



## Young Gifted and STEM Profile – Who Am I?

### Danelle Parry – UK

#### 1. Who are you and what is your STEM Superpower?

Hi! My name is Danelle and I've worked in Digital Product for the last 3 and a half years. My superpower within is, having the ability to seek out pain points within online journey's using data and insights. This enables me to create and deliver, with the expertise of technologists and designers, innovative solutions to improve the experiences of customers across web and mobile applications.

#### 2. When did you first realise you were passionate about your STEM subject or field?

Curiosity for the "mechanisms behind the tick" have always been a place my mind would often wander to when things became faulty. Understanding how things work behind the scenes, and in some cases, how I can replicate such to create my own, sparked my interests from a young age. I attended a secondary school that specialised in Technology so studying IT was an expected part of the curriculum. I was not immediately interested in this subject, but a lesson around recreating traffic light simulations intrigued me. Finding ways to ensure this complex system worked at all interchanges, and then pressing play on my creation to see if it worked successfully, appealed to me immediately.

It was from that moment that I formed a new love for Technology.

#### 3. Describe the route you took, which lead from finishing your GCSEs until now.

Back in 2007 after completing my GCSE's, technology was not like it is today. And so, my knowledge on the careers I could have pursued back then was rather limited. After having a stint with braces and meeting an Orthodontist for the first time, I chose to go down the medical route; trying my hand at Dentistry. I studied Biology and Chemistry at A level in college but quickly came to the realisation that it was not for me, abandoning the dentistry dream with it. This led me to switch gears and take up a course in *Creative Media*, where I planned to get into a career in Fashion. But, before that sudden change could manifest, **I suddenly became a mother!**

In 2011, I made the decision to go back to education. This time, I studied Multimedia Technology where I could combine tech with the arts. One of the modules on that course was around *website design* which brought back the feeling of the traffic light simulation all those years ago. This pushed me to take an undergraduate degree in *Computing*, where I learned everything from building programmes and web pages, to learning about network systems and databases.

After graduating in 2015, I landed a job with **TalkTalk as a Technical product executive**, working as a programmer to create web optimisation tests. I worked directly with Product Managers, taking their requirements and creating their a/b & multivariant tests. Working alongside them is what introduced me to the role, but also, interested me enough to put myself forward for a position in one of the teams. As a Junior Product Manager, I worked on implementing new promotions and price changes to the website with the help of the Marketing, Technology and Design teams. After 2 and a half years I was unfortunately made redundant due to a company restructure but before long, I gained a new position as a **Product Manager at BT**. I stayed there for over a year, working to deliver a range of new product propositions across the digital space.

The back end of 2019 I took a break from the role to pursue other interests with the view to go back in the near future.

**4. If you had to study/focus on ONE STEM area for the rest of your career what would it be and why?**

Technology would have to be the one STEM subject I could focus on for the rest of my career if I had to. The reasoning behind that is how much technology as a whole, has evolved from when I was a young girl to now. Due to the way computers have upgraded, social media has advanced, and the Internet has developed. This has opened up so many opportunities within this sector for people's careers. But, even for the girls like me who had an interest in all things technical growing up. This industry is one that will continue to grow as the years go by, especially as Technology is implemented more into our everyday lives.

**5. What do you enjoy most about your day to day role?**

I enjoy the fact that I am faced with a problem that I need to solve. I achieve this by analysing data and customer insights, and then working with my own team of technologists and designers to bring my ideas to fruition. I then get to see the immediate impact my ideas have on our customers when it is delivered to the world online.



*Danelle, outside the BT offices*

**6. Who would name as your main STEMspiration and why?**

On looking back, my main STEMspiration had to be my mum. I hadn't realised at the time but, my mum really was the first person that introduced me to, 'Science' and 'Technology' in STEM. As a little girl, I remember my mother learning how to create websites and putting together the hardware to build the computers we used in the house. She later went on to study an degree in Human Nutrition and Life Sciences. She showed me it was possible for women, even with kids, to have an interest in and study such challenging courses.

**7. Outside of STEM, what are your other hobbies?**

Due to my keen interest in the art of storytelling, I thoroughly enjoy watching films and binge worthy shows that all have a great storyline behind it. Genres that interest me the most are Drama's, Thriller's and Crime. But I can watch all types from Comedy to Animation. I also enjoy blogging and have my own blog where I speak about my experiences around motherhood, career and personal development.

**8. Lastly, if you could give our Young Gifted and STEM readers one piece of advice, what would it be?**

For a long time, I shied away from working in a Technology field because I believed it to be a male dominated place that was not considered as "cool".

*So, my advice would be to not let any misconceptions of any subject, or career in STEM, stop you from pursuing one if you have an interest in it. You will likely prevent yourself from having a career you are indeed passionate about, due to having preconceived notions that may not even be accurate to begin with.*

