



## Equality Talks Podcast - Transcript

### Episode 5: Understanding your strengths, taking risks and the value of volunteering

Samantha:

Today's guest is Kate Hobbs. She's a passionate friend, family member, mum and change maker, who finds it hard to walk past an opportunity to make a difference. She started her professional life as a marketing consultant. However, she spent the majority of her career loving the mining industry after falling into it by accident. In her spare time, outside of her transformation champion role at OZ Minerals, Kate is a director of Variety, the children's charity, a long-time Variety basher, a founding member of the Oz IWM's Council for Diversity and Inclusion, and a member of a range of industry on board of committees. She believes in building real connections, continually challenging yourself, and having fun. Thanks so much for joining me today Kate, I'm really excited to talk to you more about this.

Kate:

My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

Samantha:

I was hoping we could start by you telling me a little bit more about, your role in the mining industry, but also the story about accidentally falling into it.

Kate:

The accidental falling, which sounds like it happens to a lot of people. So, my role within the mining industry at the moment is as a transformation champion, which everyone says is a very cool job title. However, nobody really knows what it is. I'm working for a mining company at the moment and in this transformation roll out, the role of me and the rest of my team is to essentially disrupt the organization. So keep an eye on what's happening out there in the big wide world, and look at global trends and technology and ways of working that have the potential to disrupt a mining organization and identifying which of those are likely to hit us and which ones we want to take advantage of and turn into an opportunity. So disrupt rather than be disrupted.

Kate:

So we have a very cool job. I'm involved with a lot of different organizations, a lot of different individuals, like who work with start-ups, I spend a lot of time thinking and talking and brainstorming, which is really cool because a lot of my other roles in the industry have been much more focused on the very technical aspects of mining, sitting in front of a computer. So this particular role is very interesting for me.

Kate:

And in terms of falling into the mining industry by accident. So, as you alluded to at the beginning, I started my career as a mining consultant. So, I actually did management in mining at University and whilst I was on Uni holidays, I actually met my now husband who had just moved to Roxby Downs, which is small town supporting a large mine here in South Australia. I went up there for a couple of months over university holidays and ended up spending 12 years in total, up in Roxby, and I just fell into the industry, started working in an administration role. Funnily enough, even with two degrees, that was my foot in the door and I decided that I really loved mining. I love the people, the fact that you're sitting in orange overalls most of the time so you don't have to worry about getting dressed up every morning and spending time underground. I really loved that.

Kate:

So being among large pieces of equipment, being able to see big rocks being turned into little rocks and just, I guess it's the opportunities within the industry were really exciting to me. So I thought, "You know what? I really love this industry and I've made it my home for the last, well, I'd say 17 years now." So it's certainly become a real part of who I am.

Samantha:

So, you talk about disrupting versus being disrupted, being on the front foot with all the changes that you can see coming on the horizon. Now, historically, I think of mining industries or mining companies as pretty entrenched. I know that innovation is becoming a much bigger thing, but how often do you see something on the horizon and you're like, "Okay, we need to look at this. We need to focus on this. We need to change how we're doing things." How often does that happen, and people are like, "No, we don't want to change to that innovation." Does that happen?

Kate:

It certainly does happen, but I would say it's not just limited to mining. The majority of humans, I should say, are not all that comfortable with change. It's just the way we are, and so when you see something and it doesn't quite resonate with you because it doesn't fit into the experiences that you've had in the past, your brain actually works without you knowing it and tells you that can't be true and you tend to discount it. So you'll actually challenge it as much as you can, both subconsciously and consciously. So it's certainly in response that you see very prevalent through the mining industry, but also elsewhere.

Kate:

So we're not alone in that one. I guess a lot of the global trends that we see and that we investigate and spend time looking at how they're actually going to impact our industry and our organization, it's sometimes really hard to understand how they're going to disrupt the industry. So, it's really hard to talk to people who are dealing with the day-to-day and trying to connect how it's going to impact their business, and their activities that they work on, on a daily basis because it seems so farfetched. If you look at what happened with the taxi industry and Uber, in terms of understanding the global trends around people using their mobile phones and expectation of instant gratification.

Samantha:

The sharing the economy.

