



"GROWTH AND COMFORT DO NOT COEXIST" - GINNI ROMETTY

When interviewing for IBM I themed my presentation on the quote above, as it related to my career journey so well.

All throughout school I was adamant that my pathway would lead me to become a Pharmacist. The reality hit in Sixth Form when I realised that Science really just wasn't for me. I'm the kind of person who likes to have it all planned out, so being thrown off the tracks left me feeling very confused and lost about what I wanted to do. Throughout my entire time at school the one thing I was certain of was the career I wanted, but now I had to start all over again from scratch (melodramatic I know, but the pressure we put on ourselves and students can also be incredibly overwhelming and relatable).

Now please wish me good luck in trying to explain to my Middle Eastern family that going to university to study Pharmacy was now looking unlikely. How on earth was I supposed to explain to my Kurdish grandma that I was no longer going to zanko (Kurdish for university), but instead wanted to start working...

That's when I then found myself entering the world of apprenticeships. There seems to be a strange stigma around apprenticeships that you either choose the pathway because you are unable to get into university, or because you want to go into a more practical type of career. When it's then explained that with an apprenticeship you are gaining the same university degree (sometimes even from the same university you would have applied to), with the added benefits of extending your network and being able to attain the experience you otherwise would have missed out on, it seems a no brainer as to which one I would prefer to choose.

I chose the Junior Management Consultancy apprenticeship at IBM because I wanted to work for a company that's dedicated to creating innovations that matter for the world, and those that I'm personally passionate about too!

Joining from my previous role as a Private Client Legal Advisor within the Wills, Trusts and Estate planning sector, I was ready for my next challenge, reminding myself that growth and comfort do not coexist.

The saying "if you find a job you love you'll never work again" meant changing sector and finding something that I was really passionate about. Another common misconception is that you have to be technical to work for a tech company, let alone one that is ranked #1 in the Computer Services category in Forbes. However, with my legal and business background I was able to develop on my skills in different roles from Defect Management to Project Management (being in a technical space without being technical).

I knew that the Tech sector would be challenging, especially with less than 2% of the sector being from BAME backgrounds and reports showcasing BAME workforces receiving 13% less with a bonus gap of 35.4%.

At the end of last year I was appointed Foundation BAME Co-Lead for the first ever Foundation BAME Community at IBM. 3 months into the role I was then asked to step into the role of leading the Minority Ethnic Campaign for the wider business across UK&I. Campaigns such as these enable our voices to be heard and actions to be taken to reach a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

The issues faced in tech doesn't stop with tech companies, but spans across the entire sector, which is why I was so passionate about supporting the Shuri Network in the endeavours to support women of colour in digital health. Whilst 20% of the NHS workforce is BAME and 77% are women, there are less than 10 women of colour in senior digital leadership roles across 233 trusts - reinstating the importance of this fantastic network that I have the delectation to be a part of.
