Being a mom in tech

Speaker 1 00:04

In the previous episode, my guests Sharahn McClung highlighted the trendy perception of motherhood and career development. If you had to boil down Parenthood to a skill set, you will certainly have to be highly proficient in multitasking, crisis management negotiations, working long hours and performing under stress. Sound like the perfect employee, right? As Sharahn pointed out, if you want to get something done, ask a busy mom. But not all moms feel like they can find their place in tech that easily. Hi, my name is Will Newsom, and you're listening to tech start. In this show, we explored realities of changing careers and getting into tech. In this episode, my guest, Dina tells us how she broke into tech with two young kids and a third one on the way keep listening to hear her story and learn why boot camps might be the secret to unlocking opportunities for women who want to become working moms in tech.

01:00

I really love the idea of like, just working from home, and just how that blended in with like, my whole like family life. You know, being a mom of three, it's like, I'm balancing that whole professional, you know, role of like, what I want to do for my career. And also like, just the at home atmosphere and just making sure that everything is taken care of at home, my kids needs are met and, and all that kinds of good stuff. So it was a weird way that I stumbled upon programming languages. I don't remember exactly how I stumbled upon it. I think it was some sort of like, clip I don't know, that I saw on social media and just about coding and, and I just decided that I would just, you know, take a course and see what it was like. So I took a Python programming course. And I just loved it. I didn't expect that I would love it so much. I mean, I I used to, you know, hear about programming languages and coding, but it was never something that I thought I would be interested in. When I did it. I was like, really just in love. I wanted to keep on learning more and more. And so, um, I finished that Python programming course. And I was like, Oh my gosh, like, I think I want to try something in this field. I want to you know, I didn't know what exactly I didn't know if I wanted to go into data science, or what I wanted to do exactly what I thought I wanted to see where I can build the skill that I am just now loving, you know. At the time, I was a mom of two, but as a mom, I would just like I can't, I don't want to enrol in the additional University. And the, because I did all that already. I was already you know, I got my bachelor's in psychology, I did the whole college thing. And I'm just like, I can't imagine having to invest all that time, you know, going to campus and going to college. And so I started looking for like online programmes. And I found TripleTen I thought let me look into this a little bit more.

Speaker 1 03:11

My wife I'm married to She's currently a teacher. And she's actually in the software engineering cohort. Because yeah, they're both teachers, what part of like teaching, would you say helped you in like your tech journey, and it's helping you get that journey? And what kind of like got in the way of it?

03:28

Yeah, I would say, not everyone can be a teacher. But I think those that have been teachers have a really good understanding of how to teach themselves, and how to, like, learn better. I think I definitely don't think being, you know, a teacher in the past and a tutor in the past has ever hindered my ability to like, you know, learn and get through the programme. If anything, it's actually helped. It's helped me because it, you know, gave me the skills and tools that helped me be better organised and helped me you know, take better notes. So yeah, even though it seems unrelated, I really feel like teaching is one of those like, multi dimensional fields where you can apply teaching to pretty much anything because we're always learning, right? Like, we're always learning, it doesn't matter what we're doing in life, or what we're doing, what role we're doing, we're always learning something, we're always gonna learn something new, or we hope we're learning something new every day, right? So I feel like it's hopefully it's helping your wife to get you know, learn and, and be better at like, having those those tools and then I spoke with a rep at the time a rep of TripleTen about like, you know, what are the details of the programme was the structure the curriculum, how was like the community at TripleTen And I just loved how open the reps were because this was a new field for me. So I was just like, oh my gosh, is this something that I could Do you is it something that I would be flexible and be able to fit in my life, but I mean, I got a lot of reassuring feedback from TripleTen. And honestly, I mean, it was all true. All of the, like the support that I got from the mentors, all of the like the positive feedback that I got from the tutors, and just the help that you get, and the kind of community that they create is, it's just very, it doesn't make you feel like you're doing it alone. And I just decided to go for it. And so yeah, the rest is history. I started the programme as a mom of two and then I came out of the programme as a mom of three. So yeah, I mean, I found out I fell pregnant with my third, like, about two months, a month into the programme, and I'm like, Oh, this is gonna make things even more interesting. So I have to, MAN Yeah, hey, I made it through.

