

Debbie F: What a fantastic session. I've got to say when I was listening to it, this a topic like Rebecca, that we feel quite passionately about, not just looking outward for the Tech Talent Charter, but thinking internally, because we are remote, part time, flexible working. So fantastic to hear things that we could begin to put to work to try and do that better within, for us at the Tech Talent Charter. Hope you found that useful too. Let's look at another problem area we've been talking about for some time. And that is, we can't just try to hire our way out of this problem. What we have heard from a lot of our companies as well, they first of all leaned very much into that recruitment, early recruitment, getting that early pipeline right. When they turned around and look, they realise that what they had was a very leaky pipeline, that they weren't retaining women, or looking at their ethnic minorities or underrepresented groups, or if they retain them, their careers were stalling. We know that it's vital for us to ensure that we don't just have representation within tech, but to look at within all levels of tech. And while we were delighted in this year's report, that our members are continuing to track ahead of the UK average, in terms of representation for women. And that is improving. It's not there yet, we were pleased to see for the first time, when we've asked for ethnicity reporting, that we were at or better than the workforce averages. But we knew, looking at that leadership structure, there's still so much to do. And this is what we want to talk about in this panel. There are no easy answers, but there are some companies who are really trying to make a difference, at looking at retaining and growing into leadership, some great talent, in terms of underrepresented groups. So can you join me for my panel discussion. Hello, everyone. We've got a nice full screen of everyone here. Thank you for joining me. What we'll start off with is a little challenge, you have 30 seconds or less to introduce yourself, my favourite micro introduction rounds. Let's start with where I've got you on the screen. Lopa, will you go first.

Lopa: Happy to, hi, I'm Lopa Ghosh, I'm from EY. I run our cybersecurity competency, and I also sponsor our women in tech.

Debbie F: Over to you Shilpa.

Shilpa: Hi, everyone. I'm Shilpa Shah. I'm a director in our healthcare practice at Deloitte. I also lead our award winning Women in Tech Network, and I am passionate about all things. Equity, diversity and inclusion.

Debbie F: Lovely, Debbie. Now we're going to have some confusion here between HP Debbie and TCC Debbie. But Debbie, would you like to introduce yourself?

Debbie I: Hi, I'm HP, Debbie. I'm Debbie Irish. I've got the privilege of being the HR lead for the UK and Ireland. And I've been here since 2010. I'm also on a number of global projects, working on DEI initiatives.

Debbie F: And David.

Dave: Hello, I'm Dave Henderson. I'm the CTO at Global, I sit on the DNI committee here at Global. And I've been on the Tech Talent Charter journey with Debbie from growth.

Debbie F: You were one of our founding signatories. You were one of us before there was even a proper us involved, David. And I say the same for HP as well, yeah, look, the both HP and Global, it's great to have you there for that. Last but not least, Claudia, would you like to introduce yourself?

Claudia: Yeah, absolutely. So hi, I'm Claudia from a company called Futureproof, that you might have heard of. So we are a coding academy, that we launched out of the recruitment business, called Lithos Associates, to try and solve the digital skills gap and the diversity issue within tech. So it's a

free coding Academy to democratise access to careers in tech, to hopefully solve some of these problems, so that we have more talent in the future and don't have these issues in 10 to 15 years time.

Debbie F: So lovely to meet you all. Okay, so what we're looking at is this problem. And this is one of the biggest problems that was cited in our report for companies to be able to find senior talent, particularly for women. We know that also, getting growing and retaining talent, was one of the top 10 strategies used, whether we're trying to improve ethnicity, or gender, so we need to figure out some things. Claudia, let me start with you, both with your hat on for Futureproof, but also for Lithos. Companies will work with you when they need to look externally, help me find leaders, what do you find that's working, what are some things that we need to know and learn to get better at this?

Claudia: Great question. So I think the first thing to say is, it's really hard. We see it, especially in our executive search recruitment business, people coming to us when they're looking at senior roles and saying, we'd love to see more diversity on the shortlist. But actually, there aren't enough people out there in the first place. And that's one of the big problems we're trying to solve with Futureproof is, creating more talent. But actually, I think it's around looking in different places and thinking about how can we remove barriers to entry, it's what we did when we started Futureproof. And started to think about, how do we attract talent from different places. We have a mix of career changes, for example, and graduates on the course. And I think in one of the TTC articles that I was reading you said that, one in four women would consider switching to a career in tech, if the tech skills training was provided. I think it's thinking about things like that, to try and attract more talent. But then also, there's a piece in there around once the people are in the organisation, how can we make sure we've got an environment where people feel included, and happy to actually speak their mind and be able to progress. And I remember I went to an event around diversity, and someone said something that really resonated with me, which was the rule of 30%. I don't know if anyone's heard this before. But the idea is that, for someone to feel comfortable and included in an environment, there needs to be at least 30% representation in that room. So to give an example, if there's a boardroom of 10 people, and there's only one woman in the room, they might not feel comfortable speaking their mind, even though they're in the room. So actually, in a room of three people, whilst that person has 30% representation, they might feel a lot more comfortable. So again, it's about creating the environment for these people to be able to be successful, as well as having them in the room in the first place.