Kate:

The sharing economy. So, that gig economy type thing as well and using different employee models, all of those came together to really disrupt the taxi industry, but they couldn't see it coming. They looked at those and went, "they don't apply to us." It's exactly the same thing with us. Sometimes it's really, really tricky to look at something then you go, "Oh yeah, that's happening globally, but it probably won't apply to us." When if you look at the disruption that's happening, every industry and every organization is going to be disrupted by the sorts of things that are happening at the moment, even with demographics, so the aging population, but also the different generations coming through the workforce and the like. All of those are actually going to disrupt us a lot more than what we're expecting.

Samantha:

Yeah, it's so fascinating hey. And like you said, it's really hard to predict what the impact is going to be. So you can see stuff coming and it's like, "I think something's going to change, but we don't know yet what that is."

Kate:

That's right, and so a lot of our role is actually, I personally spend a lot of time talking with people both within our organization and outside of it in terms of how do you build people's capability to deal with change. Not to deal with a specific technology that's coming or a particular way of doing things, but just for them to be more comfortable with having change come their way, even though they don't know what it's going to be, and how they're going to respond to that, and learn from it and make slight adjustments rather than waiting for a really big change to hit a long way down the track. It's this constant ability to handle small changes instead of just having to deal with a massive shift at the end.

Kate:

So, a lot of that just comes down to, how do we train individuals to respond in a positive way to being asked to change? And that's something that the younger generation, so I hate to use the term, but millennials are very... they're one of the first generation that this is built into the way that they think because of the constant access to information and shifts in technology and just the way people work. That's just how a lot of the younger generation, their brain is actually wired to handle that. So they're really comfortable with it. But what we're saying is a lot of the older generations, which is the majority of the workforce at the moment, is that they've never had to deal with that much change and uncertainty, and so they're really struggling to be comfortable. They're open to it. I personally am very open to change, but it's a lot harder for someone such as myself or people older than me to really manage that in an anxiety-free way because it doesn't come naturally.

Kate:

So, that's a situation that we're in at the moment is we've got some very distinct groups of people within the workforce who handle change differently and who are able to adapt as things come our way.

Samantha:

So how do you train people to be more resilient, receptive to, and welcoming a change? How do you change people so they're better at change?

Kate:

How do you change people so they're better at change? What a great question. It's not easy. Anything with people is not easy, as you would know. Trying to put in place a new exercise regime or eating regime, it's not easy. It's not read a book and, hey Presto, you're a new person. One of the things that we spend quite a bit of time is implementing processes for how people work. So, and a new way of working, showing people a more dynamic way of working, so as opposed to in the past, and I'm generalizing here, in the past, if you're running a project, it's sit down, map out the project for the life of the project, and then hand out pieces of work to people and off you go.

Kate:

Whilst implementing a more agile way of working or a dynamic way of working, flexible way of working, however you want to term it, because there's lots of methodologies out there, is you map out a part, the first part of the project, and then you work through that and then you learn from it and you see what happened and then you make changes on your next stage that you're going to work through. It enables you to take advantage of these shifts in the environment and shifts with the work that you're doing and also the learnings that you come across during, actually conducting those activities. It just teaches you to work not on the fly, and that's the thing is that, you're still planning and you're still following a process, but it's about taking advantage of the learnings that you're having as you're going along, which is all that you need when you're dealing with change, is not going into a tailspin when something shifts in the environment because as we all know, change is coming at us faster and faster and faster, it's an ever increasing thing.

Kate:

So, it's not going to go away. This is the world that we live in. Technology gets updated on a more frequent basis. New programs come out on TV and we lose old ones, and different types of cars come out, and even the political world changes so frequently. So it's something that's not going away, but it just forces you to not settle in on a path and refuse to move. So we do simple things like that and we talk to people about what's out there in the environment. So we spent a lot of time just getting people to stop and look up at the horizon and think about what else is happening that's not in my direct environment. So it's not just part of my job, how we get people to collaborate a lot more. So, really encouraging teams and individuals to work together a lot more, and not just within the business but also outside of the business.

Kate:

A big part of my role is actually identifying organizations that we would like to partner with and build into our network. So, encouraging that and just being exposed to more people, and more ideas, and more ways of doing things gets people more comfortably, quite naturally, as opposed to go and sit in a training room and learn how to be more receptive to change because that's just not going to work.

Samantha:

Yeah. Especially not how you engage people...

Kate:

...No, it's just getting them in there, and just letting them feel their way through it, I guess, and just supporting them as they do that. A big part of it is just constantly talking about, yeah it's okay to fail because you're actually learning and it's not actually failing, it's learning, you're testing something and then you learn from it, and then you come up with a much better solution in the end, as opposed to

trying to come up with that 100% and just go hell's bells at it, and end up with something that you could have done a lot better just by that constant learning along the journey.

