

# Who wants to be typical? Be Yourself!

The most recent event in the packed Operational Delivery Profession schedule explored career progression strategies for female leaders.

Recognising that women are under-represented in senior strategic and management roles across the Operational Delivery Profession, Power to Progress took steps to address this and provide game changing insights in a fraction of the time that it would take to experience the same. Delving into conversations around the application process, ambition and being the only female in the room, the event aimed to tackle some of the big issues.

“We are not superhuman. It is important as a leader to really bring your whole self and be honest with your team. We are not going to know everything. Being yourself takes the pressure off, and I am not afraid to ask questions.”  
[Bernadette Thompson]

Rebekah Warburton (Deputy Director Universal Credit Service Planning and Delivery DWP) took up the role as host for this wholly virtual event, setting the scene, introducing our high-profile speakers and taking part in an interesting panel discussion with Angela MacDonald, (CEO and 2nd Permanent Secretary for HMRC), Bernadette Thompson (Deputy Director at MHCLG) Liza Berresford (Facilitator and General Manager Thresholds) and some very popular speakers from our recent ODP Engage virtual event, Paul Morrison (Director Strategy, Legal and Governance, FSA), Derek Thomas (Chief Operating Officer, VOA) and Shaun McNally (SR0 Covid-19 Response and EU Transition, MOJ).

Angela MacDonald also gave us a fascinating insight into her career story and how she became the highest-ranking female leader in operational delivery, prompting one delegate to comment:

“Extremely inspirational, massively relatable and a HUGE relief to hear everything Angela talked about. Thank the lord for people like you, Angela MacDonald.”

Our keynote speaker, Penny Mallory wowed attendees with her amazing account of overcoming adversity to realise her dreams. Talking about personal strength, Penny draws on her experiences as a homeless teenager who fulfilled her impossible dream of becoming a Champion Rally Driver. The message that underpinned was simple but powerful. As she put it:

“It doesn't matter what word you throw at it – grit, perseverance, resilience, passion, control, determination: mental toughness will always play a more important role than anything else in you achieving your goals.”

Penny's session included four excellent practical tips for building mental toughness that anyone can benefit from. These, and the advice she gave really resonated with the audience, sparking a flood of comments such as:

“Thank you Penny for sharing your amazing story. I have taken on board all the suggestions and advice for building resilience and feel excited about

trying these out. Really great stuff!”

Truly inspirational.

The day ended with a powerful panel discussion, providing attendees with the opportunity for reflection and questions to be answered. The session proved extremely insightful and informative and pointed towards the huge range of resources available on the event website. Take a look at our event website to find out more [ODP Power to Progress website](#).

The day provided inspiration for all and a fascinating insight into career progression in general.

You can also recap on the event and join in the conversation on our social media pages, using the hashtag #P2PODP on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).