Women in Business and Technology

Transcript of Episode 005 - Live from Microsoft Ignite!
Featuring: Dawn Conner, Tarah Wheeler

Summary: We are live from Microsoft Ignite, where we joined more than 20,000 IT professionals in Orlando Florida. In an interview with Information Security professional and author Tarah Wheeler, she gives us insight into her book, Women in Tech, and teases a few upcoming projects. We also get to hear from the force behind the Women in Business & Technology track at Microsoft Ignite, Dawn Conner. We wrap up the show with a discussion on the cultural sensitivity around name pronunciation.

Find audio and more information at Microsoft.com/WIBT

[MUSIC]

Recognize that your job is not your career.

Your life is more valuable than just a few people's opinions of you.

[MUSIC]

>> You are listening to the Women in Business and

Technology podcast from Microsoft.

In each episode, you will hear from women in amazing technology

and business roles, as well as male allies

who are helping make the industries more inclusive.

We are diving into programs that promote greater diversity in

the pipeline and bringing you tips on how to build

a successful career in a supportive community.

Welcome to Women in Business and Technology.

[MUSIC]

>> Welcome to episode five of the Women in Business and

Technology podcast.

I'm Colleen O'Brien.

>> And I'm Sonia Dara.

We're recording in Orlando, Florida, at Microsoft Ignite,

an innovative conference for IT professionals.

Nearly 20,000 people are here at the Orange County

Convention Center to get up to speed on technical trends and

to learn more about digitally transforming workplaces.

We're here on the expo floor, and the energy is palpable.

IT pros are connecting, learning about new products, and

grabbing some great swag.

>> Satya's keynote covered topics from mixed reality,

powered by HoloLens, to quantum computing,

which provided a pretty steep learning curve for

even this amazingly intelligent audience.

But I think it really speaks to the visionary growth

mindset culture that Satya has inspired both for Microsoft and

for our partners and customers.

>> Yeah, the quantum computing part got me a little stuck

as well.

[LAUGH] I was like, whoa.

>> I agree, yeah, so

we've seen key leaders at Microsoft revealing amazing

product news as well throughout the conference.

From new search experiences across Office with the new

Microsoft Graph to also even new versions of Microsoft 365.

>> Given all of the news and activity,

we've decided to do a special episode from Microsoft Ignite.

We'll kick off our Community Connect segment in the Woman in

Business and Technology lounge on site here at the conference.

And we'll chat with a few people who are hanging out or

networking in that space.

I then sit down with information security professional and

author Tarah Wheeler, who led one of the breakout sessions

here at the conference inspired by her new book, Women In Tech.

Finally, in our Cutting Edge segment,

we'll wrap up the show with a conversation about cultural

sensitivity around name pronunciation.

Let's get into it.

[MUSIC]

>> Community Connect, get involved and stay connected.

[MUSIC]

>> I'm just outside the Woman in Business and

Technology lounge at Microsoft Ignite.

And it's a beautiful space, with great seating,

relaxing music, and refreshments.

There's even a LinkedIn Rock your Profile booth here so

you can freshen up your online presence before diving into

networking with other people hanging out in this space.

This lounge is part of a larger track of women in business and

technology programming at the conference, which also includes

daily sessions with industry thought leaders.

We spoke with Dawn Connor, the force behind the Woman in

Business and Technology initiative at Microsoft Ignite,

to learn more about why she is so

interested in supporting our community.

>> It is important to me to provide awareness around

the challenges that females face in the workplace.

Having the opportunity to provide and educate content

that helps the community grow both personally and

professionally is something that is very close to my heart.

>> After catching up with Dawn, we spoke with Cara Radcliffe,

a conference attendee who was hanging out in the lounge.

>> For me, when I come to these,

this is not my first Ignite event.

There's still kind of an awkward staring as you kind of go

through, cuz there are so few women who do attend.

And in here, it's just quite a nice space.

It was really inspiring to hear about NASCAR yesterday in here,

kinda the different talks that were going.

And like I say, just it's quiet, it's calm, you have tea.

I've just come from the talk with Daymond John,

the women in tech luncheon from there, and

just kind of like talking to everyone.

Last year at Atlanta, I met some great friends.

I had great time at the Thursday night party with some

of the woman in tech people that I met.

So it's kind of like, let's see if I can try and

reproduce that this year.

>> I really enjoyed connecting with Cara and

many other women in the Women in Business and Technology lounge.

