

Amanda Sadler is a senior leader within Payments with extensive experience across E-commerce. She is currently working at Trustly, a market leader in the Open Banking space, and has an impressive career history working for key brands such as Klarna. The interview brings a focus to the importance of broadening the D&I conversation to include not only race, gender, and culture but also sexual diversity and disabilities, particularly 'hidden' disabilities, as these can be overlooked.

### How did you start your career within FinTech?

Starting her career in telecommunications, Amanda has always been a salesperson who has been involved in a technical sale or selling of a service. She was first exposed to retail finance when she was working for a business called Rentsmart where she was providing business finance for Dixons Stores Group (now Currys PLC). This business was later sold and became the well-known brand Clearpay.

For the next stint of her career, she moved into vendor finance doing asset finance and leasing for telecoms and communication companies before moving back into retail finance to run the Southern team at Close Brothers, a business that was later acquired by Klarna. Originally joining as part of the Enterprise sales team, Amanda was a key contributor to the UK Klarna build where she then switched roles and managed a team of 10 sales individuals within the SME vertical. After a hugely successful 3 years, she moved into Open Banking where she is now the Head of Ecommerce at Trustly. The move to a new market has been relatively seamless for her as she has always been exposed to Payments companies and the associated partners.

Most of Amanda's roles have been within start-ups. This was even the case for Close Brothers, who although are an established bank, were setting up a new retail finance division at the time. This was never something she actively pursued but it ultimately ended up being the environment that she thrives within. Amanda described her love for the 'scrappiness' of start-ups and the ability to be directly involved in shaping and impacting the direction and build of such businesses. "When I joined Klarna it wasn't the Klarna that everybody knows and loves today, we were selling a relatively unknown brand and even spelling the name out to people. To now look at what it has become and knowing that I played a small part in that is hugely rewarding".

### What is your experience of being a leader?

Since very early on in her career, Amanda has held leadership roles. "I am quite a direct individual, but I am also very empathetic, so leadership is something that I love and something that I do believe I am very good at. Being seen as a good leader is something that is very important to me". Looking back over her career made Amanda realise that many of her leadership roles have been within male orientated businesses, but it is not something that she has ever really considered or something that she feels has had an impact on her career. She recognises that there is more work to be done on gender representation as she has found a lack of females applying to open roles within her organisations and therefore, she believes that the conversation should start at talent attraction.

Amanda accredits her experience as a leader to the support of her husband. As a mum of two, Amanda would struggle with the balance of work and home life if it wasn't for her partner being self-employed. His flexibility makes it easier to navigate tricky dual-career waters and ultimately allows her to do the job that she does. Amanda strongly believes that in order to retain women within a workplace, businesses need to adapt company cultures and systems. She is incredibly grateful to have always worked for great companies who accommodate working parents by offering increased flexibility in work schedules for parents evenings, school shows, sports days etc.

## What's been the biggest success in your career to date?

Amanda categorises her successes through her own personal performance and that of her team. One of her personal highlights is setting up an independent commercial finance brokerage from scratch. This was a business that was specialising in vendor finance, that went from an idea on a piece of paper to a successful organisation with FCA approval. She was responsible for managing all cross-functional aspects of the business and growing the team from 3 individuals.

Amanda is most proud of her leadership success at Klarna. She was responsible for recruiting and managing a team of ten individuals who were all early in their career - "The team really came together and gelled completely. They showed total support for each other, achieved their targets, both individually and as a team and had lots of fun in the process, and that can be difficult to achieve with such a young team". This was her most enjoyable experience as she was able to contribute to everyone's personal growth and development, whether this be a promotion or a bigger and better career move. One individual went back to university, to complete his MBA at Oxford University, and knowing that she helped support him in getting the opportunity was hugely rewarding.

## What would be your advice to the next generation of female leaders?

The key theme for Amanda's advice is authenticity.

- "Don't be somebody you're not as you quickly get found out".
- "Take good things from the leaders you have had in the past and learn from their mistakes - take what has worked well and make it your own".
- "Understand that you don't have to be the smartest person in the room". This was something that Amanda grappled with when she first started her career. She left school and went straight into the workplace and was often intimidated by the 'smartness' of others who had gone to university. After reading a book on intelligence she quickly came to realise that there are many types of intelligence, not just academic intelligence – emotional intelligence, for one, is a key contributor to her success as a salesperson.

## What initiatives have been used to promote D&I within your employers?

As a business, Trustly are incredibly culturally diverse with a massive breadth of nationalities and backgrounds. They now have 800 employees spread across multiple offices in Europe and the US. They have recently launched a new D&I focus and Amanda has joined as part of the forum that champions the initiatives.

Amanda describes D&I as a huge topic and is extremely passionate about broadening the conversation to include disabilities. Her son has ADHD and she is acutely aware of how acknowledgement and action towards this can and will impact his success in the workplace. "When we talk about diversity, we automatically refer to the equality across the boundaries of gender and race, and for many businesses, they have made huge progress in this social change, but other diversities such as disability have been neglected from the conversation. It is important that businesses acknowledge, understand, and embrace the widespread nature of disability, including hidden disabilities such as ADHD, Autism, Multiple Sclerosis and Epilepsy. Employees with disabilities should feel supported in their working environment, and this may require some small changes to allow them to work effectively." She believes that bringing and maintaining a focus to the topic through initiatives such as companywide training is a great starting point for any business.

The recommendations from Amanda's network support the values that she stands by as she is often described by her peers and managers as truly authentic. She keeps in close contact with individuals that she has managed in the past which is testament to her approach and success in leadership.

Edited by Siobhan Humphries