Samantha:

That's actually a really key thing isn't it? Like across everything. It's better if you try, just try things and see what happens and then, if it is a failure, it's a small failure, but you get the chance to iterate and learn through doing instead of, as you say, have the end goal in sight right at the beginning, and just be like that's where I'm headed but there's no deviation from that part because then, when you think of it, there's more experimenting in trying new things, then failure doesn't feel like such a big deal.

Kate:

That's right. But I mean, what's really tricky for a lot of people is having that willingness to take some risks and not knowing all the answers. I once said, one of the people that we've worked with, we brought in through our transformation team, was telling a story and I said, it's all about people being willing to jump off a cliff and build the airplane on the way down. It's not having that answer and knowing what it's going to look like and how it's going to work, it's just learning as you head down and building something along the way. That just in time mentality because it means you're always going to have the most up to date knowledge, to be able to produce something. And that something could be a piece of technology or it could be an article, or it could be a podcast, but I'm doing it with the most up to date and current knowledge, and you only do that by trying along the way.

Samantha:

Do you think of yourself as a risk taker?

Kate:

Not naturally. I wouldn't have said that a long time ago. I have spent a lot of time and effort over the years and a lot of time with mentors in my past about learning how to take risks, smaller risks. So I'm not talking about jumping off a cliff, but I'm certainly trying to get myself more comfortable with it because it does, certainly doesn't come naturally to me. But I'm very proud of the fact that I can now call myself an opportunist. So when opportunities are presented to me, I do technically take risks when I take them up, even though I might not feel completely comfortable with them, I think, you know what, I'm just going to give this a go and try it and if it doesn't work, well that's fine I've learned from it. When I came straight out of Uni, that definitely wasn't me.

Samantha:

When you look back now over the last decade or two (I'm getting older as we speak), what are some of the risks, or one risk, that you are proud of when looking back? Either because it felt really scary before you did it, or because the impact that taking that risk had on you.

Kate:

Probably the one that sticks in my mind most, because it was probably the defining point in my career was, I'd been heading down this path, like I really wanted to do something and I had stuck in my mind that this was the career journey I was going to go on, and I was working my way through some stuff and I'd come across a couple of barriers or hurdles that I had to jump across and, I was really struggling with it, and I wasn't able to move in the direction that I wanted to. So I was doing all these wonderful manoeuvres, working in roles where I was building skills but still in order to head down that path, and I

had an opportunity come up that was completely out of my field and it was, I called it 180 degree turn. Literally was taking my eye off of the career path that I wanted and turning around and running in the opposite direction.

Kate:

It was a fabulous opportunity, but it wasn't even on my radar, and because I'd come up against hurdles heading down the path that I really wanted to go, I thought, you know what? I'll entertain these, and I thought about it for so long and I couldn't wrap my mind around doing it. Then because I had butterflies in the stomach, I was actually feeling quite unwell thinking about taking this opportunity because I felt like I would have lost the last five or 10 years of activity and roles, to hit me down a certain path. I must've spoken to 10 people, who I held near and dear. I'm talking professional mentors, my parents, really close friends, bosses, I went down this list and I went and talking to people and they all said, you need to take this opportunity. I know it's not the direction that you wanted to head, but you never know where it's going to take you.

Kate:

I literally kicked and screamed against it and I was like, "ah, my gut's telling me the other way around like it's so uncertain. It's such a big risk, I'll never get back to where I wanted to head," and in the end I went, you know what? I'm just going to jump off this cliff and I'm going to build this airplane on the way down. So, I ended up taking the opportunity, taking the role, and even though it was actually a 180 degree turn, it eventually led me to go back and get a role that I was looking for in the first place. So, even though it was a massive risk, like I felt it was a massive risk and my gut was telling me that's not something that you should do, by taking that role, in the end it opened up the door that I'd been banging on for the last 10 years. It took a little while, but it certainly enabled me to do what I was looking for. So, it worked out in the end.

Samantha:

I love that story. I love that there's, okay, so one, you spoke to like 10 people, so you were really like resisting the change and taking the step, but also the fact that they all said yes, you should take the step and you're like, "oh, I'm not going to listen to that person, that's why I'm going to ask another person," until you get to a point where it's like impossible to ignore the fact that everybody's giving you the same advice.

