

# WOMEN IN TECH

Celebrating the achievements  
and expertise of women working  
in the technology industry.

**TUBBLOG**

THE HUB FOR MSPs



# WOMEN IN TECH

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Thank you, Lyndsay Faria and team at Barracuda for being so awesome.

[Check out the Barracuda special offer for TubbTalk listeners!](#)



## WELCOME

# INTRODUCTION

I've worked in the Information Technology (IT) industry all my life, and throughout that time, I have frequently had the opportunity to work with some of the most amazing women.

In my early days in corporate IT, I learned from incredible ladies working in the service desk, project management, network administration and IT trainer roles.

Later, when I built and sold my own Managed Service Provider (MSP) business, I noticed that there were conspicuously fewer women within the MSP community. Indeed, it's probably fair to say that the MSP industry has acquired a reputation for being male-dominated.

In my opinion, that needs to change.

Any MSP owner will tell you how difficult it is to recruit and retain good quality staff -- yet ask any girl or woman about pursuing a career in IT, and very few will be interested.

We need to reverse the trend and address the perception of our industry as being male-focused. I hope that this e-book helps spark some conversations about how we can make that change.

It was my honour to interview the amazing women you're about to hear from.

By reading highlights from these conversations (and listening to the accompanying podcast episodes), I hope that everyone, but especially IT business owners, will learn what makes these ladies tick, and how their stories can inspire change to encourage more girls and women into this wonderfully rewarding industry.

**RICHARD TUBB**  
THE IT BUSINESS GROWTH EXPERT





## Baroness Elizabeth Berridge

Baroness Elizabeth Berridge is the Minister for Women and Equalities for the UK within the Department of International Trade. She's also a Minister in the Department for Education.

*"If more women founded businesses, Baroness Berridge says, "It would add around £250bn to the economy. And adding women to men-only boards improves productivity."*

### How to Encourage More Women to Join the Tech Industry

If more women founded businesses, Baroness Berridge says, "It would add around £250bn to the economy. And adding women to men-only boards improves productivity."

Employers need to make their roles more attractive to women and to encourage a diversity of backgrounds and experiences. Research into behavioural insights for job vacancies found that advertising flexible working led to more female applicants. Take into account the differing needs of potential hires, too.

### How to Eliminate the Perception That STEM is Only for Boys

"I don't know where the perception that STEM is only for boys comes from. Every young person has a smartphone, so why wouldn't they want to know about the coding and developing behind it?"

*"I don't know where the perception that STEM is only for boys comes from. Every young person has a smartphone, so why wouldn't they want to know about the coding and developing behind it?"*

She's actively involved with the Diversity Champions Network which promotes apprenticeships, particularly to girls. There's been an increase of around a third in the number of girls taking STEM subjects.

The key is to overcome this notion that girls can't do maths, too. The government is developing specialist sixth form colleges which offer STEM, further maths and similar subjects. They are tasked with outreach to female pupils.

### How Apprenticeships can Encourage Young People into Technology

The newly introduced Skills and Post-19 Education Bill is designed to build on apprenticeships, and placing the employers at the heart of developing the new training and qualifications.

We need young people to understand that doing an apprenticeship and having technical qualifications is different to traditional A levels and university, but they're equally valid.

From 2025, there will also be new legislation on student loans. Everyone will be eligible to four years' entitlement, which will last a lifetime. They can be used across sectors, qualification type and level, so they're designed to be flexible.

### How Apprenticeships can Encourage Young People into Technology

Baroness Berridge has met some inspirational young women who've set up businesses or started apprenticeships. "I'm seeing more of a parity of esteem, and I want that to continue.

"Many young women from the 'left-behind areas' want better futures for themselves, and they're working hard to make that happen. I want them to inspire each other. It's an exciting time for women to get ahead, and technology plays a big part in that."

*"I'm seeing more of a parity of esteem, and I want that to continue."*

Baroness Berridge of The Vale of Catmose was appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the School System at the Department for Education and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Women) at the Department for International Trade on 14 February 2020. She was a Government Whip (Baroness in Waiting) from 29 July 2019 to 19 March 2020.



## Grace Marshall

Grace Marshall is a Productivity Ninja and award-winning author of four books, including the best-selling “How to be Really Productive”. She describes herself as naturally disorganised, but managed to start her business while raising two children. Now she shows people how she did it.

