
Collaborate to innovate



INTERVIEW

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"Create an environment where everyone feels empowered."

Two roles, one focus: **Mélanie Petit**, Head of Swiss Change Portfolio and Digital Programme Manager at Barclays Switzerland Services, is a force majeure who conceals a refreshing sense of humility from within the eye of her team-driven, tech storm. Powered by a strong set of values, the goal-oriented risk taker leads with confident, yet modest, resolve as she positions her team front-and-centre for collective success.

You have a very successful career at Barclays. Which parts are you proud of, from a personal perspective?

My team. When I first arrived, I had no team. I have had around 100 indirect reports through the programmes I have led but no team that I could coach and guide, and after a while I noticed I missed it – that human side of my job. Then, little by little, I grew my team and, when my boss left, I took over the Change Team from him, which I was really happy about and am very proud of them.

Specifically, what is it that you really like about working in tech?

What I like about technology is that we are driven by tangible things, which we deliver. It's real, and it doesn't stand still. Working in tech

is a constant challenge, aiming to solve problems and create solutions.

The financial industry is known to be a little slow to change. As Head of Change what is your perception?

It's true that it is the reputation but I don't feel it. At Barclays we are really committed to innovation. I am an innovation champion within the Private Bank group. We are encouraged to be innovative and there is a real framework around suggesting new ideas and concepts. It's also about inclusivity. My team is really diverse, not only in terms of nationality but also gender, age, religion. Diversity, in its real sense, is essential and boosts a team's skills, experience and ways of approaching problems.

How do you adapt company culture to effectively lead your teams?

I think I'm human in terms of my leadership model; I listen to people and drive them not only based on performance and results but also on the social and emotional sides. I try to help them understand that, even though we're working in technology, it's not just about the systems. I am constantly trying to make them aware of, what I call, 'the human side' of our job in technology: we have to keep in mind that our technical design, our lines of code, our vision of a system will be delivered to people who will work with them. Put yourself in our clients' shoes is a key message.

How do you approach tough decisions?

I very rarely take a decision in isolation

without discussing it because I think that people better understand that decision if they are part of the process.

The digital world is complex and it's fast: what do you think are the key characteristics of a modern leader today?

Don't be scared to make a decision and stand by the decisions you make because, if you don't, people won't trust you. The digital world, and the changes it brings, means you have to embrace it and keep learning but also trust your team, empower them to move forward and help them develop themselves. Create an environment where everyone feels empowered to challenge others and where people can bring their own ideas to the table. My team has known me

“I think that people better understand a decision if they are part of the process.”

for many years, some were there before me. I won't be the manager who tells them to do something and then disappear. It's about us and we will get it done together. Leading by example is definitely high on my list.

When considering collaboration, what are the key characteristics you look for in the team?

For effective collaboration, what I, and my team, are looking for, is reliable people. When I look back over my own experience, it's also about open-mindedness and transparency. It might feel like common sense but there is nothing stronger than collaboration based on open and honest communication.

Would you call yourself a risk taker?

I am goal-orientated. We haven't always had complete confidence from everyone in the company and I have taken the decision to push on. I take those decisions because I know the team will succeed and I trust them to deliver. I am not optimistic but realistic about the capabilities of the team and they trust me. The

risks I take are for them as well – they see it as their opportunity to shine. Every time I have been successful, it's a team effort. It is never just about me.

What is the biggest success from Barclays Switzerland that you think your team would be most excited about?

I think it's the fact that our very small digital team is now managing the strategic e-banking platform for the Private Bank group, globally.

You have been collaborating with Ergon for some years now – which attributes do you appreciate in the Airlock team?

There are several attributes we really like about Airlock. Definitely the trust is there. They are experts, super reliable and very transparent. It doesn't feel like a supplier relationship. And I like the culture of the company, as well.

What career advice would you offer?

Be passionate. We work a lot. We will be working for years. Rather than chasing that title, do something that will motivate you to work each day and be passionate about what you do. />

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