Kate:

That's right.

Samantha:

And I also think it's really interesting that you were worried about losing the last five or 10 years of effort, when actually looking back, I mean, you've obviously got a success story that's personal, but in every second stance, that's not what happens, you don't lose 10 years of experience by taking a different fork in the road. You take that 10 years of experience with you. And that's exactly what happened. Because then, like you say, so interesting that when you went back, it opened up the door that you've been banging for the last decade.

Kate:

Yeah. Isn't that funny?

Samantha:

Yeah.

Kate:

But that's just the way we work in our mind is, when you're faced with something quite big, you get into this fight, or flight mode, and all else falls over and you can't think rationally about things. And I guess one thing that's really driven me, whether it's a positive thing or a negative thing throughout my career is, not just through my career, just in life is when people tell me I can't do something, I have a tendency to want to prove them wrong. And I felt like I'd been trying to prove someone wrong for a long time and I didn't want to give up.

Kate:

But with my young mind, I felt like I was giving up when in fact I was just going away and finding another door to open. And I've certainly since then, I mean that was quite a long time ago, that was 10 years ago, was all the things I've done since then, I never would have had the opportunity to do unless I took that one 180 degree turn. And all of them have culminated in me doing the exact thing that I wouldn't do a long time ago. It's really bizarre.

Samantha:

I think that's so interesting. And there's a couple of things I want to pick up from what you've just said as well. So one is, you said a few times that your gut was saying don't do it, and I want to question that whether maybe it was actually your fear saying don't do it, as opposed to positive intuition. And it can be really hard to tell the difference between those two things because fear is very loud. And then the other thing is, this idea of doing something to prove someone else wrong, because that's a really common sentiment that I personally actually just don't have, so, whatever someone else thinks about my ability to do it. I'm just like, "well, okay, whatever you think." But it can cause people to spend time doing the wrong thing for the wrong reason, doing the wrong thing just so you can prove someone else wrong, is not a good reason to determine a life path

Kate:

No, I would completely agree with that. And it's certainly one of the big shifts between who I was 10, 15, 20 years ago, and now, probably, I even have some of my family saying, "Whoa, you have changed so much." It's not about, like you don't really care what people think about your decisions anymore, whilst before it was right at the forefront of my mind that, that was one of my key drivers that I found really important. And it made me who I am today. So I don't think of it as a bad thing, but it's certainly something that I have learned to overcome over the last few years.

Kate:

And now if you look at all the things that I do, and some of the things that I'm really committed to, and I spend a lot of time speaking about them in public and, tapping people on the shoulder and calling them out on it is, I never would have done that 10, 15 years ago because I would have always worried about what they thought of me. And so that was a big learning for me coming through life over the last 10 years, has been how not to make that such a big driver of what I want to do. So, yeah. And certainly if you look at the opportunities that I've taken up, if I had worried about what people thought, I never would have done it. So, yeah.

Samantha:

There's a lot of freedom in that, isn't there? Freedom from other people, the weight of other people's expectations or worrying about what they think? But how did you start to change that? If that was a major driver and now you're free from that, what changed?

Kate:

I wouldn't say I'm free from it because it's still there. It's always still one of the thoughts that sits there but, I just don't let it control me. And I think the first part of that was taking that particular role, and then having an opportunity open up and I didn't... I had let this thing drive me for quite a long time and then all of a sudden I found a different door ring. So, it didn't matter what one or two people thought was I can make this a reality, whether they like it or not, I didn't need to take that into consideration anymore. I can make... be the driver of my own destiny. And just having that confirmed for me really. It really opened things up.

Kate:

And it's really interesting because, I bet if my mum was listening to this, she would be like, "this is so different to what you were like as a kid," because as a kid, well, throughout my life I've always been really independent and headstrong and confident. But yeah. And I wouldn't disagree with that, but I would say that there was always an element in my early career of making sure that people thought well of me. Even if it went against my own personal beliefs. Whereas now, I'm very proud to say that, that doesn't come into play very often anymore.

Samantha:

I think it's really interesting actually, that she would describe you as headstrong. And yet it was not people pleasing, but worrying what other people thought of you was still a big driver because I think that's really just the duality of humans. We're complex beings and so you can be both headstrong and worried about what people think of you.

