



## SEASON 4

### EPISODE 06

[INTRO]

**[0:00:05.8] ANNOUNCER:** Welcome back to Happy Porch Radio. The digital agency podcast for progressive agency owners and web professionals. Season four is an exploration of diversity in our industry. Especially gender diversity.

This season, your host, Barry O’Kane is joined by some wonderful cohosts. For conversations with agency leaders and diversity and inclusion experts.

[INTRODUCTION]

**[00:00:32] BOK:** Welcome back to Happy Porch Radio. In this episode, Erica and I have the pleasure of speaking to Elizabeth Gibbons, founder of Zeroseven, which is a digital development house in Brisbane, Australia. Elizabeth was a guest back in Season 2 talking about Umbraco, and it is wonderful to have her on the show again.

This time we get to hear about, in her own words, her mission to recruit more female developers. Now, I love the energy and passion Elizabeth always brings and in this conversation, there is much that is inspiring as well as some very specific advice on recruiting and retaining a diverse development team.

So let’s meet Elizabeth.

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:01:14] EG:** My name is Elizabeth Gibbons. I’m the director of client services at an agency called Zeroseven. We’re based down under in Brisbane, Australia and we’re an Umbraco Gold Partner. We specialize in CMS builds and we do bespoke applications for clients.



**[00:01:30] BOK:** Awesome. Thank you so much. Elizabeth, you've had been on the podcast before when we did the season focused specifically on Umbraco. Welcome back.

**[00:01:38] EG:** Woo! Very excited to be here.

**[00:01:40] BOK:** Also joining me today is Erica. Hi, Erica.

**[00:01:43] EQ:** Hey, Barry. How is it going?

**[00:01:44] BOK:** It's really good. Good to have you back as well.

**[00:01:46] EQ:** Thanks.

**[00:01:47] BOK:** Elizabeth, I thought we would start getting a little bit of background on yourself and on Zeroseven and the work you do. Before jumping into talking about recruitment and diversity.

**[00:01:57] EG:** Cool. Like I said before, we're a digital development house in Brisbane. We mostly specialize in not for profit and government sector. We do a lot of work in accessibility, and user experience and donations and lotteries management. We have a lot of experience in kind of that vertical. Otherwise, the other stream of the business is bespoke applications. We build things like CRMs and mobile apps and applications to help people run their businesses better.

**[00:02:22] BOK:** Awesome. We met in person on the Gold Coast at the Umbraco Conference. I have a vivid memory of really interesting conversation with you, although there was a drink involved, about your recruitment process. I was really pleased when you reached out to talk about when I sent out that request for people for this podcast. You responded saying you'd love to talk about recruitment and recruiting female developers.

Can you tell me a little bit about why that's a topic of an interest for you first before we move into the actual specifics?



**[00:02:53] EG:** I think as a female owner of a digital agency, finding other females is always been a struggle. Unfortunately in the industry, at least in Australia and Brisbane, it's pretty male-dominated and finding talent as a whole is very challenging, because I think in the global economy, it's really hard to find talented developers especially ones that will work regionally in your area.

For our agency like ourselves, because of the verticals and the clients we serve, we don't have the option of outsourcing. A lot of the work we do – one of the requirements is to have the developer in-house. I guess part of my personal project has been to bring more females on board, to have more diversity and I guess more opinions and perspectives on the types of clients we serve.

Because I guess if you're building a site for one of Australia's leading not for profits, it is fair to assume that half those not for profit uses will probably be women. I feel quite strongly about having that voice and having more females take part in those projects and voice their concerns and opinions as part of that. That's probably where we started.

Going back to the conference in the Gold Coast, I think it was Erica who presented a really great – I think it was 30, 40 minute presentation on, I guess, some of those mental barriers that women face when they apply for jobs and the obstacles that are common that kind of stimulated. It kind of validated a lot of things that I'd already kind of experienced through gut feel, but gave me a bit more perspective as to why those things are those way.

**[00:04:16] BOK:** Yeah. Erica, that talk was really good, I was in Brisbane as well.

**[00:04:19] EQ:** Thank you.

**[00:04:22] BOK:** When we talk about the reason why motivating and doing all that, and you talked about being a male-dominated developer community, does that make you feel that you have to actually work harder for that recruitment. What do you actually do there?

