

INTERVIEW WITH EMILY AUCKLAND



Programme director at Chapter Zero

by Olatz Bulson-Roman

Emily Auckland is program director at Chapter Zero, a membership organisation for non-executive directors created in 2019. Chapter Zero helps those sitting on the board at big companies to understand climate change and how it affects their business. It is the first organisation with this specific goal.

Influencing techniques

As part of her job, Emily meets a wide range of people, each with different experiences, ways of thinking and perspectives on issues. In order to engage her audience on issues such as climate change and inform them on how to make sustainable choices, Emily recommends "bringing humanity to it".

She uses the example of listening to a friend telling you about an experience they've had – how would you respond or interact to try to genuinely understand what has happened? Our language and approach is important.

Empathy and active listening are critical to engage people, according to Emily. "It's knowing what they care about and what interests them" since "what's important to you may not be important to them". From this, you can then frame your arguments. Audience research beforehand is also critical – are they more emotional, rational or analytical? This will help you actively listen to what matters most to your audience, to then be able to respond to them appropriately and get your message across.

"Just pretend whoever you're speaking to that you've spoken to them before" – this immediately builds rapport too! "Reflecting the energy level of the other person is really important".

A day in the life

As Emily says herself, her role as program director entails "anything and everything". From managing and supporting a team, managing partner relationships and writing budgets and reports it's no wonder Emily describes her position as "all singing all dancing".

Career highlights

When asking Emily what she is most proud of regarding her career, she first cites "the UK's SDGs Measuring Up report" which detailed how the UK was performing on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

UK Stakeholder for Sustainable Development (UKSSD) organised to have lots of different organisations look into the UK's performance on the UN's goals. After managing the whole project, the report was launched at the Houses of Parliament and it gained a lot of traction.

"When you invest so much energy in something you worry whether it's going to be terrible at the end, it's very satisfying when it's done!"

We think the report is great – so check it out!

More generally, Emily's career success has been that she has shifted between very different areas of work. From community development, working with local and national deprived communities, to working with businesses on sustainability – "being able to do that and develop the network that I have in that time I feel is quite an achievement for me and says "you can do anything if you put your mind to it!"



THE GLOBAL GOALS

CONTINUED...

"We have an opportunity to develop the world, develop society, in a way that has a positive outcome for the planet and has a positive outcome for the people and I want to do what I can to bring this to my work"

Emily's care for our planet started from a young age and stemmed from her family "they care a lot about nature". "I was a member of Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth". However, Emily was quite badly bullied at school – something which squashed her enthusiasm and "had quite an impact on me".



"You don't need to feel that the decisions you take today are going to affect your options in the future" – something which Emily has proved by successfully navigating and persuing multiple roles. "If you're determined and passionate you can apply your skills and experience to something different".

"Whether it's your gender, race or another identity factor, if you can use that as a motivator to go and put yourself in those situations where those voices are missing then I think that's really positive!"

"BE CONFIDENT IN YOURSELF"

"You can do whatever you want to do in your life"

Having originally pursued an undergraduate art degree, a summer internship to help rehabilitate offenders led to a "revolutionary moment" for Emily, as it posed an alternative mindset to her studies. "I was thinking about others all the time" and this pushed her to conclude that "things are wrong in the world and I need to solve them".

Emily completed her art degree and from then has worked with a variety of people – from refugees to disabled adults. Work which motivated her to pursue a masters in sustainable and international development.

A second revolutionary moment came when reading a book with the main argument "what's the point in solving poverty if the planet's going to die". This book led to the realisation of how interconnected and important social and environmental issues can be.

Through her Masters, Emily was able to work for an environmental charity and do work on the SDGs with the UN. Emily then pioneered UKSSD and she is now working for Chapter Zero!

"Climate and boards is very specific, but actually, really a important part of the big picture – unless we tackle that bit, we are not going to tackle the big picture".

Put yourself out there and try not to criticise yourself and question your ability especially as a woman.

During Emily's time at UKSSD she had to do a lot of public speaking, something which led to many sleepless nights, however, Emily overcame this with a determined mentality "I have the responsibility to do things which are terrifying because as a woman I have the responsibility to own that space" – it's either a man or it's me so it's going to be me!"

"Remember you don't have to tackle these things alone and there will always be external people who will support you and help."

