

Women in Tech: Changing the Data Landscape

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BRADLEY HOWARD, ENDAVA HOST (BH): Hello, everyone, and welcome back to the latest episode of our podcast, Tech Reimagined. We're now in season two, where it's all about answering the most burning questions related to the way that technology is influencing our personal and business life. We have a very special guest joining us today, Inma Martinez. Hello, Inma, how are you?

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INMACULADA MARTINEZ, DIGITAL PIONEER AND AI SCIENTIST (IM): I'm really well, Bradley.

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BH: Excellent. Well, can you start us off by giving us a bit of a background, please?

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IM: Well, I think the highlight of my career was to have the opportunity to develop the early technologies of the mobile internet. So I'm considered a pioneer of mobile technologies. And then I continued in all the digitalization of industries like music and video streaming and connected cars and smart cities. And I am an AI scientist and I have built a lot of AI in the world.

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BH: Well, welcome to the show and thank you so much for joining us.

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IM: Thank you.

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BH: Let's start by talking about the data landscape, and for those of us that don't really know the ins and outs of data, can you give us an expert's view of what the data landscape is?

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IM: I like to tell the story that humankind has been gathering data since the Bronze Age. This is not new, you know, 4000 years ago, we're making records in stones and writing how people should sell straw baskets to each other in Mesopotamia. So data has been the fuel of everything. It's only that later we put it in floppy disks and then in pen drives and now it's up in the cloud. But the information has been kind of like the ignition for all of our progress to know what's going on to understand reality. This is kind of like what created the sciences. You know - that. So data is part of who we are as a civilization. And because we're entering the digital future now, everything is digital. So data is evolving alongside ourselves as well.

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BH: And now that we have so many more sensors, billions of sensors around, how has that further evolved that data landscape?

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IM: Well, when people started talking about Internet of Things, it was a very magical thing. It was this narrative that you have to kind of explain what is the Internet of Things where you put some sensors in some weather stations in your balcony and then you can share the data with everybody else on this platform? You know, you remember that platform, don't you. And then, you know, you put sensors in a room and you know how the temperature is changing, et cetera. But today we are

living a super jump into the future because it's not just about the sensors and the weather and whatnot, it's every object around us. Every plant, every animal. Anything that has a sensor is able to share with us the potentiality of our information. Now we know so many more things that really were invisible to us, and that is a position of power, that is a position of opportunity. So what seemed like a cute little gimmick twenty years ago, now is a reality that everybody's trying to leverage from in terms of products and services, in terms of strategies, in terms of, you know, how you are more competitive.

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BH: So do you think that data and technology and maybe even business as well, do you think they're all completely intertwined and interdependent on themselves?

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IM: Yeah, because data has always been a fundamental value point for businesses. You know, I remember in banking, I was a trader many years ago and it's like, information is king. If you know something, go and put a position out there in the stock market, and then if you move into management, you know, data information is what allows you to make decisions and to create strategies, and you know, know exactly what should be done. So data in itself or information - data is basically the shape of information, it's what you know now is the tool, the fuel that we use to create everything - services, products, strategies, improvements, optimizations, et cetera.

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BH: So do you think that there's already been a data revolution or do you think one of the next big things will be around that massive data revolution?

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IM: There is a before and after in digital data. In the early days of the internet, like before 2010, well, data - yeah, there was a lot of data, but not in the vast amounts of, you know, 2012. There was a super hike simply because the whole world woke up and thought, we need to digitize our businesses and then the amount of data that came into the world was exponential, was triple its self and growing exponentially. So data was more than big. It was like an ocean of data that we had created, like this super snowball effect. And now data is really something that we treat in different ways. We now normalize data. We now don't store certain data. We just let it go by. It has no value for us. We label it, we classify it, we store it. We put it through algorithms - and data has become a product. I think that this is the revolution, data as a product. You heard it here first people!

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BH: Going back to your point before about, we didn't use to keep so much data, but now we do. Isn't it also about the cost of storing data, it's just plummeted down, so it's almost free to store that data.

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IM: Yeah. Well, this is like what happened to hardware back in 2000. I remember when I was in a start up, my I.T. budget had to be a million pounds because I had to just hire servers. I remember I was begging Sun Microsystems, believe me. Can we be a partner and give us a discount? Everything was so expensive. And then obviously cloud came and it was cheap as chips. And now it's not just the storage. You want to have some AI there. So it's getting cheaper and more affordable, but also, you know, with so many more features.

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BH: Yeah. Moving topic a little bit. What does it mean for you to be recognized as one of the top women changing the landscape of data?

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IM: Well, first of all, I had no idea when the nomination came out. Somebody sent me an email and said 'have you read this?', and I'm like, 'What?' It made me happy. I got into this industry because I love it so much, and somehow to be recognised with incredibly clever women around the world and the fact that our work was recognised was the world to me. So, yeah, I mean, it didn't put any more pressure. I was just happy that finally something that I was doing for 20 years kind of was recognised, yeah.

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BH: How do you feel about being the top recognized woman? Do you think that in 10, 20, 30 years, we'll even have different gender awards, for example?

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IM: I don't like the gender thing because I always worked in a world of men. First in banking and then in telecoms, and I cannot get on with the program because somehow technology is a meritocracy. If you're very good, everybody was going to see it, that you're very good and there's two camps - do you want to continue being close to the products and building products, and building products? Or do you want to go into management? Management has nothing to do with technology. Management could be about a shoe factory. So people think, 'Oh, there's not enough women in tech.'

Well, no, there are women in tech. It's only that many of them don't want to go into the management role because it just absorbs your entire life and you have no life at all. It's a huge decision that you need to take if you want to go that path or not. But, for example, in AI, there's a lot of women. In fact, when I have put teams together to work in projects and there's a lot of women that study neurophysiology, like how the brain works and in neuroscience, you use a lot of algos for a lot of things. So if you're putting teams together, I always wanted neurophysiologists in my team. They have like this funny abstract, and there's lots of women there. So I think the whole debacle about women, do they like tech or not? It's not, it's not that. I have many girlfriends that studied architecture and engineering, and it's not about that. It's about the lifestyle. And I think that start-ups have a lot to do when it comes to the lifestyle that they offer to people. Do you want to work 12 hours and eat pizza and Coca-Cola? Actually, women have better things to do with their time. You know, no – the answer is no. So I think we need to start, you know, nurturing the talent based on the type of life people want to build. But yeah, it's my opinion.

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BH: For young women starting out in a technology based career. What would be your main piece of advice?

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IM: Don't be afraid to ask the hard questions, because you really want to understand why they want you to build what they said that you need to do. Never assume, never assume, ask. Always try to hire the best people - even better than yourself. That's probably been the best thing. Hire the best people that you can.

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BH: Yeah, I hope my team are listening when I say that I've tried doing that as well, so. Well Inma, thank you so much for joining us. You've been so inspiring today, thank you so much. To all of our listeners. Thank you for tuning in today. Don't forget to like, share and subscribe to our Tech Reimagined podcast. Or if you'd like to contact us, please use the contact form on the Endava website at endava.com. Until next time, have a great week.