**[00:04:34] EG:** When it comes to women recruitment, it sounds like I have a fem bot army or something - but it has been an area that I have been quite passionate about and feel like. For example, we have a team of six application developers or backend developers and it took me a



while to get a first backend developer. Once I got one, I got a second one quite easily. It's almost like you have to have one to collect them all kind of mindset. If a woman sees another woman in that position and they know it's like a safe space and they know it's going to be okay.

So that kind of was a very aha moment for me, that once I got one, the others would follow. A big part for women, I think, in my experience of recruitment is it's all about – a lot of it has to do with brand perception. It seems to me like the female developers are very concerned about lifestyle and very concerned about culture and very concerned that they're going to have not special attention, but their individual needs would be catered for in a different way.

That becomes a big point of difference, a big brand difference. When I went on my crusade to hire more female developers, I had to go to more like female - women who code events and really get the word out there that Zeroseven really wanted to hire women developers and that we're a women friendly workplace and that we had policies and procedures in place. Point of differences that would make it a great place to work.

I really had to go out there and kind of spread the word. They weren't just flooding in. They had to know it was okay to apply here and that we were expecting them and that we really want to bring them onboard and that really had to get out there. I spent a lot of time at meet ups, just meeting people and just getting the word out there that we were looking for people.

Because everyone else has like women friendly quotas, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Because we're a small agency comparatively, I only have like 20 people compared to like hundreds. Obviously, the agencies of hundreds have an HR department and they could spend a lot of time promoting their values and so forth. As a smaller agency, it was that much harder and really putting the brand awareness out there that we're looking, that we're supportive and so forth made a big difference.

**[00:06:32] BOK:** Yeah. That's a really big commitment. I'd like to talk about some of the specific things you were doing there. But just before that, you sort of said you had a personal mission and a drive and so on to do that. But that's quite a big commitment in your busy schedule. You're running an agency. You're doing all the work and stuff.



Was that process challenging, or did you sort of enjoy and sort of feel motivated to do that or did you have to kind of make that happen?

**[00:06:52] EG:** I think a lot of people identify with other agencies and so forth. I'm the only female director I know of in our big community. I don't really know many other ones. We're kind of a rare breed. Myself was quite, "We can do this," mindset. I also got sick of hearing from my in-house team was that, "Oh! Well, if there were more female developers, they would be more qualified, etc."

That whole mindset seemed to be that the process would identify females just in itself and that we are trying to find females, but it's too hard. That's not enough good ones out there. They're not mature enough, they're not really active. I got so sick of hearing the excuses as to why I couldn't get a good female applicant. I kind of had to take it on myself to be like, "Stop it. I'm tired of all the excuses. I'm just going to go out there and make this work."

Because I just felt it was like really important that we have this more representation in that area, because the clients we serve and I just felt for humanities cause, that they were out there. You just had to approach it in a different way. When you go to big events as well, I usually challenge other directors on this front, being like, "So, nice slide there of all your staff. Lovely that they're all like middle-aged white men, which is fine." But then I challenge them and saying, "Why don't you have more female representation in these areas?" The same excuses, like, "Oh, I'm not qualified. Too hard. Too hard. Too hard." I was like, "I'm going to go out there and find a way to find them and then I'm going to tell everyone how I did it."

**[00:08:14] EQ:** That's a huge stereotype to take on. Yeah, that's amazing.

**[00:08:18] EG:** Yeah. I guess – it's one of the things though that's like, obviously, I would love to see more females in a leadership role, in development and in digital development. Everyone talks about it, but I don't see many people paying lip service to it. I'm like, "You got to practice what you preach." I would like to work in a place that involves that. I was like, "Fine. Then I'll just create it."

Yeah. It might sound a bit daunting and a big over the top, but I guess that's just my approach to most things in life, which is just like, "Whatever. Just get on with it. Make it happen."

