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Press Releases

Supporting young women in tech

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Paul Willoughby, Beazley's Head of Insights and Strategy Research and Beazley SHE network committee member, explains how he has been supporting gender equality through mentoring.

Among many lessons learned in 2020 so far, is how businesses need to be able to flex and adapt to stay relevant. In the London insurance market, the pandemic has shone a light on the increasing need for digital transformation and the importance of attracting diverse and creative skills to get it there.

If you work in the London insurance market, you may well have heard of, or be involved with Digital Minds already. Founded in 2016 the Digital Minds initiative aims to help shape the future of the London insurance market through digital transformation, innovation and cultural change. Acting as a platform for change, the Digital Minds programme brings together delegates and mentors with a diverse range of skills and backgrounds from insurance brokers, carriers and service providers, focusing in particular on creating opportunities and mentorship for the industry's young talent, who have a stake in its future.

Having been a supporter of this initiative from the start, I got further involved as an Executive Mentor last October when Digital Minds teamed up with the amazing not-for-profit organisation, the #STEMettes, to host a weekend Hackathon event. As mentors we were there to help encourage girls and young women to explore the range of opportunities in STEM subjects and how to acquire the associated skills. Young people from London's Tower Hamlets were taught how to build a mobile app over 24 hours (not continuous hours!) and were tasked with creating their own apps. I mentored on designing and coding of the apps, and it was brilliant to witness them getting stuck in and the inventive apps they created as a result. Helping the girls prepare for formal presentations in front of judges, including London Market specialists, Clare Lebecq and Katherine Bryant, and STEMettes CEO, Dr. Anne-Marie Imifadon, MBE, was a great test of their skills – and mine!

My involvement with Digital Minds has brought together two of my

professional passions: mentoring, which I have enjoyed doing for many years and I get a lot from, and gender equality. It is important that more women get in to tech and I see how women are often underrepresented in tech teams across the insurance industry. Through events such as the Hackathon, I hope that more women will feel encouraged to pursue a career in STEM. I have a daughter and I certainly want her to feel able to pursue a career in the industry if she wished. I'm also a member of the Beazley SHE committee whose mission is to support successful, high potential and empowered women in insurance. Through this I've seen how much more work there remains to be done to improve gender balance across the whole insurance industry.

If you are interested by what you've read, and would like to become involved either as a mentor or a delegate, you can find out more about all of the work the cohort does here including future events via Digital Minds by clicking here.

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