It was a great place for me to get some work done in between

conference sessions, to hear about women-centric initiatives,

and frankly, to build my network.

From my perspective,

the lounge is truly symbolic

of creating space for

women in the tech industry.

[MUSIC]

>> Thank you so much.

I'm excited to welcome you to our show today.

We have Tarah Wheeler with us, a scientist, information security

researcher, leader, and author of the book Women In Tech.

Tarah, thank you so much, and welcome.

We're here at Microsoft Ignite, where you just finished leading

a session on the Women in Business and

Technology track called Taking your Career to the Next Level.

For our listeners who weren't able to attend Ignite,

do you mind telling

a little bit about what you covered in your session?

>> Absolutely, and before I do that, Sonia, thank you so much.

It was an honor and a pleasure to be invited here.

And seeing so many women here, so determined and

so brilliant, was just quite an experience over lunch.

I'll tell you that right now.

So I am a lot of different things.

I write things and I hack things and I have cats.

[LAUGH] >> [LAUGH] Good company.

>> Yeah, exactly, and

a frequent flyer membership at Starbucks is what I do.

I was thrilled today to be able to talk to

apparently what was a room full of women.

And what we talked about today was

some of the barriers facing women in technology.

But really more as a side note to how exciting

a career in cyber security is for people everywhere.

Especially opening that door for women, who,

I think, often don't consider, even when going into technology,

the nature of information security and

how incredibly varied and brilliant and wonderful it is.

But we've calcified the career path to become a web

developer or a project manager.

But you can get into info sec from anywhere, art,

music, engineering, doesn't matter where.

>> There was one portion, someone had asked a question

talking about the pipeline issue, right?

>> Correct. >> And this is a loaded term,

almost, at this point, this pipeline issue.

Can you share a little bit more about that and

how you think we can resolve that, I guess?

>> Yeah, absolutely.

Well, the example that I gave was an example of millions

of girls and boys who early in their lives are all

in love with science and technology.

And who wouldn't be, because science and technology are cool.

>> Yeah. >> But here's the challenge.

You're looking right now at two female tech CEOs in the Fortune

500.

Now, here's the problem and the answer to that.

Which is that if we throw money, time, energy,

effort at increasing the number of girls who want to go into

a science and technology career.

And somehow, imagine we've got 10 million kids, half boys,

half girls.

And somehow, we magically,

through all of the work that we do, increase the number of

girls heading into that pipeline by 50%.

So we have 5 million boys and

7.5 million girls heading into the science and

technology career pipeline as they enter junior high,

high school, science and technology specialties.

At every place along that track, the number of girls who

are welcomed into the next part of that track is halved.

So at every single point in the pipeline,

half the number of girls continue as boys.

So if you start out with 7.5 million girls and 5 million

boys, even if we'd spent all that time pouring money,

resources, and time and energy into it.

You end up in college,

half as many girls go into a computer science major.

Then half as many girls complete.

The CS major, then half as many girls attempt that

prestigious internship afterwards.

Then half as many women end up in that first part of

their career and are discouraged away into outside technology.

And then half as many women end up in management.

Then half as many women end up in that

director level in a corporation, right?

And then comes the real hard part.

The point at which the real choice becomes apparent to women

around 33 to 38.

You are choosing in that moment how you're gonna treat

the rest of your life and the rest of you career.

Academia has a very analogy to this, too,

when it comes to things like tenure.

You end up with a drastic drop in the number of women

who are at the senior director and VP level and beyond.

And when you do all of that work and

you end up with twice as many, 50% as many,

twice as many girls going into the pipeline to begin with.

And you look at the result at the end of that pipeline.

You go from two Fortune 500 female tech CEOs to how many?

Three, right, so what are we really changing by dumping women

into leaky pipeline?

Absolutely nothing, the question is, how do we plug the leaks?

The answer involves awareness, mentorship, sponsorship, at

every single level the awareness that that's what happening.

And at every single level as you go up the chain,

that awareness decreases.

Elementary school teachers are perfectly well aware of the fact

that girls are being discouraged out of science and

technology careers.

There's a lot of CEOs out there who think actively that if you

are not able to get to that level, it's your own fault.

That there's not a systemic problem.

So it's time to really ask ourselves why not only do those

leaks exist, but why is it that at each level increasingly

we see people who think it's the woman's own fault for

not sticking around and putting up with it.