Speaker 1 05:54
So how old are your oldest two children?

05:57
I have a five year old, a four year old. And now an eight month old

Speaker 1 06:02
That obviously you are still pregnant with the youngest, but how did the four and five year old impact like your bootcamp journey.

06:13
It was I'm not gonna lie, it was hard. But I would say that I took the first couple months, sort of trying to figure out how I'm going to, like, allocate my time better how I'm going to manage my time how I'm going to balance the bed times the mealtimes, the all the little needs that the kids have with also just kind of trying to find even just little slots of time during the day to just get some studying done or get some some work done on my project. So it did take, like, I took me a couple months of adjustment to really find a really good, like, sweet spot in terms of what what were the times that worked for me to study to get projects done to collaborate? Yeah, it's challenging, but I, I have to say the way that TripleTen structures, their data science programme, and probably other programmes that they have, they structure it in a way that makes it easy to, you know, have you go on your own pace, and not like,

like, if you need an extension deadline, especially if you know, you're you're in a tight like time crunch, you need an extension, they're usually pretty, you know, open to working with you. And they're very understanding like the community managers are very understanding of everybody has lives. And maybe we're not going to make this project deadline on the state. But they work it out with you. And it makes it feel like you can do it. And there were times that weren't my confidence was shook, I have to say, but at the end of it all, I felt like I was immersed in a community at TripleTen. That was very supportive, very understanding. And I didn't feel like I would I you know, I had to do it all all the time. Like, it's okay to like, give and take here and there. So as long as I was I was making progress, that was what mattered. So I was just so trying to find if I could do this, you know, like trying to find confidence. And that was like, there's not a shortage of that in the community.

Speaker 1 08:33
I know my cohort is like was very diverse. Did you have like meet like in or make relationships with people that had like similar situations with you like maybe having kids or like, same geographic location?

08:46
I made some quick, you know, buddies study buddies, or, like, you know, Project buddies pretty early on. And it was really easy to find common ground. There were definitely a couple moms in my cohort, especially in the beginning, when you get introduced, and you say you kind of talk about yourself. There were I think I noticed that there were a couple of moms talking about how they were trying to find something that they were good at. Okay, being a mom is the most like the absolutely most beautiful thing, most rewarding thing in the world. But we were people were individuals, we have personalities. We have hobbies, we have the other things that we're good at other than being a mom. And so it was nice to see other moms also in the community that were also sharing that same sentiment. There were also people really what I loved too was that there are people from other just other backgrounds and other areas of like across the country and just you know, going through their own things like I knew one, one girl she was doing her PhD while also doing the programme, so that was really cool and inspiring.

Speaker 1 10:01
That's huge. How did you maintain like these two, like very different, like social roles like man, a mother on one hand, and a mother of young children to which is different, I think of being a mother voter, out of the house. And then like, being this tech genius.

10:21
Sometimes it kind of felt like Jekyll and Hyde. Like, Okay, I gotta take off, like my data science hat and just get, you know, get back into like, momming, sometimes challenging, too, because, I mean, there were times where I was, like, really like down a rabbit hole coding, you know, and, you know, I have, you know, my son come up and trying to get my attention or kind of trying to want to play with me or making a lot of noise. And, you know, the small kids, they just make so much noise, like, there's no quiet study around small kids, it was challenging, but for me, I would just take advantage of the after bedtime hours, that would be the time where I would code the most. And I felt like that helped me a lot. Like I was at the time. I mean, I was just so used to just focusing on being a stay at home mom and focusing on all of those the neat my kids needs. And then what I loved about this programme is that it

just, it just felt like, okay, I can, I found a skill that I'm really good at. And I finally can like channel, my outlet through that, you know, because your mom, you're just always serving and serving and serving your family and serving your kids and your husband and your home. It was a resentment, it's not resentment, it's like this, this feeling where it's just like, I wish I had some sort of an outlet to channel some of that, that creep, you know, creative energy, even though it's challenging. I feel like it makes me a better mom to have, you know, a skill that I'm, you know, exercising and, and growing in.

