

We're the CHANGE MAKERS!

As the world of work shifts and evolves, so do the people within it. GH meets four remarkable women who are all shaping the future

'We all have the power to set our own agendas'

Amy Golding has always aimed high, and at 33 she is CEO of an international tech recruitment firm with a multi-million pound turnover.

Working in technology, people often tell me it's surprising that I studied English at university. However, that very fact is one of the main reasons I do what I do now. For so long, we've been encouraged in education to pick a lane – sciences versus humanities, logic versus creativity. And yet I believe that technology is vital in all industries, and for all people. It is an enabler for everyone to do what they love, but better.

As a teenager, I was always looking for ways to make money, such as babysitting or washing cars for the neighbours. I chose to do an English degree at Cambridge because I loved the subject, and then spent a year working in journalism in China.

Back in the UK, I joined Deloitte, where I met my husband, and spent four years learning about business. I was then headhunted by James Caan, *ex-Dragons' Den* investor and entrepreneur, to be his personal business adviser. He made all his money in recruitment and I learned on the job, advising him on deals and buying and selling companies.

I then launched my own investment fund, before being approached to join Opus Talent Solutions, becoming CEO in 2017. I am proud of the fact that I became the youngest female CEO of a \$100m (around £76m) turnover company in the UK.

Opus helps companies to build teams in the technology and energy sectors. We focus on recruitment and training to fix the skills gap in these industries, which is critical to our future.

Day to day, I am very focused, constantly looking towards the next decision. But when I sit back and reflect on how far I've come, I do have moments of total fear, when I think, 'How and why did I end up here?'

For me this feeling of imposter syndrome stems from the fact that I've never taken the easy or obvious path. However, I am determined to channel those feelings into what I do now, which is trying to break down this idea that there are specific paths for specific people. So many people are afraid of technology because it can be intimidating. But it doesn't have to be.

In the UK, we are already more than 1m people short with the required tech skills, and this is set to multiply over the next 10 years. Opus was profiting from the skills shortage, but we weren't doing anything about it. That's

why, in October 2018, I launched a 12-week training programme that takes people of all ages from all educational paths and teaches them how to code. We've taught people who have worked in property, in warehouses, people with English and other creative degrees; even a professional poker player. We have a 100% track record of students completing the course, and I'm proud to say 95% have already commenced

their tech careers. I'm really passionate about what I do and love networking. However, my husband and I are expecting our first child, so I am making sure I factor in downtime. If you enjoy your work, it's hard to know where the line is. In terms of being a working mum returning to the workforce, my industry is brilliantly flexible, and I am able to work from anywhere, which will be a huge help when it comes to juggling motherhood with my career. With technology at our fingertips, we all have the power to set our own agendas.

Quickfire

Music or podcasts?

Podcasts. My taste in music is so embarrassing.

Scroll or switch off?

Switch off. I'm actually really good at putting my phone down.

Night in or night out? Now, night in, as I'm pregnant.

The gadget you couldn't live without? My phone.

Novels or Netflix?

Novels. I'm still an English graduate at heart.

I'm changing the game by...

Showing that anyone can play it.

For a better future, we need...

To invest more in education.

My biggest weakness is...

Not being able to say no.

My next big ambition is...

To be a good mum.

PHOTOGRAPHY: LIZ McAULAY; HAIR & MAKE-UP: LYDIA WARD-SMITH

I'm trying to break down this idea that there are specific paths for specific people



'Be brave, dream big and you can overcome anything'

Personal trainer and inspiring speaker **Adrienne Herbert, 32**, runs successful podcast *The Power Hour*. She shares the personal crisis that led to her carving out a new career.

I was pregnant in 2011 when my husband, Rob, collapsed and was rushed to hospital. He was a super-fit PE teacher, so it was a huge shock to discover he had suffered a brain haemorrhage.

Previously, life was full of happiness. I had achieved my career dream of becoming a professional dancer in a West End musical, and was expecting our first child. In an instant, everything had changed. I was terrified.

Thankfully, Rob made a full recovery, but it was a slow process, and when our son Jude was born five months later, I found myself looking after him and my husband. It was a challenging transition and I struggled with the dependence of a newborn.

In need of some head space, I decided to go for a run round the block one day. When I got home, I was breathless, flushed and exhilarated. I had felt a physical shift. My anxiety and claustrophobia had dissolved.