>> Wanted to take it back a little bit to Ignite.

And how do you think about industry conferences like

Microsoft Ignite contributing to career advancement for women?

>> I think that one of the most valuable things that you can do

is increase the sheer number of people that you reach out and

touch in social, and personal and professional networks.

And when I look at conferences like this one,

the first thing I see is there's systematized education

certification here in a way that there really isn't

in smaller conferences.

I live in a world of being at a lot of different information

security conferences.

And at the very small ones,

there's a wonderful tight family feel.

But often not the systematic certification and

education that specifically lets women prove

that they're good at what they do.

I have certificates behind my name right now, which I keep up

simply so I've got some extra letters behind my name, one or

two of which I'm super okay with.

But I strongly recommend that women continue education and

add those certifications.

Because it stops doors from closing on you.

When you are a woman trying to get into a position, and

you are up against multiple competitors.

And there's six men around and one woman.

And the men all have one or two certifications,

the woman has none.

We know what's gonna happen,

there's a justification there for not hiring the woman.

When you have one woman and six men.

And that woman is the only one with a CISSP, and

it's information security related?

What you've done there isn't, necessarily,

give the woman the job.

What you've done is given the ally behind doors

the justification to say,

this is the only woman who went that far.

What you're doing is you are opening the hands and

arming the people who are your allies behind closed doors.

And saying, look, she's spent more time,

she's got more work done.

She's more qualified than all of these other people who are in

this round.

You are arming your allies that you don't know you have when you

add certificates, training,

formal education as a woman in technology.

>> No, it's awesome, and your background,

your academic experience is very impressive.

For the listeners who might not know,

she has a BA in international relations at Carroll College,

a master's in political science, psychology,

and computational science from Portland State.

And some casual post doctoral work at

University of Washington.

So you can see that you have invested a lot in education.

So it sounds like this is advice for

women, if there's any more that you have to share about your

philosophy in an academic sense?

>> I think that one of the strongest things that we need to

recognize in technology is that this fight for

women at this certain senior level is happening in

many more fields than we acknowledge or realize.

This fight is happening, I would especially love to call out

academia and film and theater directing, right?

The reason for that is the examples are so clear cut.

It's so

blatantly clear in academia in the same way it is in technology

that at each level, half the number of women progress, right?

It's so clear in film and directing.

You see one or two women and they become the standard bearers

for their gender, instead of just simply people who are just

people failing or succeeding, right?

>> Right. >> We've made Patty Jenkins,

the director of Wonder Woman, some kind of feminist icon.

She may or may not be good at what she does.

But we need to stop putting the burden of being the success of

all femininity upon her shoulders.

Instead we need to start asking ourselves why is it that there's

only one female director at that level?

Now Gena Davis has been doing this kind of work, too.

And it's real fascinating to listen and see the crazy

parallels in film directing and senior levels of technology.

And the reason given is always the same.

Well because once you get to that level,

you gotta run a sturdy crew of guys.

And how are you gonna find a woman who can do that?

>> And that takes us to your book,

which I think- >> Wonderful.

>> Is helping open that conversation up.

Can you tell us more about your motivation to write

Women in Tech?

>> No one ever had, no one ever wrote a book on women and tech.

I mean they wrote a book on women and tech.

But nobody ever sort of just had the audacity to say,

I'm going to write the book on women and tech.

One of the challenges here is from the outside,

all statements, especially if you don't care about this issue,

or are not integrated into it.

All books look alike, right?

There's a lot of people out there who have written books on

kind of the women in tech problem.

But no one, other than I and the seven women that contributed to

this book, wrote a book by women technologists.

Not by people speculating on the field, not by people who were in

In non-technical positions inside technology.

You'll often find people in marketing, in tech companies,

doing stuff like this.

And respectfully,

every single person in this book is an engineer or a developer.

That is the difference here, right?

I'm not doing this as an artistic statement.

I'm not doing it as a marketing attempt.

I'm not doing it to, quote, raise awareness.

I'm doing it to actually get in one place

what it's like to be a woman in tech.

So the biggest challenge on that one usually

is that men don't read this book.

They don't read the book, in fact,

I have had people tweet me.

Men with 50,000 Twitter followers tweet me publicly and

say, is it okay if I read your book?

And I say, I don't understand the question.

And they say, well, it's for women in tech.

And I would say, it's about women in tech.