Speaker 1 12:04
What other aspects of like, the programme allows you to channel that energy and be a great mom simultaneously?

12:12
Well, there are a lot of opportunity at the programme to do other things other than just the projects and the curriculum and the tasks that you are assigned. And I had the absolute honour of being able to participate in the code bridge that they they have, and which was, honestly, I'm just so grateful for that opportunity. Because, I mean, I was in the middle of, you know, my DS sprint, at the time, my data science sprint, and I kept feeling this edge where I'm like, I really want to see if I can do this like in like a real, real world kind of setting. And so when we were presented with the code bridge opportunity, which is like a competition, where, you know, you work with other data scientists and maybe other other students from other programmes, it gives you the experience of doing something in like, kind of in a real world setting. So yeah, I was able to work with a software engineering student at the time. And we created like, an informative landing site, we worked on it together, which was an awesome experience, and really just made it feel real. And it gave me confidence to just feel like yeah, you know what, I can do this. It's, I'm not just it's not just like that kind of academic bubble where you're feeling like, oh, you can do it, but within like, this, like academic environment, but like, No, you can do it, even like in this kind of, like, real world setting. And yeah, we ended up winning the competition, which was awesome. So that was, that was really fun.

Speaker 1 13:52
Can you tell us a little bit about what you did your cold bridge project on?

13:57
We selected like a data set, we were given a bunch of data sets. And we, me and my partner decided to go with a data set that was about making New York City a bit more like greener. By planting trees in like the urban areas, which was really fascinating to us. We both were really into like environmental science. And so this is something that kind of speaks to us. So we chose that dataset. And we went with it and we built an informative website about how this programme was so successful in terms of like planting trees in in like those very urban areas in like the boroughs of New York. And, and I mean it, it was it's it's basically a site that, you know, people can visit to learn more about the programme and about how you know that programme Um, can be like implemented maybe in other like highly dense city areas. So and we were able to present it live on Livestream. It was definitely a great feeling. And it was, of course, an even better feeling when we found out that we won. It was like, oh, okay, so I guess we thought that it didn't just look good in our eyes. So that definitely felt great after we like I graduated from the programme. Another great extracurricular activity that TripleTenhas is I guess you can

consider extracurricular but they have an eight Bri programme or like an externship programme. So the company partners with TripleTen, and you participate in the externship. So that's what I did. So I extra and for you, che and they the project at the time was they were looking for solutions to their current problem, which was to try to build a model that would predict geolocation. From tweets, like actual tweets, what I did is I built a Karass model with a deep learning approach. And the data set that that you shape provided us was a, an actual, like, the actual data that was harvested from like Twitter, they had geolocation, they had some other metadata and other user information. And they were just asking for ideas. But what I loved is that each one of us had came up with a different solution and a different approach. And we were able to be a part of their solution, which was really cool. Yeah, we, we were able to present our findings to, you know, your che raps. And we, the CHE rep told us that like your solutions are going to be part of like their projects. That's a really big, you know, that's a big deal, especially for somebody who's just trying to break into the field. Like, yes, che was really interested in seeing if they can, if someone tweets something, if they can find their exact location, like can they predict, you know, a tweeters exact location based on what they tweet based on the text in their tweet, which is just incredible. Like, I mean, just the thought that we have that kind of technology, and we can apply it to something like that is really like fascinating.

Speaker 1 17:40
So definitely a little scary to err, yeah. That brings us to a good point. I mean, we never asked in the beginning, but what made you choose Data Science?

17:54
Yeah, that's a good question. So like I said, I finished my Python programming class that one course I took, I really was like, in love with, like, just learning how to use that programming language. And I really love like, just the skill of coding. So like, How can I apply this in a way that, you know, I can make a career out of it. I did my research, and I kind of weighed out the options. I thought, you know, if like, based on my background, my experience, I was personally never really a big math person. So, I mean, there were, there were some fields where I'm just like, I don't really know if I want to go into those fields. But data science to me in the beginning, when when I was just reading about it seemed like it was pretty interesting. I really love the aspect of machine learning and just how, you know, you can build models to do things for you with code.