Debbie F: And I think that 30% idea is important, because we do see a lot of companies have that one and done mindset of, well, we've got one woman on the board, we can lean back and relax, now we're done. And in fact, if you look and watch the retention rates, when companies take that approach is appalling, and they're losing people, and the underrepresented people watch, they watch them come and they watch them go. So it's really important to lean in and think about that culture and removing barriers. Debbie at HP, you've started looking at that. We will turn to the external and hiring externally, and those sorts of barriers. But let's look, because we've accepted that's really tough. There's not enough women out there. So what are we doing internally? HP, how are you approaching that, to try and tackle that, let's grow from within?

Debbie I: Certainly, I'll begin by saying, we're not doing a single thing. We're doing many, many things, and we're trying them out. And yes, we're a global company. But quite often our solutions are local. And we're trying to come up with ideas, and share those ideas, so that we can collectively, across the whole globe, see a number of incremental improvements. We're not trying to do a single, huge, great shift. We're doing lots of micro actions, that will enable the whole to benefit. But there's a few suggestions that I was going to share today. And I'd start with mutual mentorship. Now,

mentorships are obviously not new, at all to anybody. But what we have done last year, was we took a number of our top talent, underrepresented groups, and in this case, it was from the multiracial communities. And we connected them with executives in our commercial organisation. So very explicit pairings. And we gave them six months. And they met as often as they wanted to. And it was phenomenally successful. We had some really, really strong feedback that both parties, the mentors and mentees, they absolutely loved it. They got far more out of it than they expected. And we listened. And we are doing the same thing this year for women across the world. We're connecting up senior executives with females. It's about visibility, it's a two way conversation. Again, none of this is going to be new in the mentor concept. But in actual fact, we saw typically, people participating being promoted, and they change jobs as a result of it, it worked. By repeating this on a big scale, small scale and so on, we're really confident that this is really going to go exponentially. But also in that feedback, we listened and learned and realised that, it doesn't take a huge number of conversations, to be impactful. So we've invented a 15 minutes with, mini mentor programme, where we're saying to our underrepresented groups, we're talking to the top talent, within those groups. And saying, if you could have 15 minutes with any executive in the company, or anyone, who would that be, and we're pairing them up, and we've had a great response from our execs, because 15 minutes, anyone can do that. 15 minutes is not a huge commitment. And it's inspirational, it's, if you like, an extension on the elevator pitch, but it's a two way street. It's enabling people, who are coming up the organisation, to get visibility, to network, to connect. And it's for those execs, to connect with people, and listen, and understand what their concerns are, what their asks are. So 15 minutes with, is something we're really excited about. The other thing we're doing, on the mentor theme, is we can see clearly, that there just aren't enough people to mentor, we know we all have the same problem, a labour pyramid has fewer people at the top. So if everyone wants a mentor to grow, it's going to be very difficult to do that. So we are building on the well known concept of mentor circles. So that we are giving people access to those senior people. And they're connecting, sort of, six or seven in a group. And they're learning from each other, they're in a confidential cohort. You're getting more bang for your buck, basically, by connecting more people. And by doing this through the underrepresented communities, that's an explicit, very visible way that the company is saying, we want to enable everybody, we want to hear from everybody. And we're explicitly creating these programmes for you. I've got a couple of others if I may, really briefly. We're creating a DEI library. And we're very proud of this. Because this is probably something that the bigger companies could benefit from, and you're probably already doing. There's so many things happening around the world, that people have created bottom up. Everyone's reinventing the wheel over and again. And our DEI library, is connecting all those ideas. It's gathering together, the transferable ideas, the really simple ones, the ones that can work in a multitude of places and organisations, were sharing them. And it's inspiring others to go, oh, I hadn't thought of that. Or, okay, you've got the material, can I borrow that. And so there's a lot of that happening as well. So micro ideas, based on well known principles, but we're working our way through them.

Debbie F: Fantastic. And that's a transitional point for most companies. We're going to talk about challenges and what small companies can do. But what I found interesting over the last five years, is the number of times that companies have said, the transformational moment became when they started thinking like a start-up, where they stopped trying to figure one perfect programme to drop down from above, and started doing small ideas, measuring and then scaling in that sense. So David, a slightly different company size in reach. And I know you've then gone a step further on from the mentoring. Do you want to talk about, what are the things that Global's doing, in respect to growing and management?

David: Sure, like, Claudia said, it's hard, like Debbie said, that they were doing lots and lots and lots of things. So I definitely concur with the first two to three comments, I think the first thing to say is, the first thing we did, though, was to get our data right and understand the metrics, as to what we

