters. Having the skill to properly understand your surroundings and the needs and emotions of others helps you build strong relationships and paves the way for your success.

5. Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know about you*

I am a HUGE astronomy and stargazing fan, I could talk about the universe for hours without getting bored. You might potentially need to tell me to stop if this topic ever comes up. 😊 One of the material possessions I am most proud of is actually my telescope which I occasionally take out to get lost in our beautiful night sky!

6. Who is your most inspirational role model and why?*

Besides my mom (who is the strongest and most empowering woman I will ever know!), I also admire Jacinda Ardern, the previous prime minister of New Zealand. She is such an inspirational leader that showed the world that leading with empathy doesn't make you look weak, it makes you human and real.





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