**[00:08:46] EQ:** How did you just initially come up with your idea for how to approach this? I know that I've - in some of the talks that I've given, we talk a lot about how the job advertisements are written and things like that. But you actually went boots on the ground to meet-ups, which I think is great. I actually don't know a lot of women that go to meet-ups either. So it can be hard to find on those circles.

**[00:09:10] EG:** That's a whole other conversation, meet ups. We can have a whole podcast about that kettle of fish. Anyways, happy to talk about that another time. There are women-specific developer meet ups. Like Women Who Code, or Women In .net, or like those groups and they're pretty weird. They're very different vibe to the male meet ups. Obviously, women developers feel more secure and comfortable in that space, because that is all females and it can just kind of be themselves and experience that. It sounds a bit shady. Just gonna put it out there.

But I did have to liaise with some recruitment agencies on this one. I didn't hire a recruiter. I just said to them, "Where are the female developers. Where do they hang out? What is their natural habitat?" Then it turned out that there were these kind of closed groups of meet-ups that existed, like women in technology. In Brisbane, there's a couple of different ones. I was like, "Okay." I just like made it kind of priority for the next like couple of months to go to those meet ups and just kind of meet as many as possible. Because they'd never heard of my agency. They didn't know that we existed, which is fair enough, because another issue I found is, yeah, the big, the ThoughtWorks, the Redify, et cetera, the Deloittes. They have female inclusive program.

Obviously, if I was a female developer, I would just take the easy path and go into those programs, because they're built for me, designed for me, et cetera. But you have to have that brand recognition. You kind of have to meet them and have that perception out there that you're looking as well and that you're a viable option. I guess it's really impressive to candidates that I made that effort because I meant that like they're really welcome here.

**[00:10:36] EQ:** Do you think smaller agencies as a whole, do you think they have a harder time fighting that stereotype because they don't have those programs like the bigger companies do?



**[00:10:46] EG:** Of course, definitely. As a smaller agency, it's already super hard to find talented developers, especially in the .NET area. You're competing and it's like, "I've lost developers to like Facebook." You're competing on like a global talent scale for some very specific skillset. Anything you can do to set yourself apart. Already finding male developers was a challenge and then you're like, "Okay. Let's find some female ones." That's even a smaller pool. You really have to stand out.

Going to your earlier point about recruitment ads, that's a huge – everyone knows that area of problems, problem area. I try really hard to really focus in the culture and kind of the benefits of being a Zerosix employee in the job ads and solving that language. If I get a female resume, I will call them like then and now. As soon as it shows up, I will call them and follow up and ask them questions and I will basically like, not prioritize them, but I will really go that extra mile to kind of hold their hands and reassure them that we are quite committed to their application, because it is so competitive. They might get a call from someone else the next day. But because I make that extra effort and really try to connect with them, that you can stand out.

I recently hired someone a couple of months ago who's like, "Because you made that personal connection, it really made me feel valued in my perspective and so forth," and they chose us over another bigger team, because we've made that extra – a little extra effort that made the difference. Which I don't think not to stereotype men, but I don't think the male developers care that much. They're not really that engaged with the process, versus I found the female developers, they want to be engaged. They want to know more. They kind of really do their due diligence before they proceed. Versus the guys are kind of like, "Whatever." What's the pay kind of deal? It's just a very different experience.

**[00:12:26] EQ:** Yeah, that makes sense.

**[00:12:27] EG:** There are probably guys that are more engaged and there's probably women who are more disengaged. It's kind of like I approach with a sales mindset, which is like, "What features and benefits are going to get this across the line here. What do I need to do to make this happen?"

Even once you hire them, like you still have to have a very different approach. You still have to be – I think female developers are very much – this all sounds really cliché. I'm not a cliché



person. But I guess in my experience, do you have to really be more on the soft skill side, and that's really hard entering like a male-dominated team.

You have to be really conscious of just making sure they're included and making sure that they feel included and that if they are having a bad day, it's okay. That's a very different management style, which is when you've worked so long with an all-male team, when you get a female developer, it is a bit – It does rock the boat a bit and it does make some developers uncomfortable and some of them find it really challenging.

They're like – they do question if it's the worth the pain. I think anything that's worth doing, anything different, is going to be – change management just sucks. It's reality. So you have to kind of throw the punches and be open to that. But there's so much to gain in the other side. You're getting to their value, another opinion. You're getting so much, you just kind of have to guide the team through it.