It's not for women in tech,

although it's certainly highly read by women.

It does more good when men read it.

Because then they're finding out what the actual situation

is like.

>> And I also noticed that you leveraged Kickstarter to

actually bring the book- >> I did.

>> To reality.

Can you explain your decision to crowdfund the project as

opposed to kind of the standard publishing channels?

>> Nobody thought that there was a market for it.

>> Wow.

>> Yeah.

>> The book also has a couple of chapters,

from everything from resumes, to job application advice, to

salary negotiation strategies, even personal branding guidance.

You mentioned this in your session today about gender

neutral avatars that women should use.

>> And let me clarify.

>> Yeah.

>> I said gender neutral avatars and handles when you're trying

to get into open source projects as a young, especially,

if you are a conventionally attractive woman,

you're gonna have, it's gonna be hell.

I mean, just flatly, it's gonna be hell.

Just don't do that,

because you need the knowledge that you can get there first.

And I come at this from a decade and

a half of spending time on open source forums.

And if I had a female avatar or nick, I spent more of my time

explaining that I knew what I was talking about.

Yes, thank you, I've read the manual.

I need help with this specific thing.

It's a timesaver and it sucks, but it's a hack.

Once you get to the point where you need to worry about personal

branding, then you handle the rest of it.

But the most important thing, especially entering the field,

just get the knowledge, get the contributions.

When you walk into an interview and

someone says have you ever contributed to this,

you show them.

The contributions you've made, right?

>> So you and your network obviously were

contributors of a major wealth of knowledge in the book.

>> Yeah.

>> I was hoping you could share something you learned

while writing the book.

>> One of the major things that I tell people is you

always learn more by teaching.

And I was trying to teach people what it was like to be

a woman in technology and get that information across.

I think the thing that I learned more than anything else through

the process of writing this book is that it's not the that women

need this information, it's that they need to read this book to

confirm to themselves that they're not insane.

No matter how many times someone else has told them they're

crazy, they're not, they're not alone, you're not alone.

We are not alone in this field.

The fact that someone found it necessary to aggregate

these experiences and write them down should prove to each of

the women and men who read this book that women who say

these things who express these experiences are not alone.

And I don't just mean anecdotes,

I mean statistically you're not alone.

It has happened before, and people have dealt with it and

people will continue to help.

>> Jumping into your,

you were talking about how you have a couple of new ventures.

You spent over 15 years in information security

at Red Queen Technologies.

What did that job entail, or does your job entail, and how

did you discover your passion for information security?

>> I've been a technology consultant for a long time and

I really have transitioned.

I have been doing and had been doing international

security through technology all the way through academia.

And I spent my time over the course of the time since I left

University of Michigan where I was doing PhD work and

complex systems in political science.

Really beginning to understand that

security is the oddball part of technology.

So Red Queen Technologies at one point was just my web

consultancy.

And now it has become the company that we do

cybersecurity research through.

Discussing the recent Equifax breach for instance.

I think there's an MRP story just came out a couple of days

ago that was sourced from me on that one.

To just really discuss what the nature of incident response at

InfoSec is like.

The passion that I have and

the passion that has really kind of come to the forefront

as I've done that work and as I've spent that time

at Red Queen at Symantec at Silent Circle.

The information security conferences and

companies that I've been at and

spoken at is that people don't do incident response very well.

And the real passion that I have is in that moment when we know

something's gone wrong but we don't know what it is.

And everyone starts to run around like a chicken with their

head cut off.

That seems to be the moment when I am best able to stand up and

say, alright, everybody take a deep breath and

pull out your paper and pencils.

And sometimes just that moment and getting people to stop for

a second and start real investigations,

real incident response, real security operations is the one

thing that someone needed that everyone needed someone to do.

And I've turned out to be good at that, really good at that.

And I love it.

There's larger lessons for all of technology in information

security, but that one moment seems to be a gift for me.

And that's where the passion for me comes from.

>> Back in May 2015, you founded Infosec Unlocked.

>> Correct. >> Which is a non-profit

organization that supports underrepresented groups

in information security to speak at conferences.

>> Yes. >> Can you talk to us a little

more about that?

Of course, I'm something of the benevolent overlady of

a Washington nonprofit called Information Security.

It's Infosec Unlocked.

And what we do is we match up attempted

first time speakers at infosec conferences with a mentor to

help them through the process of their first CFP and speaking.

