

Bring IT On News

8 March, 2019

International Women's Day

Emer Maguire - Science Communicator, radio presenter (and Speech and Language Therapist)- Freelance/self-employed

Tell us a bit about your current job role?

So at the minute I do several different types of jobs! I'm a science communicator, so I communicate science to the general public and try to get people excited about science. I do this by speaking at/hosting events, and by presenting radio shows on BBC radio Ulster. At the minute I'm the presenter of a show called 'Science and Stuff: How Music works'. A lot of the time when I'm communicating science I use music and humour to facilitate my message. I'm a lifelong musician and I do musical comedy and find this helps people enjoy the science more. I also work two days a week as a speech and language therapist with adults with brain injury.



What does a normal day look like in your job?

There is no normal day in my job! On a Monday and Tuesday I work as a speech and language therapist from 8am to 4pm. On those days I work with people who have speech, language and communication difficulties as a result of brain injury.

The rest of the week my days are very varied! It's a busy time of year for me at the minute because the Northern Ireland Science festival is on and I'm usually involved with a few events at it. And I'm also right in the middle of my current radio series! So a typical day this week would include an early start for me-I get up early to do some admin things like social media and preparing scripts for events. This week I tend to have mid morning meetings with companies I work with, and then my afternoons are spent interviewing guests for my radio show. Then in the evening I either start planning for the next day or I'm somewhere on a stage hosting or performing at an event!

What was your first job?

My first job was in my local ASDA and I loved it. It gave me a lot of confidence and made me realise I had a knack for communicating with people. After that I worked as a support worker for people with brain injury and then a support worker for people with dementia. And now I work as a science communicator, presenter and speech and language therapist!

How did you get to where you are now from school?

I took the scenic route to my career as a science communicator and presenter! I studied music, psychology and English for A level (no science!). I then did a degree in Speech and Language Therapy. I didn't realise the degree was actually going to be quite scientific-that took me by surprise, and I was even more surprised that the science was my favourite part of the degree. Particularly the anatomy and neurology we studied. So after my degree I went to Queen's in Belfast and did a Masters Degree in Clinical Anatomy. During my Masters degree, I entered a science communication competition called FameLab. I had to educate a live audience on an interesting aspect of science. It turns out I was pretty good at it, and I won the Northern Ireland and then the UK FameLab. I was named the best science communicator in the UK! A while later I was chosen to go to Kazakhstan to represent the UK and Northern Ireland in an international science communication competition and I won! From there, people started asking me to speak at events, and then BBC got in touch and we put together a radio show. Now I've had four radio series, and I've travelled as far as Asia giving my talks on science.

Bring IT On News

8 March, 2019

International Women's Day

Emer Maguire - Science Communicator, radio presenter (and Speech and Language Therapist)- Freelance/self-employed



Fr l-r - Emer Maguire, Ruth McGuinness (PWC), Julie McGrath(Graffiti Recruitment) in attendance at the Bring IT On - Women in Tech event in December 2019, helping inspire and teach NI High school students about IT careers and pathways

What was your favourite subject at school?

Music, English and P.E. were always my favourite. Music was my number one though!

What has been your favourite job to date and why?

My current job as a science communicator and radio presenter. I get to meet the coolest people for my radio show who are doing amazing things in science and I love that. I also love speaking at events because I get to show people that science can be cool and fun and it's for everyone.

What has been your least favourite job to date and why?

I have never really had a job I didn't like. I think every job I've had to date has added something to my character and life experience.

Best piece of advice you have received?

When I started public speaking I used to get really bad stage fright and really nervous beforehand. Someone then told me **'fake it until you become it'**

In other words, pretend to be confident and then eventually you will be confident. I followed that advice immediately. My stage fright disappeared and people often tell me I'm one of the most confident people they know. It worked!

What are your top tips for getting into the IT industry?

I'm a science communicator, but my sister is a fantastic senior software developer so I got a little help from her on this questions! Her top tips are following the path of IT through school and university by choosing topics such as ICT and technology.

Then figure out if you are the type to go into software development, testing or support (which is where most roles are!) A major top tip is to do little IT projects at home. Build websites, create simple apps. Do anything IT related that interests you! Having something like this to add to your CV can show companies what skills you have or even how innovative you may be (and also that you have a genuine passion for IT!)

IT is such a fast moving industry, are there any jobs/roles that don't exist now that you are excited to see in the future?

Well, technology is popping up everywhere so I can't even imagine what jobs we're going to have in the future! All I know is that we're going to become more and more tech and ICT dependant so the more skills you have in that area the better equipped you'll be for future careers.

Who is your role model and why?

All the women changing the world through their passion for science, IT and tech. There are literally too many to choose from.

What would you say to a young female who is contemplating pursuing a career in IT?

Go for it! IT is the future and we need more fantastic women in the industry. A career in IT gives you so many different career opportunities. Pretty much every company needs IT so it gives you endless career possibilities. Want to work at Google? Netflix? Snapchat? Want to create apps? Make robots? Develop games? Change the world? Do it through IT.