Speaker 1 18:54
Have you have you found a job yet? in data science field?

18:58
I haven't. So the job market now is crazy. It's not great. But I mean, I'm keeping a positive outlook.

Speaker 1 19:07
How do you go about like your job search? So you leverage like LinkedIn like close connects on LinkedIn? Like how do you network or like, what's been your practice and job searching?

19:16

Yeah, so one of the most important things that I've learned is just network network network as much as possible. Especially if you like, for me, I was never really a LinkedIn person. I never even had a LinkedIn before, before I graduated. So when I when I created my LinkedIn, I started learning about all of the resources and the tools that you can use on LinkedIn to just really build your network and also make a meaningful network, make meaningful connections network with people in the industry and ask them questions about what it's like to do their job. Like what is it like in the real world like, What Works For you to land your job, you know, or how, what kinds of things do you do on a on a daily basis as a data scientist first and for example, all those things will help you get more clarity on the role that you are, you know, looking for, and what you should do to sort of tailor your resume and cover letters to the roles that you're interested in?

Speaker 1 20:26
What would you prefer doing in the future, like social projects, like you did for the Code Bridge?

20:34
Yeah, you know, I love that I had such a diverse background in these sort of real world simulation projects. And personally, to me, I am I have a very strong interest in helping people and just really like doing something that's going to have like a positive impact on people. So I think that I would probably go towards the more like, health care field, or healthcare domain of data science.

Speaker 1 21:16
Are you worried about sometimes, like, maybe hiring managers or managers like reaction to you? And maybe switching careers to?

21:23
Yeah, no, absolutely. I mean, first of all, we're like, women are not really that you were a minority in the field, I think, in general, which can, you know, make you feel kind of make me feel kind of insecure? But yeah, absolutely. Like, being a stay at home mom. And also, like, being a woman just does make you feel a certain type of way in terms of, Am I can I still be fit for this role, like, like, what kind of what kind of schedule do certain companies like expect, you know, out of their employees, and personally, for me, I am looking for a role that is a remote role, which would like work better for just for my lifestyle, and, and my family. And what's great about data science roles is that there are a lot of remote roles, but you have to be very selective about which companies you're applying to, because there are some companies that are very understanding of work life balance, and work life culture. But then there are other companies that might not have so much of an emphasis on that and might expect you to work this many hours in the week. So it's all about kind of doing your research on what companies really promote, like, work life balance, and company is that sort of, I guess you can call them mom friendly. That's something that I keep in mind all the time when I apply to jobs.

Speaker 1 22:54
What advice would you have to other moms young, older, wiser considering breaking into tech?

23:00

I would say that if you even have the slightest interest, just dabble in it a little bit, get. Get yourself familiar with coding, get yourself familiar with the programming language or get yourself familiar with with the programmes. And just try it, try it and see if it's, it's something that you're interested in. And because, I mean, there's this such the, the stigma, where it's like, okay, like, I'm a mom, and you know, I have all these responsibilities as a mom, how am I going to do something like this, you know, but it's doable, it's not going to be easy, but the guarantee is, if you have the, you know, that determination to get through, you know, get through the obstacles and the challenges, then you're gonna get through the whole thing, you know, as long as you have that mindset where you can, you can get through it. I know, it sounds cheesy, and all of that, but it's true. It's really all about your mindset. Because a lot of times, you know, us moms, we were so unsure, our schedules are so unpredictable with small children, you don't know how your day is really going to go. You can you can, you can plan it as best as you can, but you don't know how your kids are going to, you know, really react to, to it and how they're really if they're, if it is gonna go smoothly, or if it's not gonna go smoothly, because you have these, you know, small little personalities that you know, have their wants and needs and everything. So it's very unpredictable. You know, your schedule is very unpredictable, but but if you have that mindset that no matter what obstacle you have in your way, you're going to get to the other side, then you you can get through it.

Speaker 1 24:54
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