“Procrastination is a very human thing. We want to avoid things that are boring and scary. When we notice ourselves procrastinating, we can accept it as normal. And that takes the pressure off.”

### Why People Struggle to Get Things Done

“Procrastination is a very human thing. We want to avoid things that are boring and scary. When we notice ourselves procrastinating, we can accept it as normal. And that takes the pressure off.”

Worrying about something hard takes up a lot of headspace and weighs us down. We need to be curious rather than fearful. How can we break it down and accept that it's new and scary but not bad?

Sometimes when we feel like we're procrastinating or struggling, we think, “Am I in the wrong place? Maybe I shouldn't be doing this.” Actually, the opposite is true.

### How to Take a Step Back When You're Struggling

Grace describes three steps to shift your thinking. The first is to recognise you're struggling but you're trying

to fix it. Our primitive, 'lizard brains' try to protect us from threats by encouraging procrastination. We think in fight or flight mode – push through (fight) or avoid it (flight).

Next, get curious and start asking questions. This is a brilliant antidote to fear. What is the problem you're having – what do you think it is? Could it be something else – an opportunity rather than an obstacle?

Finally, stop looking for certainties. Move away from black and white thinking and look wider. What could your challenges mean for you that would be positive instead of negative? This lets us be more creative and innovative.

### How to Recognise Stress

When you're feeling fearful, it's easy to mistake that for an attack. Learning to notice those feelings will help you realise you're stressed and change how you respond to feelings of panic and uncertainty.

When we change our perception of what's going on and how we feel, we change how we experience it and what we do in response. We can start to recognise stress in others; to be compassionate and support them.

### Why High Achievers put too Much Pressure on Themselves

Sometimes we can use productivity to beat ourselves up. High achievers sometimes put a lot of their identity in achieving and don't know who they are if they're not doing well.

We don't allow ourselves to not be the expert or the space to learn something new. We fear not having the answers, but we need leaders to be willing to say they don't know.

### The Importance of Rest and Rhythm

Grace uses the term 'work/life rhythm' rather than 'work/life balance.' “Balance always feels like accounting; if one is balanced the other isn't. But rhythm is like a dance, a mix of fast and slow.”

Work never ends, so you have to put in your own finish lines. Technology enables us to be 24/7, but human beings can't do that. Recognise that you're at your best when you're rested.

Don't just keep pushing through, because it's not sustainable. You'll end up ground down and can't see the bigger picture. Taking time to rest means you come back with more brain power and capacity for work.

“Grace uses the term ‘work/life rhythm’ rather than ‘work/life balance.’ “Balance always feels like accounting; if one is balanced the other isn't. But rhythm is like a dance, a mix of fast and slow.”

Grace Marshall is known for her “refreshingly human” approach to productivity.

She is Head Coach and Chief Encourager at GraceMarshall.com, Productivity Ninja with Think Productive, one of the world's leading productivity training companies and her book “How to be REALLY productive” was named Best Commuter's Read in the CMI / British Library 2017 Management Book of the Year Awards.

Author of: “Struggle: the surprising truth, beauty and opportunity hidden in life's sh\*ttier moments.”



## Olesia Klevchuk

Olesia Klevchuk is the Principal Product Marketing Manager for Email Security at Barracuda Networks. Barracuda are a cybersecurity company, providing security solutions for organisations all over the world.

*“Threats are harder to detect than they were before, and Olesia says “Barracuda spots around 97% of attacks before they happen. Some technologies are incredibly accurate at detecting high-volume attacks from a bad IP or with a malicious payload.”*

### Where Cybercriminals Focus to Exploit Email Vulnerabilities

In recent years, hackers have focused on social engineering tactics which are very successful. They carefully craft emails that look genuine, and to block them requires a sophisticated tool.

AI and machine learning recognise patterns of communication within the organisation and then identifies anomalous emails. But, Olesia says, detection isn't enough, because one day the email gets through. Then, you need a quick response to the attack.

### How to Help MSPs Detect Threats

Threats are harder to detect than they were before, and Olesia says Barracuda spots around 97% of attacks before they happen. Some technologies are incredibly accurate at detecting high-volume attacks from a bad IP or with a malicious payload.