Kate:

Absolutely. And I wouldn't... the word worry, it's an interesting one because I think it's more, rather than worrying about what people think about me, it's more I am driven to get a positive feedback from people. So it's making sure that I'm ticking the boxes and I'm adding value to the relationship or adding value to the role. So, that's probably more my focus now is making sure, constantly checking in. So it's not, to me personally, if you think I don't align with the way that you want to do something, call your values or you think I'm wearing the wrong colour shirt or I'm not acting like a lady, I don't mind about that. I'm not even going to listen to it because I'm still operating within my own values.

Kate:

But I'm still worried that, or I'm still conscious that if you've asked me to do a job or we're working on something together, that I'm adding value to the relationship from that regard. So it's just, it's a slight tweak on the same theme. And I think that just comes from maturity and leaving those years we were talking about before.

Samantha:

And there's also, I think, something to understanding yourself. Have you ever done the Gallup strengths finder tests?

Kate:

I have. And one of the things came up is that I am conscious of what other people think of me, which is funny.

Samantha:

What's the name of that strength? Do you remember?

Kate:

Oh, I can't remember. That was quite a few years ago, but I have done it, which I thought was quite interesting.

Samantha:

Yeah. One of mine is winning others over. It's one of my top five strengths. And I took the test and I read that and I interpreted it as I was like, "Oh, I actually think the reason this came up in my strengths is because I'm insecure and I care what other people think about me. And so, this isn't a strength to me, this is a weakness. But then I was talking to a friend who specializes in coaching people around the Gallup strengths, and another close friend and my sister, and I said that to them and they all said, "no way," and pointed out five things that I do, that are consistent with the strength of winning others over.

I was like, "oh how interesting." Like understanding that, I could have interpreted it as, oh, it's my insecurity coming out. Or, actually maybe I am just empathetic towards how other people feel about things, and how they're impacted by me and it's a positive thing, that I want to try and win people over. So there's like a bit of growth in seeing how you show up and then how you can maximize the way your naturally tendency is.

Kate:

Yeah. And that you're naturally good at, right? And one thing that I've learnt in the last, I don't know how many years of my career is that, if you follow the traditional route of trying to fill the gaps or your not so strong points, or your weaknesses, you'll always only be mediocre in that. But if you grab onto those strengths that you do naturally, that you're really good at, Oh, the world is your oyster, you're already starting well above everyone else, so go for it. And if one of them is being able to influence people and win them over, go for it.

Samantha:

I really passionately believe in that as well. So Gallup, they've actually done their own research into that, because obviously it serves their purposes of people who are trying to build on their strengths. And it's true, like all the research shows that when you focus on improving your strengths, you improve by more than if you focus on increasing, improving your areas of development or weaknesses. And like you say, "the world's your oyster when you really take them and try and run with your strengths and use them in your days, and in your work, and in your life.

Kate:

Yeah. Well, if you succeed in something, there's your dopamine hit right there. It's like having a nice wine or a shot of coffee or something. It makes you feel good because you've succeeded at something, just because it's a strength, it means you're going to do it more frequently, which means you just got to keep getting better and better at it because it's enjoyable to do.

Samantha:

Indeed. Indeed. So I'm going to take the conversation a bit of a different direction. When we lined up this conversation, you sent me through a list of some of your milestones and achievements, and it's quite an impressive list, and I was hoping that you could talk to me about some of them. So one of them is that you've raised over \$250,000 for Variety, the children's charity via the variety bash. So can you, and you're a board member of Variety of South Australia. So can you talk a bit about Variety, what you do for them, why it's a charity that is something that you're involved with and just a bit more about that story?

Kate:

Sure thing. So Variety is an organization, kind of like mining, that I fell into. It's an international charity that is focused on giving every child, no matter their background or, their physical ability or, their mental ability, no matter who they are, giving every child the chance to live a good life and do the things that they want to do. So that's the focus of Variety. It's in many, many countries. In Australia we have what we call a tent or a branch in every state. And Variety essentially raises money and gives grants to individual children. So where I'm from South Australia, so we give grants to individual children or we give grants to organizations who support children, or we give grants to charities. So one of our big grants every year is to support the Royal flying doctor service because it helps children who are unwell, but also who are disadvantaged by their location that they live, so then, they live in regional areas.