understood, the demographics, and ethnicity, and gender by role, by location by level, that it was hard to understand what was going on, and also to challenge some of the key decisions that we're doing in this space, things like, who we're going to send on training programmes, who gets promoted. Unless you actually have the data to say, why is it that there's three times more men going on the mastering development course than women? Getting data is really important, to then have better conversations with people who have confidence can make a difference. That's first thing I'd say. And I think some things that we're doing, they're a work in progress, some have worked well, some just need tweaking. First one is a published career framework, that shows across all of our levels, got all of our key roles, the attributes you need, just to move up at those levels. And that can be on a management track or technical track, whether you're an iOS developer, or whether you're a change manager. And that's been with me that profound, the impact that that's had, just by getting it out there, getting people challenging it, commenting on it, talking about it, and it's made it a much more inclusive way of talking about levels and titles, as well. And for anyone that wants to see it, it's in the, I can share a link, but we also, with the Monzo, he's done some brilliant work in this space. The things we're doing that are working quite well, is just thinking a bit more about succession planning, and making sure that we're having conversations with people, two to three years out, from a major promotion, around all the things that they can do, and putting in place training programmes to support that. We've pretty much doubled our learning development investment, over the last two years. We're trying to link that back, very much more to intern information. attributed on that framework, where that goes. Like Debbie says, we do mentoring here, but we call it sponsorship. And it's all about leading in, sponsor for women at Global. And on a quarterly basis, talk about their key challenges over the last three months, what's coming up, what are they worrying about, their career plans. What's been fascinating to me is just those conversations, the amount of reverse learning or reverse mentoring I've got, to a process of having access to roles we've had. Just being able to share with them articles, or inviting them to meetings that they wouldn't know about, or sharing contacts with them. That process has been a time efficient, for me, it's four hours a quarter, but it's a really, really valuable time spent. The final thing we're doing, we're doing a lot more here now is lateral movements, and more as comments. Special projects, nine months here, working on different projects, and certainly for certain categories of underrepresented groups, giving them the confidence to try that, with a safe drop to come back to, the initial results have been really popular and useful. And an article I read in the MIT Sloan, they talked about how lateral movements and as comments, have a massive impact, on both retention and on an ounce of morale and engagement as well. We've done about seven or eight last year, and we'll be doing even more in the next year.

Debbie F: Fantastic. And David, to unpack some of that journey, I think it's really important for people to see where that went is, it was data driven. And that's essential. There was a joke yesterday from the audience, of they were going to do a word bingo on how many times we talk about data, and that data driven model, is really vital to understand where the problems lie, in terms of that, and is it in certain regions, certain teams, certain types of role, etc. The fact that you were then thinking and in creating the solutions, moving from the mentorship, into that sponsorship, that active engagement in other careers, I think is powerful. And I really applaud that transparency of career progression. Yesterday's talk, we heard from Vanessa Bolelli, that we did some joint research with Ipsos MORI, on looking at women in tech, and what were the reasons they stayed? What were the reasons they left? Yes, salary was an issue. But even more importantly, were things like, that transparency and career growth, seeing where their career was, how they could develop that culture that relationship with the management, that made a huge point in that. And that engagement in that respect is really, really powerful. And I like hearing how, again, you're not trying to reinvent just from the wheel, you're looking at the research, you're looking outwards, and bringing that into to what you do. Lopa, in terms of thinking of that, is there anything that you would talk about that is happening at your company, in terms of leaning in, to really trying to understand what's happening and how you make those interventions?

Lopa: Yes, again, agree with everything that's going on. It's one of those things, isn't it? At some point, you can't do anything new, you've just got to do something that's existing better. And one of those things is listening. Everyone says they do active listening sessions, or I went and spoke to some people, I really understood. And it's like a tick box exercise. I spoke to five women, I spoke to five people of ethnic minority, I did my job. But have you acted upon it? So as well as doing reverse mentoring things, that we have. We also have active listening sessions, where we've gone out and done a lot of research actually, around junior members, senior members, all the way up about, what is bothering you, what makes you stay, what will make you want to leave, especially when it comes to technology itself, technology careers. And we've had a wealth of information back. It's been amazing, actually, that anonymized way providing feedback. All organisations are quite hierarchical, especially when you're talking with junior members or if you're having a peer to peer conversation, you don't always want it to be something that's out there and known. So a lot of it's anonymized. But we've heard things such as, role models that 30%, is just so important. Do I see myself being up there? Am I going to get supported through my journey? Or am I just going to be left alone? One of the things that was really clear especially within technology and consulting, is that leadership and business consulting skills, don't always come hand in hand with technology consulting skills. And so when you work in an organisation like ours, and you see the partners, and they're are certain type of individual, it's really hard for some of our hardcore technical people to see, do they have a space or a place there, especially with our women, we're getting loads of women that are super technical, which is amazing. And a lot of [inaudible], and I don't know whether we can talk about that at some point, but we have a lot of self taught women. So we need to create, and through those listening sessions, understand where that path is. Those things are called ZUDS, zones of uncomfortable discussion, and that is discuss any issue around DEI in a safe space. And anyone can talk about anything, and it's public, and everyone joins, and we've had amazing participation in that. It's all about awareness and growing that sculpture of acceptance, that means that we increase retention, because people aren't talking about it behind a closed door. They're seeing actual action being taken after the words that they have said.

Debbie F: Okay. Love that idea of the zones of uncomfortable, can you read me again, zones of uncomfortable safety? Can you hear me all right? Okay, I think we're getting some sort of lag going on here. Can you still hear me? Right. Okay, so if you can hear me, that means I'm still in the room, and we'll technically...

Lopa: Zones of uncomfortable discussion.

Debbie F: Perfect. Thank you very much. Right, so do you want to let me know, Shilpa where do you play in those sorts of things?

Lopa: Oh, I'm so sorry. I think it might be me.