That run had given me a precious slice of time on my own, and the idea to start a fitness bootcamp for mums. When Rob was well enough to look after Jude, I studied to be a personal trainer. I had 1,000 flyers printed to advertise my bootcamp and popped them through front doors. As it was the summer holidays, Rob's school let me use its sports field for classes, and I also hired a local dance studio.

Twenty mums turned up for my first bootcamp. As the weeks went on, I watched them change from being apprehensive and shy to a confident team of friends, cheering each other on. I knew I'd found the career path I wanted to follow. I started doing personal training sessions when I could. I also had a Facebook group for the women who came to my classes and, as word spread, so did my new fitness community.

My sister suggested I start a blog, and it was featured in *Women's Health* magazine. Then, in 2015, Adidas invited

me to a photoshoot of personal trainers. Other brands such as Sweaty Betty, Puma and Gap asked me to host events or lead workouts. In 2016, Adidas signed me as a global brand ambassador. It is a champion of women in sport, so its values aligned with mine.

I didn't actively try to grow my social media presence; it happened organically. The most important thing for me was to stick to my mantra of encouragement and motivation: anyone of any age, size or ability has the power to get involved in fitness. Social media has become very strategic. Before posting anything, I consider what its purpose is and

what message I want to convey.

In 2018, I pitched an idea for a motivational

fitness podcast to production company Studio 71 and they loved it. The idea of *The Power Hour* is to find out what drives different people to get up in the morning, how they achieved success and what advice they'd give listeners to help them unlock their potential. My guests have included Fearne Cotton as well as psychologists, choreographers and yoga instructors. The podcast has almost reached a total of 1m downloads so far: it's amazing and unbelievable!

The biggest lesson I've learned is that success is never linear. Rather than accepting the structure that exists, we should be challenging the world of work, finding flexible alternatives and proving they can be successful. My husband's illness taught us that life is unpredictable. It lit a fire inside me to live life with a sense of urgency. Everyone faces adversity in life, but be brave, dream big and you can overcome anything.

Quickfire

Music or podcasts? Podcasts.

Scroll or switch off? Scroll!

Night in or night out?

Night in.

The gadget you couldn't live without? Headphones, or my phone's no good to me.

Novels or Netflix? Netflix documentaries.

I'm changing the game by...

Using my voice.

For a better future, we need... To collaborate.

Working together is key.

My biggest weakness is...

Over-committing and saying yes to too many things.

My next big ambition is...

To double it. Everything I'm doing, I want to do more of it.



The biggest lesson I've learned is that success is never linear



Quickfire

Music or podcast? Music.

Scroll or switch off? Scroll.

I have to, for work!

Night in or night out?

Night in.

The gadget you couldn't live without? The humble radio!

Novels or Netflix? Novels.

I'm changing the game by...

Helping people to find their power and speak up.

For a better future, we need... More ordinary people in politics.

My biggest weakness is...

Made In Chelsea.

My next big ambition is...

Writing a novel.

'Everyone has the opportunity to make a difference'

Kajal Odedra, 34, is UK director of *change.org*, the world's largest petition website, with 200m users worldwide and more than 17m of them in the UK.

When I was young, I noticed that minorities were often ignored and dismissed. My parents were immigrants and moved to the Midlands in search of a better life. I saw people treat them with contempt. This was painful, and had a huge impact on me.

But my brilliant parents – who ran a corner shop – were so supportive of me and my three sisters, and I grew up feeling I could accomplish anything. I was so affected by the Asian tsunami in 2004 that, after graduating, I volunteered in Thailand, helping to look after children in an orphanage. When I returned to the UK, I began working for major charities including Crisis and Macmillan Cancer Support.

When *change.org* came on to the scene in 2012, it was so disruptive, as it was a digital petition platform allowing anyone to share their story and ignite change. Before that, it had been very difficult to get

your voice heard. It is free to launch a petition, so it allows normal people to really make a difference. This spoke directly to my values, so I joined as a campaigner in 2013, and worked my way up to UK director in 2017.

I manage a small team of eight people, and our job is to support ordinary people to start and win campaigns: we parachute around them as their communications and strategy team. We choose petitions with clear aims and a winnable outcome. Most people don't know how to make their cause stand out and hit headlines, so we guide them every step of the way. The more successful petitions there are, the more

it inspires others. The platform is incredible and so many petitions have brought about real change. Laura Coryton's petition to end the tampon tax garnered more than 320,000 signatures, and the tax is due to be removed by 2022.