Kate:

So one of the ways that Variety raises money in Australia is they run something called the bash, the Variety bash, which is essentially a group of volunteers. So people who raise money throughout the year, they elect to, if they raise a certain amount of money, they elect to go on this event. And essentially it means for, it's about nine days, you get dressed up, you have an old car. So it has to be of a certain age, and it can't be hotted up or anything. So, you get these weird and wonderful really old cars. I'm in a 1964 Dodge Phoenix. And you drive these cars around, generally on private tracks through the South Australian and other state countrysides, and we essentially get to see our country, and to visit kids and communities in remote areas. And this is essentially a thank you, to the bashers for raising funds throughout the year, but at the same time, we pay to go on that because we see it as a really good opportunity to celebrate what we've done during the year.

Kate:

Now, in South Australia alone, the funds that we raise on the bash is anywhere between one and two and a half million dollars a year, in South Australia. And that enables Variety in South Australia in particular to help thousands and thousands and thousands of children. So last year we helped over 41,000 kids in South Australia who are disadvantaged or critically ill or special needs. And that's something that is so unbelievably amazing to think that such a small state in terms of population can do, just bowls me over, I'm so proud of our organization to be able to do that. And I fell into Variety because my mother in law has bashed for many years and she had a space in her car on the bash one year, and

asked me whether I wanted to go along and I didn't really know anything about the bash and I didn't know anything about Variety.

Kate:

And the thing that hooked me into it was, I attended a grant on the bash my first year. And just seeing the difference that we can make to people who, families and individual kids who have nowhere else to go, they're not supported by other organizations. They can't receive government funding and if they receive something as small as a laptop or an iPad to help a child with autism at school to remain focused. Or we provide hearing technology so a child who has hearing difficulties, if they're in a school, they can actually hear their teacher, so they're not disadvantaged in their learning outcomes.

That sort of thing and seeing the difference that it makes to the families who feel they have no other help is just, it blows me away once you say one of those things. The amount of, I'm getting choked up already, the amount of a difference you can make to a family with a very small amount of money was, to me who grew up with a privileged life, I had really good education, all of my family is healthy. My son is healthy, I'm healthy. You just don't experience that and you don't know how hard it is. So that's why I love giving my spare time to have fun, while at the same time being able to help lots of families and individual children across South Australia, or across the nation. I call them my Variety family. It's essentially something that I love to spend a lot of time doing.

Samantha:

What a beautiful story. An amazing charity and just what an amazing thing to be involved in.

Kate:

It certainly is. It's one of those things that once you get hooked in, it's really hard to leave, I've been bashing, I've done eight bashes now over the last 10 years. I've been on the board in South Australia for almost three years now, and it just becomes a part of who you are. The kids that you meet are amazing. These kids, some of them, I can't believe what they can do. We see some children reach heights that able bodied kids, or kids who come from the middle of the city would never be able to do because they just don't have that drive and passion sometimes. It's amazing what a child with a bit of drive can do and a little bit of support behind them. So it's great to be able to provide that little bit of support.

Samantha:

Oh, how wonderful. I really loved that story.

I'm going to go onto another area of your milestones and achievements and it's one of the things, having spoken to a lot of women, on through the podcast and through other work that I do, is really seeing that when people do things that they feel passionate about, they're successful. Volunteering is a way that women often get a lot professionally and career development-wise out of, as well as that amazing feeling that you get from being part of a community and a cause you feel really deeply about. And so it's actually, just such a win-win thing to be involved in.

Kate:

It certainly is. I think most of my development has actually come through the committees and organizations that I volunteer with. Variety is one of them. Having the ability to be on the board, I learn a lot from that experience and running events and the like. But my other volunteering side of things is I'm heavily involved in the Australasian Institute of Metallurgy and Mining, called the AusIMM, That's

the professional body for professionals within our industry, so you're talking about an organization with anywhere, it depends on the year, but up to 15 or 16,000 members at the moment. We have lots of communities of interest that support the professionals within the mining industry in Australasia, and it's also the body that provides most of the conferences and professional development and mentoring programs. It's just an amazing network to be part of.

Kate:

I've been heavily involved in that through my association with the women in mining network, which is about driving diversity and inclusion within the industry. So bringing that a gender equality lens to what we do as an industry and the networks that I have built and the activities that I have been able to be involved in, surpasses anything that I would have ever thought I would be doing as part of my normal day job. I've presented at so many conferences and written papers and just had the opportunity to hear stories from some amazing professionals from within the mining industry, and outside of the mining industry who are coming to the end of their careers. Just having contact with that network of individuals has enabled me to learn so much that I never would have got if I'd never put up my hand and volunteered.

