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Speaker 1: Tech Reimagined, redefining the relationship between people and technology. Brought to you by Endava. This is Tech Reimagined.

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Bradley Howard: Hello and welcome back to Tech Reimagined, Endava's podcast. I'm Bradley Howard and I'm very pleased to welcome you to the latest episode of our show. In season three, we now look at how technology is influencing the fabric of our society, the way we work, the way we live, and the way that we do business. Stay tuned on every popular podcast platform to listen to our subject matter experts this season. And speaking of subject matter experts, today we have the pleasure of hosting Helen Pownall, engineering program director at Sportradar. Hi Helen. It's lovely to have you here today. Would you like to give a bit of a background into yourself?

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Helen Pownall: Yeah, sure. Thank you first of all for having invited me onto the podcast. It's great to have an opportunity to go through this and talk about women in technology as well. So I'm the engineering program director for Sportradar, and as part of that, as part of evolving that, I kind of arrived at Sportradar three odd years ago, nearly four years ago, three and a half years ago. And there were no women in technology groups at Sportradar at the time. And so I've, at the end of last year, me and a group of like-minded women set one up. So yeah, that's a little bit about me.
 In terms of what I do when I'm not setting up women in technology groups, essentially I look after the program delivery and the agile coaches and the integration teams as well as an operational excellence piece which focuses on ways of working and KPIs.

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Bradley Howard: Well, welcome to the show and thanks so much for joining us today. Can you give us a couple of minutes on what Sportradar does please?

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Helen Pownall: Yeah, sure. So Sportradar works to enhance the way that people engage with sport in any capacity. So we collect data, we collect media, we analyze the data and process it to provide products and services relating to the full spectrum of engagement with sport. And that's using its broadest term. So whether you're betting or whether you're playing sport, coaching sport or whether you're watching sport or whether you care about the integrity of sport because that's the other aspect of what we do. Sportradar has a product or service which can underpin all of those interactions.

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Bradley Howard: Fascinating. So was there a particular turning point in your career that led you to work where you are now?

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Helen Pownall: Yes. I was working in a great place and then I got a tap on the shoulder from my current boss who said, " Right, I want you to work for me." And he'd just taken up the role of CTO Sportradar. And of course being a C plus two is quite a big step.

That was the moment really where I thought, " Well, I've got to give it a go. Why not give it a shot?" And then coming to Sportradar and being given the opportunities but also putting your hand up for stuff. The stuff that you get stuck into that's not necessarily part of your remit is something that defines you as well as a leader.

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Bradley Howard: That is such a consistent answer to lots of other senior people we have on the show who just say putting your hand up, taking that step forward, offering yourself is one of the key turning points in many people's career. It's very interesting. Being proactive, definitely. And do you have a particular role model or several role models?

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Helen Pownall: I had to think about this one really hard actually, because a lot of the time when you see some people going and kind of acing it just in your everyday life, you think, " Gosh," but in terms of people who are out there in the public eye, I would say Serena Williams for me and JK Rowling I think really kind of act as a great role model because they are unashamedly doing what they feel passionately about and they don't give up and they're not afraid to be controversial and not to conform to stereotypes.

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Bradley Howard: So have you ever mentored anyone and do you have any advice for young people on how to choose a mentor and then cultivate that relationship?

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Helen Pownall: I've not formally mentored anyone as part of a program. I applied but I never got a match. But I do encourage the junior members of my team to put in skip one- to- ones with me and a skip one- to- one is just a one- to- one which has skipped a level so they can tell me about what's going on directly and so I can learn about what their challenges are firsthand.
 And in terms of choosing a mentor, a great piece of advice I heard the other day was to go and have coffee with somebody first so that you can make sure that there's a bit of connection there before you start out on that mentoring. Because it's an investment. It's an investment from both parties, so you need to make sure that there's a connection there and it's going to work out well.
 And the other piece of advice is that there's a time limit to these things, so don't feel like it has to go on forever. And it might be useful to talk about when to conclude so that you don't have to get into awkward conversations later on like a " Oh, it's not me, it's you" kind of situation. So there's the tips I would say if you are going into a mentoring relationship

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Bradley Howard: Within Sportradar, do you always keep mentors within the company or do you sometimes have mentors outside of Sportradar?

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Helen Pownall: So we are starting to embark on a mentoring program and because Sportradar, we've got three and a half thousand employees, we do have enough breadth if you like to actually keep things within Sportradar and still have enough sort of a gap, an air gap between the mentor and the mentee so that we don't have any worries about people getting there inside the same division and all this kind of stuff. We're also exploring the option to go in with other companies for particular circumstances. But normally within Sportradar the plan is to include it and just have it within Sportradar.

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Bradley Howard: Today we're going to be taking a closer look at the gender gap in technology and issues that arise from it. I just want to start off this episode with an important and yet still underdressed issue and that is women's representation, especially in IT. So apparently only 5% of leadership positions in the UK technology sector are held by women and that's really not great when roughly 25% of the UK's tech workforce is made up of women in the first place. So Helen, how do we address this? How can we improve it?