Debbie F: Don't worry.

Shilpa: No problem, Lopa. It's so great to see that everybody else is...

Debbie F: That's better. Thank you.

Shilpa: Okay, it's so great Debbie, to see that all of our panellists today are doing a lot of the same things that we've been doing in our organisation, as well, and having the real impact. I think a number of themes that really resonate are around accountability. Accountability is really key. So our leaders are accountable for targets and progress against them, and it's reviewed quarterly, by our

UK executive. We've also published our targets externally, so that transparency, not only within our organisation, but externally as well. We have a target of 30%, 30% female partners by 2025, and 40% by 2030. And our targets for ethnically diverse and black partners have also been shared in our pay report, which is available for everybody. Having the transparency of the targets, and then the interventions that we're taking to get them in combination with accountability, really allows us to use that data, to drive change across the whole, attract and hire to retire lifecycle. And we specifically also have a black action plan, which sparked commitment to much greater transparency, when reporting our ethnicity data. So, for example, we broke down our ethnic minority figures for the first time, to publish pay gap analysis at a black, Asian and ethnic minority level. And we thought that was quite different and really much needed. So it provides a much more transparent message to our people to society, but also, really gives us much more richer data, to inform our wider and ongoing inclusion strategy. And there are so many different things and a number of them, the other organisations are doing around sponsoring reverse mentorship, uncomfortable conversations, definitely echo, Lopa's point around listening. So active listening, and then the actions that come off that, are absolutely critical to creating the right culture. So it's important that we recognise that everything is a journey and continues to evolve, there really is no silver bullet. Some of the things that we've done include, making sure, and I think your previous panel touched on a lot of this conversation around hybrid, but every one of our 20,000 people has the choice of when and where they work. There are no set number of days in the office. And that flexibility really helps, to speak to both the attraction and retention piece. We definitely use the data to inform how we're going to change our spaces by listening to our people around what it is that they want. Another great initiative that we thought was quite different, that we recently implemented, is from an inclusion perspective, allowing everybody to choose when they take the UK bank holidays. So if they don't want to celebrate the traditional festivals, or take the time at the end, but want to take at some point throughout the year, they're able to do so Sponsorship and mentorship, absolutely critical. So we launched our Emerging Leaders programme, for black and ethnic minority colleagues, of all genders, and the first cohort was 166 participants, back in 2020. And now the programme has been expanded, to include women and other represented groups. One of the things I'm sure other organization's are doing, is mandatory respect and inclusion training. And we've been doing it since 2015. We also held sessions, specifically for our leaders, around talking about race and our 2600 partners and directors undertook these uncomfortable conversations and training, to help them with race fluency, helping them become much more comfortable, confident, and competent, in talking about race and acting as allies, and behaving in a much more inclusive way. There are so many other things that we've done Debbie, in terms of policies and programmes, for supporting working parents return to work, being part of the valuable 500 and focusing on supporting those from disability backgrounds, to really strive and ensure that our working environment is inclusive and accessible and welcoming for everybody. Those are just some of the examples of different things that we do, to help create the right culture and retain our talent.

Debbie F: Fantastic. Okay, so what I'd like to do now, we're going to do some deep diving, we've been getting so many questions. So I want to go into a rapid fire, quick questions I'm going to throw out, and anyone wants to lean into this, here's a really practical question, how can I optimise promotion processes to mitigate bias? So let's think about process. We've talked a lot about the actions on culture, what can we do in our promotion processes, any ideas?

Lopa: I can take one of those, we're doing in mine, is that succession planning is really, really important. We are going oh, I'm ready today. Let's promote today, we're doing, are you going to be ready in two to three years time? And what level are you going to be ready at. And so we started that. Now the other thing that we started to do is, do twice yearly promotions within our technology, consulting space, and all of our business consulting space, which is a huge part of retention, you're no longer waiting maybe 18 months to get recognised for skills that you have

today. It's something that we can recognise every six months, as we go forward, and actually allows us to plan effectively the type of people, the culture, and provide the right development plans for people, as they progress through the organisation.

Debbie F: Anything else, anyone else that's putting things in into that process, that they could add that helps us putting into our promotion process?

Shilpa: I think for me, it is the point about transparency and communication. So there are many open communications, everybody is aware of the process. David, you talked about, having, making sure that career framework is in place. So I'm sure most of our larger organisations have that. But the transparency, the openness, the ability to ask questions, throughout the time period, and not just at the stage of promotion, is really critical. To help people engage with that. You'll get people who are proactive about doing that, you'll get people who, maybe are focused on the day job so much, and typically they are from gender backgrounds, or underrepresented communities. So our people leaders, encourage every single one of our people to think through the process, support, coach and guide them, in whatever they want to achieve, from a potential perspective, and make sure that it's not just a one and done journey, at the time of promotion, but throughout the whole time period.

Debbie F: Good, excellent. What about the fact about maternity leave? Okay. A lot of people see maternity leave as that big derailment. That is a gap. How are you balancing that, in the long run, for women's careers?

Debbie I: Yeah, should I take that one?

Debbie F: Yeah, super.