There is a huge problem in, of course, all of technology but

especially in information security about a lack of women,

people of color, and

queer people on stage, really giving perspectives.

And it's not about just having boxes checked.

It's about the fact that we think differently if we've had

different life experiences, and

we are poor as an industry if we don't have those voices.

So we directly work with, especially people who say stuff

like, I've never spoke at an Infoset conference before.

And they get intimidated because they think that the first thing

they have to do is submit to like blackhat or deathcon.

No, no, no, no, no,

we want you to talk first at your local Infosec meet up.

You know in front of 20 people.

And this is the first way to do it.

And the next thing you're gonna do is you're gonna

submit to your local B sides, CFP.

Call for papers and proposals.

We walk them through that process and

then mentor them all the way through and then proceed,

you know, celebrate and throw them balloons and

gifts on twitter when they get all the way through it and they.

Inevitably come back and say, my God it was awful and

we say yeah but everybody loved it and you got through it, and

next time you're gonna be better at it.

I was terrible my first time on stage, come on, we all were.

Just get through it the first time, and you get some support,

and then you start getting those ideas across and

you see faces light up.

Then you get somebody hooked.

>> Yeah, upcoming projects that you're working on?

>> Upcoming projects that I am working on.
Several different ones,
I am in the middle of writing two books right now.
I sometimes say I open my brain and a book fell out.

>> [LAUGH].

>> So one of the things that people kept asking me,
the origins of girls in [INAUDIBLE] from this.
I've probably signed 10,000 copies of Women in Tech for
women all over the world at this point and
I've probably signed it for 100 of men.
Maybe five of them total,
to maybe five of them have I signed it in their name.
They're inevitably coming up to me and saying I'm trying to get
my daughter into tech and you're an inspiration.
And I almost always wanna look at them and
go you realize there's a story in there about me being a drug
dealer at 16, right?
Just so you know, I mean like this is not a book for
little girls, it's a book about being a woman in technology,
and overcoming mistakes, and creativity, and this is not for
you ten year old.
But it never occurred to them to read it themselves.
Because its got a lady thing on the title.

So, every time it happens, it actually,

you never wanna be disrespectful.

I mean it's wonderful that they wanna grab this book and

give it to their kids.

But I started realizing that there is something there,

there's a piece there that's missing.

Because men in technology in recognize the same thing that I

do, which is a lot of the stuff that's directed at girls in STEM

to get them in the pipeline,

is patronizing, in every sense of that word.

And it's not written for, by, and

about girls in technology who are solving actual problems.

It's written by people who have never coded a day in

their lives and

who are trying to create this as almost a marketing thing, right?

They're thinking a bit differently.

Now, there's nothing wrong with approaching it from

a marketing perspective, but there's a missing piece there.

As men in technology recognize if they want to get their

daughters into tech,

they need to actually tell them what it's like.

And so there needs to be a voice out there, or multiple voices,

for girls actually writing applications and

solving problems in tech, right?

And a good example of one of the girls who's gonna be writing

a chapter, I've got her in her first draft right now.

She wrote an app.

She had lost a couple of friends in New York City

who were blind and they had been run over by electric cars

cuz they couldn't hear them coming.

>> My God. >> I could see them but

you couldn't hear them coming.

She wrote an app that was a proximity warning for

electric cars for her friends at 14.

>> At 14?

>> Yeah. Now I said, how would you like

to write the mobile developer chapter in Girls in Tech.

And she went okay.

And I said, okay, but I'll have to talk to your mom first.

>> [LAUGH] >> She's so young.

>> Yeah. >> And

it's been an interesting challenges as I do this because

this is, it's a motive expression.

I am free and a lot of levels to make what I want out of these.

Because I'm not writing it for a publisher.

I'm not writing it for

anyone other than the way I think it should be written.

And sometimes you have to be kind of the web pan of something

like this.

I often joke that there's nothing quite like writing heard

on seven other very famous women in technology for the events and

the stuff that we've done in promotions and

stuff on women and tech.

And each one of them I disagree with them on some level on

something.

But ultimately as many people would say,

the responsibility in the end is mind.

And I am saying the same thing for

those girls who are incredible, who often, they're gonna grow up

and they're gonna disagree with me on things.

That some of them disagree with me now.

[LAUGH] Good for them, they're getting tough already.