*“Hackers aren't going anywhere; they're just getting smarter. And the use of machine learning is fascinating. The space is evolving around us, there's a lot to do and being in security feels like you're fighting the bad guys.”*

The personalised emails are harder to spot, because hackers are sending them from genuine Gmail accounts with no link or attachment. The email is therefore not flagged as malicious, and the hacker uses it to gain access to a network.

### The Mistakes MSPs Make with Keeping Their Clients Safe

It's important to remember that what used to keep your clients safe might not work anymore. Don't just stop at threat prevention; prepare for the 1% that get through. You need a gateway, but you also need to educate your clients on staying safe.

Have a security awareness programme in place, and help clients to be proactive about reporting suspicious emails. And, have a security plan in place with a data backup and restore process if the worst happens. Minimise the damage.

### How to Protect Clients Against Ransomware

Ransomware attacks have been devastating over the past 12 months because they've grown in complexity. Furthermore, the criminals aren't just asking for \$1,000; they're asking for millions.

Hackers know that emails are scanned for links, attachments and other things that look suspicious. So, they now ask the victim for their credentials. They use a multi-step approach to gain access to the organisation.

The first step for MSPs is to make sure the emails are protected, and then to secure applications. Many SMBs use Office 365, which can be vulnerable. M365 only backs up data for 30 days, and then you have no protection. A third-party solution like Barracuda's is recommended.

### Why Olesia Chose a Career in Tech

“Technology is always changing. There's always something new to learn, to do. It's all around us. And I believe that everyone needs some form of security.”

“Hackers aren't going anywhere; they're just getting smarter. And the use of machine learning is fascinating. The space is evolving around us, there's a lot to do and being in security feels like you're fighting the bad guys.”

Olesia Klevchuk is a Principal Product Marketing Manager for email security at Barracuda Networks. In her role, she focuses on defining how organizations can protect themselves against advanced email threats, spear phishing and account takeover. Prior to Barracuda Olesia worked in email security, brand protection and IT research.





## Vera Tucci

Vera Tucci is the co-founder and CEO of T-Consulting, an MSP and COMIT. They provide co-managed IT support to SMBs without an internal IT department and larger companies looking to improve their teams.

“Your clients aren’t technical people – if they were, they wouldn’t need your help. Keep them in the loop and speak their language. The IT side isn’t important to them, but the consequences of a breach is.”

### What a COMIT Does

Vera explains that T-Consulting is an MSP and a COMIT – providing co-managed IT support. Her husband’s idea was for a business that would look after its clients through using an automated tool and charge per month.

They focused on companies without an internal IT department, which was the norm in their local area. Now, they also support larger companies to make their IT team stronger and more secure and to boost overall security.

### Vera’s TEDx Talk

Vera gave a TEDx talk in 2019, sharing the story of her attempt at setting up a side business. The new business was completely different to T-Consulting, and wasn’t a success. Vera took this harder than she’d expected.

In 2018, she had a frank conversation with her Airbnb host in New York. Vera explained what had happened,

and the host said: “What you’re going through is hard, but you’ll get through it. And then you’ll share your story to inspire and reassure other women. Failure is a learning experience.”

By chance, Vera came across an ad for TEDx speakers in Italy. She submitted her application, was accepted and told her story onstage. She thought she was doing it to fulfil an ambition, but at the end she was thanked by a young woman. Vera’s talk had resonated with her and taken the shame out of failure.

### How IT Companies can Keep Clients Safe from Cybersecurity Hacks

The key is to never stop educating your clients. MSPs should make that a focal point of their business. Threats are changing daily, and your clients need to understand that.

Your clients aren’t technical people – if they were, they wouldn’t need your help. Keep them in the loop and speak their language. The IT side isn’t important to them, but the consequences of a breach is.

When people don’t understand something, they feel that it doesn’t apply to them. They’re reluctant to ask questions. That’s why you need to make them aware of the risks they face.

### What MSPs Shouldn’t do in Cybersecurity

Vera says: “We need to stop selling technology and sell solutions. They don’t need to understand the tool we’ve bought, only how it can help them.” As an MSP, your job is to integrate that tool for your client and keep them safe.

Sometimes we find a solution that’s better than the one we’re already using, and it can be hard to explain to the client why they should switch to the new tool. Explain the benefit of using it, and focus on creating an offer you can sell as a service.

“The key is to never stop educating your clients. MSPs should make that a focal point of their business. Threats are changing daily, and your clients need to understand that.”