Debbie I: So again, there's no magic bullet here. But something that we really consciously do, is talk long term with our female employees, and we talk to them about their career goals. And if you like, we keep the faith. We say to them, look your personal plan comes first. What do you want? What are your priorities? And then when they're ready, and they say, I would like to develop my career, I want to move into management, I want to move into directorship and so on. We're there for them. They know already, because we've been partnering with them throughout, we don't force them and say look, you missed your chance. We actively listen to the points made earlier. As they develop their career, and that includes, okay, so they take some time out and they come back again. But they come back positively, knowing that we will be completely flexible with them, in terms of where, how they work, is it a short term flexibility, is that a permanent flexibility, if that's not an oxymoron. But we have, touch wood, we have had a phenomenal experience with our maternity leave and returners. They're all coming back. We've actually had 100% return, which is superb. Now, I'm not saying that we're magic or anything, but it does help, talk to them about the long term, appreciate that they will have different priorities, at different times in their lives. And they're more likely to come back, they're more likely to think actually, that's the place I want to return to, because they get me, they know me. And they will be flexible, and they're ready for me when I want to be promoted and moved up. And we do it, and they see it has happened time and time again. And some of our best leaders today, are people who went on maternity leave some time ago, returned and we partner with them.

Debbie F: Super. Claudia, are you seeing anything, either within your own company, or some of the employers that you're working with, that are dealing with this innovative way?

Claudia: It's really interesting actually, because I guess I've got a personal stance on this, because I actually returned from maternity leave about a year ago. So I'm going through that and being able to pick up where I left off, but also have the support of the organisation, was a really key part. And

being completely honest, coming up to having that conversation, I was really nervous about telling the organisation that I was pregnant, and that's just me being really honest. And what was amazing was to have support from the CEO, from all of the members of the business to say, we want to support you on this, and we want to make sure that we're creating an environment for you to be able to succeed and come back. I think what we're seeing, though, with a lot of the clients that we work with, is that companies that are really focused on diversity and inclusion and have a lot of senior role models within the business, who have children, and who encourage flexible working, is a really good way for people at the more junior levels, who are maybe thinking about having a family later down the line, to look ahead and think actually, you know what, that's okay. So having that example and role models further up in the organisation, is something I think is really important, and especially within large organisations, Debbie, to your point, I think there are a lot more of those role models, in smaller organisations, sometimes there aren't as many of those role models. So I think it's important, in an organisation which is maybe smaller, to make sure we're open and having that conversation and being clear that it is supported. So that it's not a welcome surprise when it happens, if that makes sense.

Shilpa: But just picking up on your point, Claudia, I think it's really important. We haven't touched on storytelling, and storytelling is so important in this space as well. And we offer shared enhanced paternity and parental leave, for a range of different situations. So I know lots of male colleagues who've taken the extra time, so in addition to the maternity side of things, because my oldest is 16, and I attended the programme that we had back then, that's continued to evolve in supporting transitioning, at that time, it was mothers coming back, but now the transition is for working parents. But really sharing the stories that are out there, of people who've done it, will encourage more people to think about doing that. And then when they return, we also have support dedicated for returning to work parents as well. So using those stories, is great. And I think Debbie also made a point around when they're ready to come back from maternity leave. So I love it when I hear the stories of people who were promoted whilst on maternity leave. And we need to share more of those stories to know that this can happen.

Debbie F: Super. Okay. Let's think about this. It's said that people leave their bosses, rather than their jobs. Middle managers are key in this process. What do our leaders need from our organisations, in order to make sure that women, other underrepresented groups, aren't leaving? Due to them? What can we do?

David: I guess that's the biggest challenge, that there's senior leaders that get it. And talking about that, authentically to your teams, so that they get it, they understand, is absolutely crucially important. We found here the last few years, that putting everyone through unconscious bias training, but actually getting the conversations richer about it, getting engagement survey results into them. So they can see where they are, relative to their peers. And it's a relentless battle, because I've got a bunch of superb technical engineering managers, who just don't think of this as important as it is. And trying to convey that down, it's a massive challenge. So I think that just looking at the quality of the management, unless we're having, sometimes the better managers, who are less engineering savvy, to manage people, and I think about that and in two tracks. I think it is really important because, certainly for us, the biggest retention has been challenges that have been around poor management and people not being listened to, not having a voice, not feeling included and stuff. So I think it really is a number one issue for us.

Debbie F: And, David, I think you touched on something, that we often skirt around sometimes within tech, when we're talking about tech roles. At the moment, promotion structures mean that quite often, the more senior I become as an engineer, the more skilled, the more I will then combine that with people management, and those are two very different skills, and to expect them to have



that, and we need to think about, what can we train and compensate and help them to develop. Or where that's not possible, how are we tackling in other things, where people management skills, but I think there is something, particularly within tech, that we would feel, but in any profession, but we need to look and think, what do our managers need? And maybe it is accountability, as some of you have been saying, and that is about the targets and the accountability. Yes, it is around creating those spaces where we can talk about it and win them on board. But also, we maybe need to really understand what does management mean? And what are we asking of managers, and are we putting the right people, in the right chairs, to do the right things in that respect. And I think we have to be pragmatic in that perspective, as well.