And ultimately the responsibility of the person who

develops something like this, who brings a book like Girls and

Tech into the world is gonna be about creating something

the publishers don't understand.

Kickstarter understands it, Crowdfunding understands it,

Publishers don't understand it,.

And so this is the reason why we do this,

why women authors perpetually have to keep fighting from

publisher recognition again and again.

I can write a best seller like this one and

still not know how to get girls and take out their best,

other than used Kickstarter again, and I will be.

So just get the most number of people aware of it, there's

nothing like 1,000 presales to perk up a publisher's ears.

And for girls in tech I think it's gonna get a little more

exciting even than that.

>> You mentioned a second book.

>> That would be security operations,

just working on this security operations book right now.

There's not a good explanation out there of how to stand up

multiple security operations centers.

And I do security operations for TEDx events.

>> Where can our listeners find you online?

>> I am at my first name, so

I'm first name club on Twitter @tara.

Buy it on Amazon, do me a favor review it.

This is gonna sound interesting and

it's one of the challenges I have here in this room where

you've just handed out this book to 500 awesome women.

Online no one can hear that or see that and the reason why

is women are very afraid of being seen as looking for

a new opportunity.

And just reviewing this book, this is a marketing thing I

didn't think about or know, right?

Women are reading this book because they want to improve

their lives and careers.

And so, they hide it from their boss and

they don't put things under their real name.

Which means that this is a screaming underground

bestseller that no one's ever heard of, which is crazy to me.

So if you want people to know about it, tell people about it,

and go review it on Amazon.

I need people to know about this, so that they can help

other people, cuz this is supposed to be helping people.

>> Yeah, we've actually talked about it, a common problem when

you're updating your LinkedIn profile or

if you're networking on LinkedIn.

>> Mm-hm.

>> It might be in your own current job,

but it could be perceived that you're looking for

something differently.

>> Yeah, one of the recommendations that I always

have for women is update your resume and

your LinkedIn once a month.

>> Once a month. >> Yeah you always, so

if you have then updating your resume and

your Linkedln in profile becomes noise.

You should always be updating your resume and

your LinkedIn regardless.

But if you're updating your resume and your LinkedIn and

you do it on schedule once a month it is a warrant canary for

your job search instead of a warning.

And a warrant canary,

I don't know if you've ever seen this before.

There's no requirement that an information security firm say

something untruthful about whether or

not they've been served a national security letter, right.

About having to turn over data.

But there's also no requirement that they live

up false information if they are served one.

So many information security companies and

there's perspectives on this and problems with the course.

But I have been part of and seen information security companies

leave up a statement on their website that says,

as of this week we have not been served within NSL,

a National Security Letter.

We've not had the turn over data in this jurisdiction.

So you just leave it up, and

once a week you resign it you put it back up there again.

And then one week it disappears, what does that mean?

>> Probably worser, [LAUGH].

>> Because they're not required to say false things.

>> Yeah. >> Right?

No injunctione has ever been shown to forced a company to

leave a warrant canary up.

Now whether or not that's a good idea in information security

the same principle for updating your LinkedIn and

your resume is a really good idea, right.

Once a month you just update it and then it becomes noise right.

Instead out of the middle of nowhere after three years in

an otherwise happy position all of a sudden your whole LinkedIn

profile changes.

Then you've got a warning sign there,

the opposite of a Warrant Canary.

>> Anything else you'd like to share?

>> For women I believe you and for

men when you are told that there is a problem you're

being told about maybe 10% of the problem so be aware.

And listen and

believe women when they tell you something because if it has

gotten to the point where they are telling you it is far worse

than you could have imagined Tell the truth, all the time.

And recognize that your job is not your career.

Your life is more valuable that just a few

people's opinions of you.

And don't internalize the kind of critique that makes you

tear yourself down.

Believe more than anything else that you are absolutely not

alone.

No matter whether or not you feel like you're the only woman

in the room, you may be in that place and in that time,

the only woman in that particular conference room.

But be aware that there are thousands of conference room

around the world with one woman in them that feel the same way

that you do and all you have to do is find your squad.

[MUSIC]

>> That's awesome.

Thank you so much, Tarah.

I really appreciate it.

>> You are very, very welcome.

>> I'm so glad we got to meet you and thank you for

taking the time to speak with us today.

>> Thank you, this is a real pleasure.

[MUSIC]

>> Cutting edge our take on stories in the business and

technology world.

