

DATA DISRUPTOR TEARS UP THE CAREER MAP AND PLOTS A PATH OF HER OWN

SEPTEMBER 10, 2019 | 10:27 AM | HAMISH BURNS

Sorcha Lorimer quit comfy job with Standard Life to set up as a fintech entrepreneur.



Sorcha Lorimer was born to do things differently. She was raised by her 'kind of hippy' parents in a household filled with 70s rock, where it was quite

normal for musicians such as the legendary Malian guitarist Ali Farka Toure to drop by.

The background was entrepreneurial but not in a way normally associated with the 80s.

"I grew up with late night jamming sessions," she says. "Evenings dancing at gigs rather than in front of the telly, earning pocket money collecting tickets and ironing shirts for bands for spare change."

Lorimer's passion is data - a subject that's enough to glaze over the eyes of GDPR-fatigued chief execs. But for her, that's the point.

Her Edinburgh-based Trace business aims to take the jargon out of the subject and help businesses to visualise where their data is - not in an abstract cloud but on a world map.

She said: "Compliance has tended to be all about static spreadsheets that don't set the world alight. If you turn up at a meeting with your board and your spreadsheet, people are not necessarily going to be super-excited. So if you turn that into something visual like a global map, then you start to get people's engagement."

Not surprisingly, Lorimer's career path has been a little different. Having worked in marketing for an agency, she witnessed just how reckless business could be with customers' data. At Standard Life, she ended up working in IT and data security, where she learned how it could be protected.

Trace helps corporate customers work out which data they need to be concerned about and where to find it and get greater visibility on cloud processing. Lorimer believes many firms felt needlessly overwhelmed in the run-up to last year's GDPR-compliance deadline.

So far, the only two major fines meted out in the UK have been to British Airways and Marriott. Lorimer fears others could follow because firstly, they think the work ended on the deadline of May 24, 2018.

"Unfortunately a number of businesses saw that as the finishing date, when in fact that was the start date," she said.

That's where Trace comes in, to look at what protections are in place so there can be no nasty surprises lurking somewhere in a data centre in a non-EU adequate country such as Belize, where there are no transfer tools in place.

Lorimer said: "If you're isolating your compliance function or just seeing that as a separate project then that's going to lead to problems - it's missing the point.

"To me the responsibility for it should sit in operations. Information is the lifeblood of your organisation, so you need to run it from there, you need to bring in IT, marketing, HR, so it needs to be run by someone who's got the ability to coordinate all those areas of business. Sometimes compliance is just given to someone who might not necessarily have the nous or the stature to pull all that together."

As for the map, it makes sense to see data in terms of a world map, because when we start to store data in the cloud, we're potentially entrusting it to stacks of computers in countries with different standards from our own.

She has given up the well-paid corporate life for that of a solo entrepreneur, with the financial instability and often lonely road that entails. But she has found support in the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Edinburgh and earned one of nine much-sought after places on Addleshaw Goddard's UK-wide AG Elevate scheme for fintechs.

Trace also has a spot on the prestigious Wayra AI & Blockchain accelerator, based at Edinburgh's hub for data driven innovation, the Bayes centre.

She's pretty happy to be rubbing shoulders with the legal profession, having dreamed as a teenager of being a human rights lawyer.

"I wasn't a natural fit for a corporation, with hindsight," she says. "My mum was bringing a lot of world music to Scotland, a lot of African music, so she was doing something quite groundbreaking in her own way. I was growing up with that, and I think that's a template that comes back to you.

"So I knew I wanted to do it - it was a case of when. It was a comfortable job but, looking back, it wasn't for me at all. I didn't realise how much, because I am a risk taker, albeit a calculated one.

"I'm more suited to what I'm doing now, even though it's a lot less comfortable, but I don't seek out comfort. It's a great time to be doing this."

SOURCE:

<https://www.insider.co.uk/special-reports/data-disruptor-tears-up-career-19916005>

insider.co.uk



Sorcha Lorimer quit Standard Life to set up her data start-up Trace