Claudia: We see that a lot as well within Futureproof. Because a lot of the people coming into businesses or going into junior positions, they'll be managed a lot of the time by first time managers, so maybe senior engineers, who have got to a certain point in their career, and now are starting to step into management roles for the first time. And as you rightly say, the skills to be an engineer and the skills to be a manager are two very different skills. And a lot of the time organisations don't necessarily provide the training, in order to get people into first time management roles. So as part of our support programme for Futureproof, that's one of the things that we do, is actually work with the managers, to help them with support of how to get the best out of their talent and make sure that they've got that feedback loop, so that it's not all on them to actually work it out on their own, because it is a very different skill set. That's really interesting, I think.

Debbie F: And I think that's powerful in what you're talking about Claudia. Because quite often, I wholeheartedly believe a vital part of this is going to be the coaching, the mentoring, the speed dates, all of these sorts of things. But it is not just for the underrepresented people to fix themselves. We need to go to the other side of the process, to make sure, how are we debiasing our processes, how are we creating accountability, how are we creating the training and support and taking people with us, because this is what needs to change, more than the people on the other side of the desk. There's a lot of discussions around, and I think we need to look at, yes, there is a tremendous issue around the confidence of people, to put themselves into leadership and management. But culture can shape confidence, and our managers shape that culture. So we really need to think about what we're changing in that respect. Here's an interesting one. If you had to pick a single hero policy, that is a must have for retention, what would it be? Now Shilpa, that troubles you to start, that you choose one, I can be generous and let you choose two. But if I'm looking across my piece, and I can only start putting one in tomorrow, what would that be, Shilpa I know it's breaking your heart. But what would that be?

Shilpa: It really is, because as I've said, there is no silver bullet, there is no one right answer. And I think context is key in this situation. So it depends on where your organisation is, what are the priorities? So is it around retention? Is it around attraction? Where exactly, and this is where we go back to the point about collecting the data, is the challenge, where are you leaking? Is it there's a particular cohort on return to work parents, for example. So I think it's really difficult, because you would choose that policy, based on your particular organization's challenges. And at that specific point in time, because obviously, as you go through your journey, your priorities will change, and therefore, so too, with your policies. I think, for me, just because it's quite recent and new and different, and thinking much more broadly, from an inclusion perspective, I do really love this idea of not having to take the bank holidays, that are traditionally from the Christian calendar, for those who don't typically celebrate on those days, to be able to have that flexibility. And speaking of flexibility, not having any diktats around when we need to be in the office. So every single one of our employees is treated in exactly the same way. Everyone has the choice and flexibility. So if I had to pick, and it's going to break my heart, because there are so many things that need to happen, I would go with those.

Debbie F: Super. What about the rest of you?

Debbie I: I wouldn't call it a policy, but I would say, have a mirror to hand, it's been incredibly useful for so many things. So every year, hold that mirror up to every manager at every level and say, this is what you did, use that data, use the facts, how many people left your organisation in the past 12 months? And have a talk about that. Why did they leave? When they disappeared, was it to do with management, was it to do with the company, personal, but actually hold them accountable and hold up the mirror and say, this is you, you're the leader in this group, let's talk about why they left. And then if you can understand the reasons why people were leaving, you can then start to plug the gap and fix things very, very specifically. But hold everyone accountable. Use that data, give them their goals.

Debbie F: And Debbie, yeah. Because too often, we see things like inclusion, is the responsibility of someone else, or the hiring, that idea of, but I like it's combining, to some degree, Shilpa, with what you were saying, there is the data and accountability, but then have the conversation. Because the conversation can understand where problems are, and it also helps us know how much we need to bring people on the journey with us. Lopa, I don't want to leave you out. We can't see you, but I do still know you're there. Is there a policy, is there a policy or issue, that you would say, you just couldn't do without, in terms of leadership and progression?

Lopa: It's kind of linked to the last question as well, around recognising that some people aren't good leaders. And that's okay. So having the right career framework around, to allow those people that are more technical, and don't give them things that they're not very good at, or actually quite uncomfortable doing, and rewarding them for being down that path. And then also rewarding those that are more leadership and people focused, to help with that retention. And I think with that, so it's not really, it is a policy, it's a career framework of some description, but I think it goes through both questions. It's recognising the skillsets of the people, and not penalising them, if they're not good at one particular thing. It's recognising for what they're good for. And I think that enables, if they want flexible working, then that's the policy that works for them. If it's around wellness and mindfulness, and if they want a gym pod, if they want a gym membership for their wellness days, then that's the one for them. So I agree, completely Shilpa. But it can never just be one silver bullet, because it's just so different, depending on the person that you're bringing them to the organisation.

Debbie F: Thank you, David.

David: Yeah. I've got one that I definitely couldn't do without, around retention. And that is parties. For a tech team, we have a lot of parties, that thank people, make them realise the role that they play, in the in the wider purpose and difference that they make. We don't feel special, to get to meet other people. And just taking time to have those inclusive events, where they can collaborate. Me, colleagues, especially in this hybrid working environment as well, it is really, really important. Because actually, it's people that make a place. And so I think, for me, I couldn't imagine running a team here, without some great inclusive parties.

Debbie F: Fantastic. Claudia, what do you think? What are you seeing either, within your organisation or with the companies that you work with?