“We need to stop selling technology and sell solutions. They don’t need to understand the tool we’ve bought, only how it can help them.” As an MSP, your job is to integrate that tool for your client and keep them safe.”

Vera graduated in Political Science, sure that she would have become a social worker. After finishing college, though, she took the chance of co-founding T-Consulting, a Managed Service Provider that focuses on Cybersecurity and Business Continuity. Today, she is the COO of her company after years spent building each department from scratch.

Vera is a TedX speaker, a member of the EMEA advisory board of one of the biggest cybersecurity companies globally, and a teacher.



## Jennifer Bleam

Jennifer Bleam is the founder of MSP Sales Revolution. She works with a small number of MSPs to 'scale the cybersecurity mountain'. She helps them with pricing, packaging and a go-to market strategy. This includes sales and marketing, time management and financials.

“MSPs often assume their clients wouldn't buy something because the tool is too expensive. Or they can't see how it would help them. Don't make the buying decision for them and think they don't want what you offer.”

### Why Using a Framework Makes it Easier to Talk Cybersecurity with Clients

There are so many tools out there that it's hard to explain them to your clients. MSP owners can't talk about AI or algorithms. Clients only care about the results they get from using a tool.

Jennifer encourages her coaching clients to use a framework to explain the importance of cybersecurity. Both the UK's NCSC (National Cyber Security Centre) and the US version - NIST (National Institute of Science and Technology) set out a framework.

So, when you talk to a client, make it clear that the government requires them to be compliant with the framework. In order to do that, they need your help. This gives you credibility and overcomes objections. You're selling something that's a legal requirement for their business.

### MSP Assumptions That Need Challenging

Jennifer says that MSPs often assume their clients wouldn't buy something because the tool is too expensive. Or they can't see how it would help them. Don't make the buying decision for them and think they don't want what you offer.

Another common misconception is that MSPs think their clients are already aware that cybersecurity is a big deal. So if they want support with it, they'd ask. Most small business owners aren't. That's why you need to sell it to them, and use a framework to help.

### Jennifer's Tips for Successful MSP Marketing

Many MSP owners say they're bad at marketing. But the challenge is that somebody has to do it. As the owner, don't just hire a marketing manager and leave them to find leads. You need to understand marketing basics at least.

It's fine to outsource what you're not good at, but know the outcome you want to achieve. Have KPIs and enable the marketing manager to get the right results so you hit your business goals.

Jennifer's one piece of advice is to select a tactic or strategy and plan to execute on that consistently for a minimum of 6 - 12 months. Results don't happen overnight. You'll start to see a change within three months. And a tangible result after six months. By 12 months you'll see it's really working.

### Using Video and Webinars in Your Marketing Strategy

Jennifer says video is the tool to use because people love to consume content that way. She explains that there is a difference between videos and webinars: video is evergreen content. It could be a short educational piece to answer a question. Use it at the top of the funnel.

“Webinars are for the middle or bottom of the funnel. People are a little more educated and looking for a solution.” A good way to do a webinar is to get two or three other people in your industry together. Then, talk about a topic that's important to viewers. They learn and they can ask questions.

“Webinars are for the middle or bottom of the funnel. People are a little more educated and looking for a solution.” A good way to do a webinar is to get two or three other people in your industry together. Then, talk about a topic that's important to viewers. They learn and they can ask questions.”

Jennifer Bleam is an award-winning speaker and a respected leader in the IT channel. She has coached nearly 1,000 MSPs on marketing and sales best practices, based on her real-life success as an MSP business owner. Jennifer also grew a channel-only cybersecurity software firm from start up to acquisition in less than 2 years. Part of her role included coaching MSPs on how to sell cybersecurity to small and medium sized companies. Jennifer trained with Sandler Training and attended CharTec Sales lab. She founded MSP Sales Revolution to help MSPs master the art of cybersecurity sales quickly, easily, and profitably.





## Maggie Philbin OBE

Maggie Philbin, OBE, has worked in radio and television for over 30 years on a wide range of science, medical and technology programmes.

In 2008, she co-founded TeenTech, an award-winning organisation which works across the UK to help young people prepare for a fast-changing future.

“5G has the potential to be a game-changer in so many industries. For instance, if you play games but you only do it at home plugged in, 5G has such low latency that everything speeds up. And lots of people can do things at the same time.”