Kate:

Actually we wrote an article about the benefits that can be gained from volunteering, a number of years ago, just because I feel so passionately about it. You give back, but you actually get a lot more than what you give. A lot of people ask me, why do you give so much time? But I see it as, I get so much more back than the volunteering time that I give. So I would do it again in a heartbeat. And I do, do it again in a heartbeat.

Samantha:

Yeah.

Kate:

Don't tell anyone that okay, if they come and talk to me, I'll probably say yes.

Samantha:

So, one of the things that you won was that you are a joint winner of the 2015 South Australia gender diversity champion in women in mining and resources. Right now, there is really a hot wind behind a diversity and inclusion, and gender equality. But I think even four years ago it wasn't as strong. It wasn't as big a thing and it was still something that people were trying to get off the ground. So can you tell me a bit about how you got passionate about gender equality and gender diversity work and involved in these groups from a while ago before it was such a hot topic?

Kate:

Sure. So, it's an interesting story because I never felt that I was disadvantaged by being female, which is interesting coming from being that, or I should say being the daughter of a passionate feminist and someone who'd always worked really hard to make their way up through their career just because they were a woman, they found it a little more difficult back in the day, which is slowly changing, but glacial pace, I should say. So it was interesting that I never really had the mindset that I was disadvantaged because I was a woman and I still didn't think about it, and then when I left one of my roles, so I took a redundancy and I was taking some time off having six months off, and I had someone come and say to

me, "look, I'd really love you to be involved in the women in mining network. We're looking for committee members." And I thought, "Oh, okay, I've got a bit of time," back then, I had time.

Samantha:

I won't later, but it's worth the risk.

Kate:

So, I said, yeah, why not? I'll get involved. And I started to connect with individuals, I say women and men within the industry and started to hear stories and it was really eye opening, kind of like when I got involved in Variety, I didn't know there was so many kids who really struggled. It was the same thing is, I didn't realize so many professional women were finding roadblocks everywhere. And I delved into it, me being me, I did a lot of research and a lot of learning and started understanding that it wasn't just mining, but mining in particular, we had being a male dominated industry with quite an insular focus that the concept of diversity inclusion hadn't started at all really, other than from some women talking about it.

Kate:

And so I thought, I'm going to get involved in this and I'm going to make a difference. And so that started my journey with the women in mining network, which I'm still on, pleased to say. But yeah, it just became something that I was really keen on doing and what I was able to do was combine this passion for doing justice and wanting to support other people with my professional strengths, which were planning and executing and understanding a vision, and developing a strategy around that, and basically combine the two, to help establish a stronger women in mining network.

Kate:

So, we were achieving more and building a really strong team around that, and keep launching things in South Australia. Like our mentoring program, which is still going and going from strength to strength on the watchful eye of the current chair of women in mining network South Australia, and also the women in resources, great parents, South Australia. So that's still going, but understanding the gaps that were out there that we could support women with. And yeah, I ended up stepping into the deputy chair role of the national group, once again with all my free time, and I thought, no, I want to develop myself further. So I saw this as a good opportunity to grow my network and participate on a more strategic level within the Institute. And the rest is history, I guess.

Kate:

I was involved in a lot of activities with the Institute itself, so working with the board and the management team there to contribute to the strategy that's now in place for the Institute, which is, if it called future directions, but one of the key drivers of underpinning this strategy is around diversity inclusion, and we're not just talking gender diversity, we're talking everything like any type of diversity that you can imagine, but recognizing that we can no longer just have the type of industry that's not inclusive to difference and doesn't accept people thinking differently and acting differently.

Kate:

So, yeah, it's been a really amazing journey since stepping into this space. And it's certainly something I'm really passionate about. And one of those things that I tapped people on the shoulder and, and call them up on things. So, but I'm amazed at the shift that's happened over the last few years in this space.

And if we go back to what we talked about at the beginning around global trends, this trend of, I won't call it a trend, this movement of things like "Me too," where people who never would have spoken up in the past because of society's expectations, if you think about how, particularly in the Western world, women were raised to be ladies, girls were told to be quiet and not take risks and be seen and not spoken to, be seen and not heard. That's shifting. And so there's an acceptance that it's okay. If you get treated poorly, you can put your hand up and say, I was treated poorly.