Claudia: I think it's actually a mix of everything that everyone's already said, in terms of the things which are working really well, I think it's always about where it works well, what we've seen is that, when people feel like they have a voice, or that they can be comfortable in an environment, regardless of seniority, without hierarchy, that actually, that means that people are much more able to be able to progress, and also that peace around communication and understanding what

progression looks like for them, where they want to be, and then having a clear personal development plan, or career roadmap, so that they can see what the next steps might look like. And to that point about not everyone will move into management. I think a lot of the career roadmaps that exist, are very geared towards when you get to a certain point, you move into a management role, but actually giving different paths, we've done it within our recruitment business, giving different paths to people that maybe don't want to manage, but actually can still progress into senior roles, within the organisation, without having to take that initial path to be able to grow into different roles. It takes a lot of thought, and active thought, but thought without communication, doesn't lead anywhere as well. So it's about mixing the two, having all of the pieces in place, to make sure that people can progress in a certain way, but also being able to communicate those, so that everyone knows what the different paths are, so that they can succeed as well.

Debbie F: And I think that links into some of the things that we heard earlier from Debbie, what David's talking about, as well. Starting small, and having those conversations, and listening to people for what's missing, and build from there, and try and experiment in that sort of respect. I mean, thinking of experimentation. We've talked a lot about what's working, what we think works. Are there anything that any of you are working on, that isn't fully formed, but there's an interesting, I know David, you and I touched on it, but I'll give everyone else a chance to think as well. Is there something within your organisation, that you starting in a small way, to look at, and I'd love it if we broaden this out to think about, not just thinking about women into leadership, because if all we do is get a lot of white middle class women to pivot, if everyone in leadership as women, looked like me, then we've got it wrong. So this is thinking more broadly, more in the round. But David, you started taking another thing, what's the project you're working on the side, to see if that makes a difference?

David: We're working on a concept called a shadow board, which is basically to take a diversity of people, and get them to think about the same issues and same agenda that the senior leadership team will be thinking about, and giving them the same materials, and then getting them to think through how they might approach it. And that might be, topics like, how do we recruit and retain the best? How do we deal with onboarding six new international countries in the next two years requisitions? Just giving them the same challenges, but seeing how a different group, a younger group, potentially, different ethnic mixes, different role levels, seeing how they would tackle it and give them support through that. And then that gives them exposure to management information, gives them exposure to constant challenges, that I now realise as well, that it's not as easy as you think it is. That's what we're working on, as a sort of a pilot scheme, to see if it works. Without giving away too much confidential information, I suppose that that's the best balance. But I'm really excited about that, just to see if it works.

Debbie F: I love that, because on both sides, in the same way that we've been saying about the reverse mentoring, the coaching, etc. There's a genuine value exchange going on, isn't there, because this is, one giving people that chance to network, or learn, or benefit. But then we learn, because we're getting the benefit of that different thinking from us, in that respect. Who else has something else that they're playing with, in some sort of a sandbox way, within their organisation? Anyone ideas?

Lopa: Hi, it's Lopa again. So one of the things we're looking at is our middle layer of consultants, in technology, around developing them. And that is, again, it's not just focused on women, it's focused on, a finding that we discovered, is that there's a real skills gap, regarding progression, whether it's to be a lead or a partner, or is it in the technical area. And so something we're trying with, and it's hot off the presses, and not everyone really knows we're doing it yet, but here we go, I'll just say what we're doing. We're going to be launching a scheme for technology consulting, for our middle

levels of development, because grads get loads of development, partners get loads of development, but sometimes we forget about that middle layer. And so that's going to be looking at all sorts of different skills. And that will help develop them into what they want to be, not necessarily want to force them into, what they want to do. Business skills, technical skills, all sorts of things.

Debbie F: And that sort of echoes something, that David you were talking about earlier as well, this working in other areas, and that skilling, etc. So it's again, it's not creating a single pathway to a single management role. It's actually thinking and letting them explore different areas. What about the rest of you, other interesting ideas.

Shilpa: Not necessarily in a sandbox, because it's something we've done in the past, but I thought it would be helpful to share. So I think, Debbie, when we spoke, I was sharing that actually, for us, technology is now permeated across our organisation. And we are structured slightly differently. So we don't have just a technology unit, technology is everywhere. And to that point a few years ago, for everyone in the organisation, to help everybody upskill in tech, because tech is the way forward for everybody. We run a programme called tech savvy. And I think, as new people join the organisation, just helping everybody, regardless of the industry or area that you work in, help everybody understand how technology can benefit our clients, our people, our societies, through that learning journey. Because I think we've touched on the themes that, actually this is all a continuous learning journey. So if you've got that mindset and you're happy to learn, whether you work as a coder, or a business analyst, or a tester, or somebody in strategy, if everybody comes together and learns together and learns from each other, the untapped potential and unlimited potential to what can be achieved.

Debbie F: Right, and I love and that links into the research we heard before. Now we're nearly out of time, and I always promise to let everybody go on time. So Claudia and Debbie, do you want to give me a really quite tight little idea of something you're playing with?