### How Young People View IT

Many young people don't know a lot about IT, and so their enthusiasm varies. If they know someone who works in tech, they have a better idea about what might be possible for them.

Maggie adds that once they do know about the opportunities available, there's no stopping them. They become really enthusiastic because they see it's an important area. And they see that they could do something and make a difference.

### How Business Owners can Encourage Young Women into the IT Industry

Maggie thinks the majority of businesses don't set out to exclude women. There is a retention issue, though. And the higher up the organisation you go, the fewer women there are. Sometimes there's a culture of promoting men, too.

When you're advertising for a role, make it clear you're flexible around childcare and so on. Some roles require specific skills that take years to acquire. But most don't, so let people learn on the job. Does one person really need to do lots of tasks?

### What Maggie Finds Exciting in the Tech Space

“5G has the potential to be a game-changer in so many industries. For instance, if you play games but you only do it at home plugged in. 5G has such low latency that everything speeds up. And lots of people can do things at the same time.”

Another example Maggie gives is the music industry, which has a very heavy carbon footprint. With technology, you could have a gig in your local pub. The bass player is there in person but the singer is in Mexico. These things are a real possibility.

“When it comes to tech, it's not about the widgets; it's about the people. They're all trying to solve problems. Until I did Tomorrow's World, I hadn't realised how many problems existed.”

### Why Maggie was Attracted to a Career in Tech

When it comes to tech, it's not about the widgets; it's about the people. They're all trying to solve problems. “Until I did Tomorrow's World, I hadn't realised how many problems existed.

“People had seemingly wacky inventions that were actually really needed. One guy had a light-up fishing rod. Because you can't see your rod in the dark! The innovation and tenacity of these inventors was so inspiring.”

In June 2016 Maggie Philbin was voted most influential woman in UK IT by Computer Weekly and also named 2016 Digital Leader of the Year. She was awarded an OBE in Jan 2017 for her work to promote careers in STEM and the Creative Industries. In July 2017 she received the Tech4Good Special Award..

She is patron of the Council for Professors and Heads of Computing and has been awarded ten honorary degrees and fellowships for her work.

### TeenTech Charity

TeenTech help young people understand opportunities in contemporary industry, no matter what their gender or social background. Their engaging, sharply focussed initiatives reach students aged 8-19 and are carefully planned to involve teachers and parents as they are the main influencers in career decisions. Over 300 companies and 40 UK universities work with TeenTech helping deliver their exciting programmes to students across the UK. More info : [maggie.philbin@teentech.com](mailto:maggie.philbin@teentech.com)





## Diana Giles

Diana Giles is the president and owner of Skyline IT. She's also the founder of Sensible Cyber Parenting, a free resource website to help parents protect their children online.

*"It's hard trying to be in several places at once. I have to see if an issue really needs fixed or if it can wait. And having an outsourced helpdesk makes a difference. I can respond quickly to people even if I'm tied up with other work."*

### The Challenges of Being a One-Man Band

Diana says the most challenging thing is when she needs to be in several places at once. She adds that she strives to provide good service, so sometimes she rushes to get work done that isn't that urgent for the client.

"It's hard trying to be in several places at once. I have to see if an issue really needs fixed or if it can wait. And having an outsourced helpdesk makes a difference. I can respond quickly to people even if I'm tied up with other work."

### How Diana Spots Potential Clients Who Aren't a Good Fit

Many MSPs will write someone off immediately if they mention price straight away. However, Diana says if that's their only focus it's a red flag. "And another one is if they have really outdated technology."

"They're not interested in upgrading. They just want to manage with what they've got. Limping along with unsupported operating systems is bad for them and for you. It's better if they know they need help to upgrade."

### The Most Challenging Part of Running an MSP

Like many MSP owners, Diana admits that sales are hard. She got plenty of referrals but she wasn't as busy as she wanted to be. And she didn't do any marketing, but things ticked over.

Most SMBS are loyal to their IT support person until something goes wrong and they need someone else. But getting people to switch provider is hard. The other challenge is security. "Especially now, because we're all thinking about it all the time."

### Being a Female MSP Owner in a Male-Dominated Space

Diana is often the only woman in the room when she goes to events. However, she says that has never been a problem. When she started in the industry in the 90s, she was hired by a woman. And half of her colleagues were women too.

"There don't seem to be many women business owners around. But I'm not sure what the solution is. Because I don't think they're being left out intentionally. So maybe they aren't interested in the industry."