Some petitions have really affected

me personally, like Richard Ratcliffe's petition to free his wife, Nazanin, from imprisonment in Iran, which broke our record of 2.2m signatures. Often we are helping people through their darkest periods, after they have experienced huge loss. In 2017, in the wake of terror attacks and the Grenfell Tower fire, there was a spike in petitions. It was devastating, but seeing people speak up, to shine a light on heroic and compassionate actions, gave me so much hope in the human spirit in the midst of great tragedy.

It's also really interesting to see how petitions change over time. After *Blue Planet II* aired, we saw an increase in petitions about plastic and the environment; this is only getting bigger. It's great to see the impact it's making.

I'm often asked my advice about how to campaign, so I've written a book called *Do Something*, about the steps people can take to ignite change. My biggest aim is to show people that they have the power to raise their voices, because everyone deserves to be heard.

• *Do Something: Activism For Everyone (Hodder & Stoughton)* by Kajal Odedra is out now

My aim is to show people they have the power to raise their voices

PHOTOGRAPHY: CIRCE HAMILTON. HAIR & MAKE-UP: LYDIA WARD-SMITH

'I feel so proud to be leading this fashion wave for the future'

Maria Raga, 40, is CEO of Depop, the fashion resale app that is skyrocketing in popularity.

For years, we have been swept along by fast fashion – buying cheap, mass-produced clothes and casting them aside without a thought when our wardrobes get too full. Now, of course, attitudes are changing with consumers and brands all realising it's not sustainable.

I am delighted we are starting to see a shift, with more people seeking ethical methods for production. In fact, reports show that re-sold items will be as big as fast fashion in five years. That is where Depop comes in. Depop is a fashion marketplace app for buying and selling pre-loved items where users upload photos of clothes they're selling and communicate with other users directly.

It tends to start off as a sideline to make money from unwanted garments, but people who have a flair for it turn it into their full-time business and source clothes to sell on. I feel so proud to be leading this fashion wave for the future.

I studied for a business degree, going on to do a fellowship in the US working for a couple of university professors before deciding to pursue a career in consulting. I did an MBA and moved to London with my husband, where I took a job with Groupon.

However, after three and a half years, the role changed as the company became much bigger. Keen to go back to a more entrepreneurial position, I went to the Web Summit Conference in Lisbon. One of the contacts I met was an investor in Depop, who got in touch afterwards to tell me they were hiring. I joined the team in 2014 and was promoted to CEO in 2016.

The thing I love most about my role is meeting sellers. Many of them are under 26. Traditionally, the fashion industry has been very hard to break

into, meaning it can seem virtually impossible to build a business around it. However, if you have an eye for fashion, it is possible to become successful through Depop without financial backing or having a degree. One of our programmes at Depop is called Level Up, where we choose sellers we think have potential and work with them to ramp up their businesses in a quick and effective way.

Sisters Bo and Eve Brearley started in 2015 when Bo went to university and Eve sold the unwanted clothes she had left behind. The response was huge, and they soon realised they were on to something. Now, the sisters have set up Past Trash, which has 207k followers,

and they source and buy clothes to sell. The more money our sellers make, the more the Depop business grows. The app is built like a social-media platform, so increasingly, we are seeing that our community is the one driving trends and being influenced by social circles rather than big fashion brands.

As a leader, I think it's important to be visible. While a lot of my time is taken up with meetings or forward planning, I am determined to meet everyone on my team at Depop. Every week, I have open time to chat with the team. Becoming CEO is my proudest career achievement. Every day is exciting; I can't wait to see what the future has in store. □

INTERVIEWS: ARIELLE TCHIRPOUT, ELLA DOVE.
PHOTOGRAPHY: RII SCHROER/EYEVINE



Quickfire

Music or podcasts?

Music.

Scroll or switch off?

Switch off.

Night in or night out?

Night in with my family.

The gadget you couldn't live without?

My iPhone.

Novels or Netflix?

Novels.

I'm changing the game by...

Helping the next generation

to transform fashion.

For a better future, we need...

To build a better pipeline for female talent in STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths).

My biggest weakness is...

Glasses. I have over 30 pairs!

My next big ambition is...

To learn how to code!