Kate:

And that's only, people have only been given the confidence or feel they have the confidence to do that in the last few years. And what that's done, it's enabled everyone to speak up and say, I'm not getting what I need, both male and female. And so society's expectations around meeting people's needs has really changed. So, it's enabled the diversity and inclusion agenda to really come to the forefront. And also it's enabled people such as myself to have conversations around the benefits of diversity and inclusion, it makes for better businesses, it makes for more profit. It makes for much better risk management and safety outcomes. But having that conversations five years ago, it was very difficult. People were just not willing to listen in a lot of cases. So this global movement has really shifted the aisle on that.

Samantha:

Yeah, I think so too. And I think what you're saying is right. If you look back even five years, now there is a pretty broad understanding that diversity inclusion is good for business, it improves performance, it improves outcomes, it improves innovation, it improves profit. Whereas five years ago, I think it was hard to even move the conversation beyond social justice issues and people weren't really paying attention in the same way that they are now.

Kate:

They weren't paying attention, people were doing it because they were willing to contemplate implementing diversity inclusion initiatives because it was the right thing to do, or because they wanted to be seen to be doing the right thing, but they couldn't understand ignoring the benefits. They couldn't understand why it was the right thing, but they'd been told it was the right thing. And interestingly, like one of the first people I came across when I started really delving in to the diversity inclusion piece, was I came across, I'm not going to mention his name, but I came across a middle aged white man who was the CEO of a large organization who had seen, he called it like, "I have seen what it's like," who had seen the reason why diversity inclusion initiatives were required. And so he actually made it his personal mission to go and speak at so many different events all the way around Australia.

Kate:

He wrote papers, he went and spoke to other middle aged white men who are in positions of power. That's, I know people sometimes find that hard to listen to, but when you actually look at the leaders of their organizations in Australia, that's how it is, right? There's more CEOs called David and Andrew and Peter than there are women. So that's just a reflection of where we're at the moment. That hasn't changed. And so he went around and he spoke to people and he said to me, because I heard him speak at a gender diversity event, and he was the only man in the room. And he was speaking. And the first thing he did was he got up in front of everyone and he said, you know what, I'm just sick of talking to rooms full of women. He said, it's not because I don't like talking to women, it's because you're sold on this concept of diversity inclusion, you see the need. You know why it's important and you're passionate

about it and you want things to change. But he said, there is no point me talking to you because your mind is already there. So what we need to do is get men to see why it's important.

Kate:

Men to see that there's a problem because the majority of, particularly Caucasian men, haven't experienced a lot of discrimination. So you find it really, really hard to actually say that there's a problem. But it's not because they're bad people, it's just because they haven't experienced it. So as soon as, and this is, this gentleman taught me, was as soon as you can get them to see it, they actually care, because they can connect with it and they can see that there's so much benefit. And I guess that's why a lot of the rhetoric around diversity and inclusion is on the business benefits because the people who haven't experienced discrimination do understand profit and they do understand innovation.

Samantha:

Yeah, exactly.

Kate:

And they do understand effectiveness within an organization. So you're giving them another reason to go down that diversity inclusion path. But the real aim is to actually get people to understand what it's like to be different. Because once they see it, they can't unsee it, and people are generally good, so they will start to care about it. So, that was probably a big defining moment for me, was how to get people who aren't discriminated against to see it. Because once they see it, they're on board.

Samantha:

I love that. Yeah. Because, the awareness builds empathy. I think.

Kate:

Absolutely.

Samantha:

Now if we can go back in time to Kate Hobbs 15 years ago, and knowing what you know now and having done all the things that you've done, what's one piece of advice or insight that you would offer to younger you?

Kate:

Oh, 15 years ago. Well, I was newly married. I only just got married 15 years ago. A piece of advice? Well, we've already talked about one of them would be, don't care so much about what people think, and be willing to take those risks. Yeah, that is a really good question. It would be around the risk taking and taking up opportunities as they come. Sometimes I didn't take opportunities because I felt they didn't fit with who I was, or what I wanted to do, and I probably missed out on a few things, but yeah, pleased to say that I've shifted that, but I probably wasted a few years not doing that. So that would probably be my one big bit of advice.

Samantha:

I really hope you enjoyed today's chat. If you can help us spread the word by giving us a review on iTunes, that helps even more people find equality talks. To find out more about our mission, check out

current opportunities with WORK180's endorsed employers. And to read and listen to more inspiring stories. Please head over to [WORK180.co](http://WORK180.co). That's work one eight zero.co. See you next time.