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Helen Pownall: Gosh, I think first of all you need to start with education in terms of each individual, at an individual level, people need to understand what are the barriers to performance which exist. So for example, self- efficacy, so unconscious bias, the impact of being in a minority and what that does in any circumstances. And once you've got the education, once you've got the awareness, that can then promote action and behavior change.
 From a state perspective, there is the need to make sure that everyone is educated and given the same opportunities within the system. We need to understand the importance of role models like teachers, and also we need to make sure that, from a state perspective, we do need to make sure that there are simple things like affordable childcare. So from my perspective, in the UK it's really expensive and this is a practical thing which the state can do, which will make it much more affordable for people with children to work.
 And from a private company perspective, actually there is a business imperative to increase diversity in the workforce. It's actually one of those things where it creates a stronger outcome if you have a diverse range of thoughts and perspectives when you go through the process of creating a product. So it's not only something that we must do because it's good and it's useful for the people who are struggling, but actually you need to do it because it's actually good for your business. So there's lots of different things that we can focus on.

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Bradley Howard: In the companies that you've worked for and had other dealings with, have you seen any particular initiatives that you think particularly stand out, that have been particularly well received?

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Helen Pownall: Well, I think most of the, just talking from my personal experience at Sportradar and I think the women in technology initiatives that we started, and it's only less than... It's less than a year old already, but it's actually been so well received across Sportradar and you realize that actually there's such an appetite for initiatives like this and we've already been able to start another. Somebody else has been able to start another, a pride group at Sportradar and it's just opened up the door to so many different conversations.
 So any diversity and inclusion initiatives, I think it's a double bubble because not only do you help the people that you are targeting, but you are also helping, indirectly you're helping the company to actually make sure that it's holding up a mirror to itself. And that then opens up the doors to actually a much more robust and interesting conversations about actually what the company needs to do.

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Bradley Howard: And do you look at other companies and think, " You know what, I really like that initiative. Maybe we'll adopt part of it for Sportradar" or " That's some really good best practice."

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Helen Pownall: Yes, we're always doing forays into other companies to see what they're up to. And I think one of the interesting things was a conversation I had with Steph from Endava, and when you understand that actually we're all trying to do the same thing, we're all trying to achieve the same outcome, it's a really productive place to be.
 So yes, we're always sharing our thoughts and our perspectives about what works for us and it's very much a two- way street. So we're very interested and actively pursuing the mentoring program. And one of the key things that we learned was when we heard about the way in which Endava did it, it gave us a lot of really great ideas about what the benefits were and also how to go about tackling it for the first time. Because obviously there's quite a lot of logistics to think about. So we're looking at that for next year.

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Bradley Howard: So to be really clear, I wasn't asking for a plug.

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Helen Pownall: No.

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Bradley Howard: Okay. But I'm always interested to hear from senior leaders like yourself who you see as aspirational companies across the industry for certain particular aspects, in this case around gender equality.

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Helen Pownall: There are quite a few actually out there. We work with a company called Grace and they run a whole bunch of graduate programs, mainly within the UK. So you'll have a graduate and you'll bring them into the company, they'll give the graduate the training, but they'll also sort of, the graduate will learn about your company. They have exceptional statistics in terms of their diversity, in terms of the ethnicities, in terms of off the charts, 41% plus in terms of their gender balance and all this kind of stuff. So they're doing something right.
 It's slim pickings though in terms of other companies out there. And it's a shame, isn't it, because you often see it's around the sort of 15 to 20% mark and then there's a big drop off at the senior levels as you've already mentioned.

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Bradley Howard: And moving onto another angle around mental health. So only 43% of women who were surveyed in the 2022 report feel comfortable taking mental health challenges in the workplace. 44% of those say that they get adequate support from their employer when it comes to mental health, and 33% have had to take time off for mental health reasons, which seems really high to me. Do you find the same kind of sizing inside Sportradar?

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Helen Pownall: Well, one of the key things at the moment about Sportradar is, especially with the Women in Technology initiative, what we've learned is that getting hold of the data and being able to get hold of these kinds of numbers is exceptionally difficult. So I don't know is the short answer. I don't know whether the numbers would align in

Sportradar with what the figures you've just quoted. We do have, within Sportradar, we have employee assistance programs, we have all sorts of bits and pieces that would hopefully help. And obviously since the pandemic, I think a lot of companies do now recognize the need to do much more in terms of those kind of holistic aspects to support the employee. We now have people coming in to do wellness checks and bits and pieces, which are a little part of the health program, but getting those numbers and getting the data is not easy.

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Bradley Howard: Helen, thank you so much for sharing these valuable insights with us today. It's such a great industry and some of these points are quite difficult subjects. To all of our listeners, thank you for joining us today. We look forward to doing so next week. If you enjoyed today's episode, then please share it with your colleagues, your friends, and your family. Until next time, I'm Bradley Howard and this has been Tech Reimagined.