

Zurich's Brettell shares her story to inspire inclusion



Amy Brettell

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Indicative reading time: **3 minutes**

Ahead of International Women's Day on Friday (8 March), Amy Brettell, managing director at Zurich Municipal, shares who inspires her to overcome imposter syndrome and work towards a more inclusive insurance industry.

While I have been inspired by many people throughout my 17-year career in insurance, my real inspiratio

n started much closer to home.

Mum was the main breadwinner in our house when I was growing up, as Dad has severe epilepsy and was unable to work.

Mum spent an incredible 50 years in the NHS, so while she didn't inspire me to pursue a career in insurance, I grew up in



a house where there was no gender bias, which definitely shaped how I thought about work.

Despite Dad's epilepsy, his outlook on life, resilience and positivity inspired and continues to inspire me hugely.

Although he couldn't work, he gave back in other ways, whether it was volunteering for charities, helping in schools, or organising play groups in the community.

He always wants to 'put good' into the world, which is why I feel passionately about leaving the world in a better place than I found it.

Growing up, I was always told that I can be anything I want to be, and this has helped me believe in myself and make bold career choices.

Industry inspiration

When I joined the industry it was definitely male dominated, certainly at a leadership level, but over the years this has started to change.

It has become more inclusive, and not only are we seeing more women in the board room, we're seeing people of all different backgrounds leading businesses as well – it's great to see and is a trend that must continue.

I worked with someone who was the only woman on the executive team. Not only was she intelligent and politically astute, she was a phenomenal leader and very well-respected by her peers. It was empowering to see a woman navigating what was then very much a man's world and made me think that I could do the same one day.



Early on in my career this wasn't the case, but I was lucky enough to work closely with a couple of very inspirational women.

For instance, I worked with someone who was the only woman on the executive team. Not only was she intelligent and politically astute, she was a phenomenal leader and very well-respected by her peers.

More importantly, it was empowering to see a woman navigating what was then very much a man's world and made me think that I could do the same one day.

I've also seen amazing women ignite change within the industry. They have tackled uncomfortable and important topics, such as gender bias and diversity, head on.

They used their connections and positions to bring people together and make the industry more inclusive and more attractive to diverse talent.

However, it's not just women or people within senior positions who have inspired me. One particular man left an undeniable mark on me.

Not only did he ooze authenticity and went out of his way to find a connection with the people he worked with. He was also outstanding at giving feedback and a natural coach. He gave me confidence to be myself and showed me the power of authentic leadership.

Next generation

Imposter syndrome can be really limiting to someone's career, and it's generally understood that women are more likely to experience this than men (although I've spoken to plenty of men who feel this too). When I started my career I assumed that senior people were just naturally great at everything.

However, this couldn't be further from the truth. I was really lucky in my early years to see "behind the curtain" and to witness first hand all the practice, hard work and the number of failures that go in to making something seem easy.

I can now also personally attest to this. I want people to see me make and learn from mistakes or know that I practice a speech in front of

my dog before delivering it to the wider business.

I also believe that being able to see someone that you identify with in a leadership role helps give people the confidence to do it too. That's why I believe in being authentic and sharing our stories and experiences.

I hope this helps inspire people to be more open and build genuine connections in their careers.

Understanding that we are all constantly learning and from different backgrounds also helps create an environment where different ideas and experiences are celebrated, and in turn that means we have the best possible chance of tackling any challenges we face.

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