"It would be good to have more women around. I think I have more patience in some situations. But asserting authority is easier for men. We all have different strengths that we bring to the table."

### Being a Mother and Running a Successful MSP

Diana has always managed to juggle being a mother and a business owner. But she admits there were times she had to take the kids with her. Or drop them at her husband's office.

She did most of her work when the children were at school, but her plan was to build a lifestyle business. So she was as busy as she wanted to be. "But there were still times when I was pulled in different directions. And the kids did their homework in customers' offices sometimes!"

*"It would be good to have more women around. I think I have more patience in some situations. But asserting authority is easier for men. We all have different strengths that we bring to the table."*

Diana Giles is the President and owner of Skyline IT Management, originally established as The Computer Monkey, LLC in 2004. She truly enjoys helping small businesses improve and secure their operations through the proper use of modern technology.

Early on, Diana realized she enjoyed being the go-to tech person in the office more than her regular job, so she left to pursue an entry-level tech support position with Teleflora. She eventually travelled to some of the largest florists in the country doing installation and training. Requests for technology services continued after Diana left work to stay home with her kids, so The Computer Monkey began.

Diana has a bachelor's degree in business and master's degree in Telecommunications Management from Oklahoma State University. She is also the founder of Sensible Cyber Parenting, a free resource website to help parents protect their children online.



## Nancy Sabino

**Nancy Sabino is the VP of Sales and Marketing for Syntek Solutions. They're an integrated, outsourced IT department in Texas. Previously, Nancy was CEO of SabinoCompTech, which recently merged with Syntek Solutions.**

**“The balance of work and home sometimes is non-existent. The kids help a lot to remind us that we have a life outside of work. It's difficult, but we do manage to have time where we don't talk about work. It's hard but definitely doable.”**

### **Why Nancy Focused on Compliance Strategy for Her Clients**

SabinoCompTech was based in Houston, where there are lots of private health care organisations. In the US, they have to follow HIPAA guidelines regarding data sharing.

Nancy realised that there wasn't a lot of support to help those businesses stay compliant. So, they built a platform to do that. As well as healthcare providers, accounting and law firms also have to be HIPAA compliant. They helped with the tech and carrying out security risk assessments.

### **The Best and Worst Parts of Running an MSP**

Nancy says the best bit is the people she meets and works with. As a teenager, she was an early adopter of the latest tech and interested in the user experience. She now brings that into her own business to ensure customers get a great tech experience.

She also admits that people can be the worst part of the job, too. “Business owners don't always prioritise tech. They don't keep things updated. So, it's something I try to educate our customers on consistently. Otherwise, it's frustrating.”

### **What it's Like Working with Your Husband**

Nancy and her husband, Angel, have been together since high school and set up their first business when they were quite young. She says they've had to learn to work together and be a team.

“The balance of work and home sometimes is non-existent. The kids help a lot to remind us that we have a life outside of work. It's difficult, but we do manage to have time where we don't talk about work. It's hard but definitely doable.”

### **Why Nancy Thinks Branding is Important for MSPs**

Nancy says people often think of branding as a logo and company colours, which of course is part of it. But she feels it's really the soul of the business. If you get it wrong, your business won't come across right.

It's an unspoken language between every aspect of your company and how it comes across to your customers. And then you add the pretty bits on top, which is what we usually think branding is.”

### **Encouraging More Girls into Tech**

When she started in the tech industry, Nancy felt intimidated. Imposter syndrome made her feel like an outsider. But she was soon part of supportive communities, and there are a lot of women in the space now, who help each other.

**“When she started in the tech industry, Nancy felt intimidated. Imposter syndrome made her feel like an outsider. But she was soon part of supportive communities, and there are a lot of women in the space now, who help each other.”**

Nancy Sabino is VP of Sales and Marketing for Syntek Solutions, a Texas-based MSP and Host of the Business + Tech = Success Podcast. Nancy co-founded a break-fix shop at the age of 22 which she successfully transitioned to an award-winning MSP in 2016 before being acquired in 2021. Nancy is a alumni of the Goldman Sachs 10K Small Business Program, selected as a Champion for the C200 advancing women grant, and has been recognized for her DE&I advocacy in the Channel.