In this cutting edge segment we're gonna talk about

an article that was published on September 22nd in the post by

author Jisha Japagnanon entitled Say My Name, Say My Name.

Parenthesis or at least try with the subtitle, I will not change

a part of myself for the sake of your comfort.

Jisha talks about her relationship with her name,

navigating life.

And needing to come up with nicknames or

different pronunciations to make the people she encounters feel

a little bit more comfortable Gisha is not a very common name

in America.

And when she would meet people, they might stumble over

pronunciation or not even try to pronounce her name.

So she has gone through life really making her name more

comfortable for other people.

And is now reclaiming her name, putting a stake in the ground.

And talking about why it's important for

her to better assert her self identity through challenging

people to try to pronounce her name.

>> I'm having two big things come to mind when I read this

article.

One is that classic scene from Office Space where they're

trying to pronounce his name.

They're like naga, naga, not gonna work here any more and

they just don't know how to say it.

And I remember laughing and like yeah,

I understand that cuz being south Asian myself, I have so

many friends who no one can pronounce their name.

And even my sister, which is the second point, her given name was

Jyothsna, which is spelled J-Y-O-T-H-S-N-A.

So when anyone, and

when she grew up in the middle of America, in Dallas and Tulsa,

Oklahoma, a lot of schoolteachers could not.

They look at that J-Y right next to each other, and

they're like I'm not gonna attempt it.

And so my sister obviously being young at the time,

she was like I'm not gonna correct my school teacher, so

she ended up kind of adopting the name Jo, super short, J-O.

And it's a super strong name and she actually kind of adopted it

in a more natural way and she kind of grew into it.

So a little different on that she's not embarrassed of her

name by any means but she had to kinda go by this different

identity and she grew into it.

But you don't see a Coke can or key chain which shows on and

even my name which isn't that uncommon, Sonia S-O-N-I-A.

You'll never see in that spelling though so

even in Orlando, I've been checking all the gift shops if

maybe by now, 2017, they'd have one, but.

>> [LAUGH] >> See if you can get

validated now.

>> Yeah, for my entire childhood.

>> With a little key-chain. [LAUGH]

>> No, unfortunately not.

[LAUGH] >> Yeah,

Jisha talks about these.

Starbucks names or names that you would give to a restaurant

to make a reservation.

Again, sort of as a cultural lubricant to make the experience

a little bit more comfortable and

not an awkward learning moment for everyone involved.

>> Yeah, she was talking about how sometimes people,

if they feel like they have to explain it, they almost are coy

about it, and then they become embarrassed to have to explain.

Like I'm sorry I'm taking up your time by having to

explain this now.

And they get a little bit more reserved and

it's not confident about no, this is how you spell my name,

this is how you pronounce it.

>> Right, and the crux of the article is that she's

reclaiming her name instead of offering up these nicknames or

different pronunciations.

She is reclaiming this fundamental respect of

being addressed accurately.

So for me personally, reading this piece, I'm going to

challenge myself to take a few moments to learn names that,

at first sight, aren't necessarily familiar to me.

To offer people a little bit more respect and

respect their cultural heritage and

take a few more seconds to learn appropriate pronunciation.

[MUSIC]

>> Well, it was great to be at Microsoft Ignite for

this special episode.

It's been an energizing week of news and networking.

But believe it or not, we already have our sights

set on another great event that Microsoft is contributing to.

It's called Smart City, and

that will happen in Barcelona in mid-November.

If you're interested in learning more about this event,

you should check out www.SmartCityExpo.com.

>> And thanks to all of our listeners for tuning in today.

Be sure to subscribe to the podcast on Apple Podcasts,

Google Play, or wherever you get your podcasts.

We appreciate any ratings or reviews you leave there as well.

>> If you have any feedback on our show, please write to us at

wibt@microsoft.com or you can tweet us @MicrosoftWomen.

And please recommend our show to anyone you think would like it.

>> And before we sign off, and

I know I speak for both of us, there's been a lot of

destruction in the news recently that we want to address.

Of course, there were the earthquakes in Mexico that

occurred just last week.

And meanwhile Florida, Texas and

the islands in the Caribbean have endured some devastating

conditions due to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria.

We're grateful that the city of Orlando was still able to

host us.

Please be sure to help those who have been affected by

the devastation by donating to national or

local relief organizations,

whether it's the American Red Cross or Feeding South Florida.

[MUSIC]