Claudia: Yeah, of course. So one of the things we're trialling is, so we've got mental programmes for the students and associates coming through our programme. But we're looking at, not just skill sets and mentoring, matching people based on skill sets, but also trying to bring in the diversity piece. We've got, for example, 43% of the people on our course are female, but they might not have female role models within their organisation. So we're trying to match them with people who look and sound like them, as well as the skill sets, and see how that can actually help with things like confidence and people's development, and feeling like they have a role model, even though it might not be in the place where they're actually working, on a day to day basis. So that's something that we're trialling with some of our existing clients and partners, where they're interested in being mentors, for next generation coming through.

Debbie F: And that's a super idea to think about, if I'm a small company, where I don't have those role models, that's super. Last but not least, my other Debbie.

Debbie I: Right. So really quickly, I was going to share impact networks, which is basically a global concept that we run at HP, where we have groups of people from underrepresented groups, around the world, they connect in local, if you like, it's like a university society set up, where they're like minded, they could be from an underrepresented group themselves, or they could be an ally. So it encourages everybody in every level, dissipate with a common goal if you like. And we in the UK, we have combined with Ireland, to create a number of impact networks, in the last two years. It's gone really, really well. It's voluntary, so the employees themselves come forward and say, is there a group that does this. And if there isn't we say, there isn't, but would you like to? And with our support, they then go forward with ideas, they share experiences, they basically partner with the business, but something that really helped it all take off was last year, a year ago, we created what

we're calling the DEI executive board. And that means literally, the top execs in the UK, have a regular meeting, with the chairs of each of these impact networks. And we talk to them, we listen to them, we partner on ideas, they hear each other, they cross pollinate their ideas. So we've got pride, we've got multiracial, we've got women, we've got next generation. And it's just gone stratospheric, it's so exciting, that there are so many common targets, if you like, and all these ideas are going backwards and forwards. And crucially, they've got executive sponsorship, they've got executive support, they've got the networking, the visibility. So for me, it's very, very much do something, don't just talk theoretically, do something, try it, keep going. And this particular concept is something we're incredibly proud of, because it really has gone stratospheric.

Debbie F: Lovely. Listen, so many things that I think people can take away. I really appreciate it. I want to keep hearing from you. We had a challenge thrown down yesterday, by Jacqueline de Rojas. She didn't want to see getting women into leadership and management, number nine on the list of top strategies, she wanted to see that in the top few of the piece. So I hope that you've had a chance, and thank you so much for being a wonderful panel. We could do this all day. Take care.

Debbie I: Thank you.

Claudia: Thank you.

Debbie F: Okay, so remember, I'm gonna let you go on time. That's always my promise to you. This is the end of our day two working lunch. I hope you found some things that you could pick up and you could put to work in your job today, tomorrow and going beyond. What should be happening right now is, in your inbox, if this is your last session, and why would it be your last session? You could still join me for an afternoon cuppa. But if it is, I understand. There's a survey, I promise you it takes less than five minutes. All you have to do is choose which face, are you the happy face, are you the grumpy face? And then if you want to give us a comment on what you liked or didn't like, please, if you haven't done so before, tell us what mattered to you, on social media. So we know how to frame things going forward. Listen, if you were sitting on this call, and you were thinking, come on remote and hybrid, I have loads of things these people weren't sharing, or leadership and management, how to get a broader talent pool. We need you. Every two months, our team puts together hackathon teams, people from across the sector, who come to work together as a virtual team to gather all that best practice. If you have that best practice. We need you on our hackathon team. We'll send out information about that. But keep checking in with us. We're going to be looking at things like, how increasing your leadership and management, hybrid working, create a inclusive culture for neurodiversity, and how to use data systems, to really energise what's happening within recruitment. If you have that expertise, come join one of our hackathon teams. Not much less to do today. So what we will have this afternoon, later this evening, for our afternoon cuppa will be two more important topics, alternate routes into tech. You heard at the start of the session where the minister was talking about this, is about skills. This is about a lot of people who've been displaced from work, or found that their sector is no longer sustainable. And who wants to get into tech. And I know everybody on this call is desperate to get more people into tech. One of the ways that you can do that, is to find out more about alternative routes into tech. Secondly, we've seen a lot from your questions that there's a lot of appetite to learn more, what can we do on social mobility, neurodiversity, disability, LGBTQ plus, those things that too often feel like the invisible lenses, things that employers haven't leaned into yet. Well we're going to be talking about that, in our afternoon cuppa this afternoon, and I hope you can join us for that. And last but not least, we want to carry on this conversation. If you are part of the Tech Talent Charter, we've got a survey coming out soon, in a few weeks to hear about our overall work. What do we need to do more of, less of, we have drop-in sessions. We have our open playbook. We have our annual report. You don't have to reinvent the wheel, we've heard again and again on the panel. We all agree, there's nothing new. What we're

discovering, what we're realising, is all the pieces of the puzzle that we need are here. It has to be customised to you. There's no magic bullet, but everything you need, the whole of that toolkit is available for you for free. If you're a member of the Tech Talent Charter, we'd love to have you join, we have sessions where you can just drop in, ask me some questions about that means, it's painless. You give us data once a year. And then you're in here, in the tent, as we say. I preach to the choir, I make no apologies, because everyone in this tent wants to be the best at being an inclusive and diverse employer of tech. It's been a full day. I will see you hopefully in two hours. Thank you very much for joining us, goodbye.