Yeah, I think our first female developer was an interesting experience. It was just different and people don't do different well, especially developers who are trained to be exact and to be methodical and logical and rational. I think that's a little bit different than that thread, can be challenging for them.

**[00:13:58] BOK:** Yeah. I'd really like to come back to that point as well. But before we do that, the other thing that you described to me in the past is, as well as that application process, but the actual selection and interview process. You had some steps there -

**[00:14:12] EG:** Well, that's been a wild ride for me, as in the whole interview process as a whole. So back in the day, we used to be about like doing tests and do homework and all these barriers of entry, which probably makes sense for some people and they're looking for, I don't know, IQ and ability first. I just switched my mind one day, "You know what? This isn't working for me. We're losing candidates. Candidates are spoiled. They don't have time to do homework." They want to be paid, to be honest. If you're going to give them homework, you better pay them for it.

Because if you have five jobs up for grabs, let's say you have five offers, you're going to take the easy one, the one that didn't give you homework. The one that like just gave you the job. So





that had to change as well. That's probably not male or female specific. It's just a market response to supply and demand.

We got rid of that whole process of doing the tests and so forth. We just created criteria, and if they met the criteria, they get a phone call right away. We do a quick soft skills evaluation, like do you sound like a person that could work here? Then, boom, straight to the interview.

Try to shorten the recruitment cycle to like five days or less. Either you're in or you're out kind of mentality, and it was really a game changer, because candidates would respond - they want to get on with their lives. They don't want to be waiting around for the call and just like I don't want to be waiting around to hire them. So we really shortened things up in the process.

I think that also worked well in the female recruitment because, again, they just want to get on with it too. I think something Erica's book about in our presentation was how like how sometimes females respond differently to these tests and questions. So if you're given the test and questions, you spend - like a female developer, assuming, might spend hours filling out that test and like trying to make it perfect and like flawless. Versus a guy would probably like wing through it and be like, "Whatever." A couple of hours, send it off.

That was about taking that burden out of the picture as well. So that they could just be themselves and realize that - we realize they're skilled, otherwise they wouldn't be in the phone call and they wouldn't be in the interview. We just want to get more about them and more about their personality and how they're going to fit in the team. We really switched those things up in the last year. It's made a big difference. Maybe it's more about treating people as people rather than like being so objective and rational in the decisions.

**[00:16:21] BOK:** Yeah. That's really interesting too. The testing thing is something that I've always struggled with. How do you identify - when you say the criteria, what are those criteria and how do you measure them?

**[00:16:30] EG:** A criteria for being ridiculous, to just being simple, like how many years of real experience do you have on a CMS platform? For most of our roles. Can you show me like three sites you've built? That's pretty much it. Do these sites like real.



Because we can train most skills and we can certify developers. But what we're looking for is kind of pure talent and, I guess, attitude and cultural fit are becoming more and more important over those skillsets. If you send me an example site, we can look at that. We can tear it apart and we can evaluate on ourselves based on those examples. We don't need to do this whole test.

That being said, the interview we do in person, there is a technical component. But it's just like question and answers, like 20, 30 minutes tops. We're not doing the whole like come sit in a room and do an exam thing anymore either, because people's time is valuable.

I have heard other agencies, they're now paying, at least is in the Brisbane market. They're paying people to do their tests. At least there's a monetary incentive to do that kind of criteria test. But it's not really something we're that interested in to be honest. We're mostly looking for relevant experience, relevant degree and you have some sense of something or other.

The bar is not that high, but a lot of people when you speak to them on the phone, you can tell right away whether they switched in and they're on top of the technology stack. When they tell you about their projects, they can tell exactly what they built them in, et cetera, etcetera. What blogs they follow. What they're passionate about. What part of the IT community they're part of, and that in itself speaks volumes.

If you came and talk at that level to me as a human being, then you're probably not a fit for here. It's really amazing how those soft skills really make a difference. We base a lot hiring on that, because yeah, we can train you. We obviously have our own bespoke way we approach quality assurance and our code and everything else. That's all given. It's just find the right fit. But that also applies to female developers as well.