Nancy is passionate about business, marketing, diversity, equality, tattoos and inspiring others to dream big and be an example to other girls that with hard work, dedication and the right resources, they can be successful. Nancy is married to her high school sweetheart and has raised 2 kids while building their businesses.





## Amanda Stewart

**Amanda Stewart is the managing director of Edinburgh-based MSP Illuminate, which supports local businesses and charities and has a strong focus on prioritising customer service.**

**She started the business when her daughter was six months old to give herself the flexibility her employer wouldn't. It's a lifestyle business so she can be available for her kids.**

**“The people who come and ask for a price list and aren't interested in what the tech can do for them aren't right.”**

### How Amanda Spots Clients That Aren't a Good Fit

Client satisfaction is a priority for Amanda, and she works with people who see their IT systems as important for their business. In 14 years, Illuminate has only parted ways with five clients.

Amanda explains that she's careful to choose clients whose ethos matches hers. “The people who come and ask for a price list and aren't interested in what the tech can do for them aren't right.”

Also anyone who's negative about their previous IT support or fell out with them is a flag. It makes me think that the complaints aren't down to the other company.”

### How to Talk about Cybersecurity with Clients

Amanda says it's a challenge to talk about cybersecurity without scaring clients. “They often switch off, so it's hard to make them aware of the issues.” However, she adds that she's worked with a number of people who have been hacked.

They come to Illuminate for help to make their systems more secure. Amanda explains the minimum requirements to keep them safe, and talks them through additional tools she recommends.

“I know they often have budget issues, so I work with them to see what's affordable. But you need a good relationship with them, because otherwise they think you're just trying to sell to them. Education is the most important thing to stop cyber.”

**“Sometimes salespeople come into the business and speak to the men about tech, assuming I'm sales or HR. Sexism still happens, but many men are conscious that it's an issue, and are trying hard for it not to be anymore.”**

### The Culture of Customer Service Within Illuminate

Customer service is important to Amanda, and she hires engineers based on how they'll interact with clients. “Technical skills can be learned, but the soft skills are more important.”

Amanda makes sure the engineers communicate clearly and consistently with clients. She encourages them to put themselves in the customer's shoes, imagine how they feel, and to keep them in the loop.

### Being a Woman in a Male-Dominated Industry

In her early days in the industry, Amanda did get comments, but she says it doesn't happen as much anymore, or she just doesn't notice!

“Sometimes salespeople come into the business and speak to the men about tech, assuming I'm sales or HR. Sexism still happens, but many men are conscious that it's an issue, and are trying hard for it not to be anymore.”

### How Amanda Juggles Being a Mother and a Business Owner

Illuminate was founded to give Amanda flexible working, and she's always been able to be there for her kids.

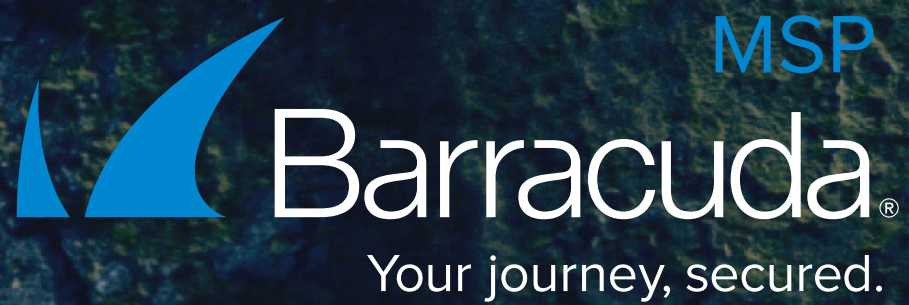
“It's difficult. Women never think they're doing it right. They either think they're failing at being a mother or they're failing at running a business.”

Juggling work and family commitments is stressful. “My wish is for women to stop making so many demands of themselves. I want my daughter to know that things have to give and that's ok.”

**Amanda Stewart has worked in IT for 30 years. She has worked in the accountancy and legal industry as IT Manager, before moving into the MSP sphere in the early 2000's. When her first child was 6 months old, she started up Illuminate, as she spotted a local gap in the market for quality IT for the SME. The business has grown organically since then.**

**Despite leading a team of 6 women IT professionals back in the 90's, she has seldom come across many women when interviewing for new staff, and is passionate in getting girls interested from primary school age. She recently was voted 'highly commended' in Comptia Advancing Women in Technology' award.**





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