

Women in IT



Name:
Gillian Mowforth

Company:
Indez Ltd

Role:
Director

Background:
INDEZ, Scotland's longest established web company has created many of Scotland's most successful online businesses. Gill is a Director and Chief Financial Officer of the company. Gill is proud to be a motivational leader of the Indez team who together have achieved e-business supplier certification and won SMART, SPUR, WOW and Scottish Software Innovation awards. The company is based in the Sky Park complex in Glasgow.



Hi-Tech Scotland (HTS):
Describe your current role.

Gill Mowforth (GM): I'm co-owner and founder of Indez. My role involves a wide variety of tasks: I'm Chief Financial Officer of the company, so I handle all the invoices, payments, grant applications and so on; I also manage our Human Resources activity, including all recruitment matters. Most of our staff are project managers in their own right, so I basically oversee the overall running of the whole operation.

The co-founder of Indez is Dr. Peter Mowforth - I can imagine that working with a spouse would be a challenge for many couples but we find we can work very well together. Our core skills are different and employed in separate areas of the business, so we don't have much opportunity to stand on each other's toes!

HTS: When did you first become interested in technology as a career?

GM: I studied Maths and Statistics at Glasgow University and my first job after leaving gaining my degree was with Rolls Royce, working as a junior programmer. As you can imagine, it was a very male-dominated environment, but I found that I was treated well and got on with everyone. I soon became a section leader, managing a small team of five programmers, and things progressed from there. I spent a decade with Rolls Royce in total, then spent a few years working in IT consultancy and training roles, before forming and launching Indez in 1996.

HTS: Do you think that being a woman has ever been an advantage or disadvantage to you in your career?

GM: It's true that there's still a lack of prominent female role models in the technology business. At many of the conferences I attend, for example, women make up less than a few percent of the delegates. That said, personally, I've never felt intimidated by the male-dominated environment. I would say that I've always felt appreciated and respected within my field. The idea that the technology industry as a whole discriminates against females is out of date and,

these days, is mostly driven by the media I think.

HTS: So what can be done to encourage more women to consider careers in technology?

GM: Women's minds work differently from men and many young women tend to be more attracted to careers that involve an element of creativity. Men, on the other hand, tend to be more focused on logical tasks and problem-solving. As an industry insider, I know from experience that both of these mind-sets are extremely valuable to technology companies.

Women are natural multi-taskers, which again is a sought-after talent inside ICT due to the wide variety of tasks and functions you can be asked to perform, often simultaneously!

However, I think that, at the moment, it's far easier for young men to spot the opportunities that exist for them inside the technology business than it is for young women. So perhaps we should be doing more to market the wide variety of roles and talents that are required by the modern ICT industry.

It's also impossible to side-step the fact that women with families require a certain amount of flexibility in order to meet their work and domestic responsibilities, so, as a 21st century industry, we should be trying to lead the way in terms how we treat our working mothers.

HTS: What are the 'hot' topics or issues among your client base at the moment?

GM: Over the past twelve months, we've noticed a distinct shift in the behaviour of our customers. The projects customers are green-lighting no longer tend to be as sweeping as wholesale re-design of their websites but, rather, are tightly focused on improving the performance of their existing online resources, particularly in terms of generating sales. To use the housing market as a metaphor, people aren't looking for a new house right now - they're more likely to build an extension to their current home!

Most of our customers are concentrated on building a "call to action" into their websites: whether

that's in the form of a filling in a form, requesting a call-back from the company or actually completing a sale online. Over the years, we've discovered that converting online enquiries into online sales is a very subtle art. Often, small design elements on a site - changing a click-on button from one colour to another, for example - can be hugely influential to its success. Other more practical things, such as converting the cost of a sale into the online user's native currency, also have to be considered by customers focused on international markets.

People increasingly recognise that an online business requires just as much work and attention as an off-line business, requiring constant tweaks and continuous evolution. It's now beyond doubt that the Internet represents the future of commerce.

HTS: From your perspective, what sorts of technology or application are likely to be most important over the next 5 years?

GM: Again, it's all about the Internet. High street retailing will become less and less common, specialising in fewer areas than at present. Town centres will become based around social pursuits, with more restaurants and bars, I think. It'll be a gradual process, but it has started already with sales of things like books or airline tickets moving almost entirely online.

HTS: Do you have any remaining ambitions - career-based or otherwise?

GM: I'm at a stage in my career where I'm now confident in my abilities and comfortable with promoting myself and Indez to a wider audience, so I'd like to do more to promote technology careers for women. The current generation of teenagers are familiar with using technology in a way that we've never seen before - who knows what contribution female executives and female entrepreneurs could make to the ICT technology over the next 10 years? I'd like to play my part in helping them to find out.

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