



Arlene Bulfin

Director of People Development, ANS

Medium Organisation

NPWAwards Winner 2022

ans

HOW TO CREATE A TECH CAREER FOR EVERYONE

NORTHERN POWER WOMEN
PODCAST



Arlene's Story

- Arlene Bulfin is Director of People Development at ANS.
- She has over 10 years experience in education and the technology business. Arlene leads ANS's people development and tech skills programs. She is responsible for the company's apprenticeship scheme and the learning and development program, the ANS Academy.
- Arlene is a qualified IT and business studies teacher and has brought her passion for education and skills development to the tech sector. Her mission in life is to bring more girls and people from different backgrounds, beliefs, ways of thinking and different abilities into the tech world.
- This passion and knowledge has seen Arlene speaking at the House of Commons on apprenticeships, running the company's local school engagement program with over 50 local schools and winning a Princess Royal Training award for the apprenticeship program. In October 2021, the program, led by Arlene, was awarded 'Outstanding' by OFSTED, one of only two tech businesses in the UK to get this award.

What winning the Medium Organisation Award meant to ANS Group

"It was an incredible recognition for what is a hard slog sometimes in the tech industry - championing gender diversity, championing the women in the business. This change in business does not happen overnight or with one initiative or with one person, it's always such a continued effort. So it was a really lovely award for us and a different one. I think that's what's really special about the Northern Power Women Awards. There are no awards like it. We were hugely proud and delighted to come back and encourage more businesses to get their names out there".

How ANS have created a culture of diversity in the Tech industry?

- Every year ANS nominate a woman in tech as an ambassador for the business. This female representative across the business champions us at events and comes up with more initiatives.
- They have ANS social groups so people get together... "we want to share experiences, we want to look at topics that are relevant to us, maybe family life, work life balance, confidence in work, impostor syndrome."
- The ANS Academy is their OFSTED outstanding apprenticeship program and were rated Top 100 Apprenticeship Employer. "Usually we work with a lot of schools and colleges to come into our business and begin a career in tech. It's been going for nine years. We started out with four apprentices and one of those is still here nine years later, which we're really proud of."
- "We are targeting younger children and schools to show them what a career in tech is, and really opening up that it's not just about sitting in front of a computer, but you can be creative, you can communicate, you can move around and that there's really good opportunities."

What ANS do to help the younger generation?

- "Every week we come travelling up the stairs with 30 kids following us to meet people doing their jobs. Everyone loves it because there's nothing more exciting than being on a serious call and then 30 kids walk by your desk! Everyone knows the importance of showing young people what their world looks like and what that world could look like. Having a funky office really helps with the sale to the young people. We're not sorry about that either... dogs and slides and bright colours engages them and gets them really, really excited."
- "We work with unis, colleges, schools and primary schools. We've run code clubs with local schools. An after school club comes into our business. Our apprentices run a little programming club - a Code Club, in our office, and there's just as many girls there as boys, we've discovered as they get older it's a really key time. We're planning a programme now for the end of the year to target year nine girls and local schools to have them look at IT as a career option or as an option for their GCSEs. When we get to them, post GCSE or in college, you've got a room with 15 boys and 2 girls and you're too late then. You can only convince those 2 girls to get a career in tech. What I think we've really learned is we need to do more and more for the younger generation."