**[00:18:22] BOK:** Another thing you mentioned earlier on when you're talking about that recruitment process is being able to demonstrate the culture and that this is a good place, and you talked about procedures. Is that something that you just had in place already or did you make an effort to kind of –

**[00:18:36] EG:** These things take years, I tell you. Years.



**[00:18:39] BOK:** That's what my question was asking.

**[00:18:40] EG:** Yeah. It's not like I woke up one day and say, "Guess what, guys? We have the best culture ever and here's how we're going to do it." No. There's a lot of trial and error and I guess it just comes with time and making that a focus. Actually, a funny story, I did have a conversation with someone about this yesterday about, "How is our culture doing? What are we doing better? Where can we improve?" It's like, "Oh, God. I can't take this."

I guess it's just finding enough. We found that like social media is where usually we talk about culture bits out in the public. Funny enough, Instagram, is where all the young people hangout apparently. I guess we like postings about birthdays and yoga classes and PT and we have a corporate video. But these things just take years to accumulate. Also, these rituals. We always do a birthday cake. We always do gym. We're always seen as the fit and healthy agency, because we do like 10 kilometer runs, we have a triathlon team.

One of the big things at Zeroseven, that's always been a continuous thread, is healthy lifestyle, I guess, and making sure that a fit body, fit mind is usually our mindset. Yeah, it just takes so much time to kind of create those assets. If you start in the right direction. I saw one of my competitors the other day started posting like that on Instagram like them working at the park. I was like, "Ha-ha-ha-ha! Copycats."

It's all good for the industry. But it's funny how young employees do look at your Instagram account and they do want to know what it looks like to work there for the day. They do want to know like, "What's my desk going to look like? What are the chairs like? What are the computers like?" It's really funny how like the younger generation is quite fixated on those things and quite fixated on the work-life balance and they want to know all that framework exist as well.

**[00:20:13] BOK:** Yeah. When you were describing for and you were saying that your experience of male developers being a little bit more blasé or whatever and the female developers being a bit more selective. I was wondering if that is partly – there's a higher risk for female developers, a high risk of going into an environment which is less pleasant.

**[00:20:29] EG:** Yeah, I think so. I think I can't speak for all female developers. I'm being very careful here, but there probably some agencies or some work environments that have not been



pleasant for female developers. I have heard from ones we've hired that they came from places that were maybe not as respectful or understanding of their particular concerns or needs.

I'm always sensitive to that. Yeah, we're always just aware that there's probably other places that are not so nice. I think that's when you get a bit cautious. It's just like if you've been burned before, you get a bit cautious and you want to make sure you don't repeat that negative experience. So you're extra careful the next time to make sure it's going to be okay.

**[00:21:06] EQ:** Also, I find it interesting. I don't know if this is a global thing or more in the U.S. But I see men hopping jobs with a lot more frequency than women. I think it adds –

**[00:21:16] EG:** Oh, all the time.

**[00:21:17] EG:** Yeah. I think it adds to women wanting to make sure they get it right the first time or the second time, because they're planning on being there for a while. Versus if a man is not happy in six months, he's out or whatever. Whatever it happens to be.

**[00:21:31] EG:** Yeah, you're totally right. I've seen many developers just hop from job to job to job every six months, like whatever the next pay packet comes from or wherever you're offered more money for something similar. They're a lot more – they'll drop it at the drop the hat, I think. But this is like not every developer is like that obviously, but definitely you see a little bit more of them moving around. Or they'll like go out of the job market to work on their own dev project for six months and then come back into the job. They definitely have a higher appetite for risk.

Versus, yeah, I think the female developers, they're a little bit more cautious. They're a little bit more aware. They seem to also be like very much like save my money, buy a house. They are a bit more concerned and a bit more stable. Obviously not all are, but the ones that we've had are definitely more in the kind of life planning type thing.

They have a plan and they have like goals and objectives that they're going to achieve for 10 years. Yeah, they want to make sure that whatever they're doing fits into that plan and that they're not going to give anything up or make any compromises in that time either. Yeah, I think they're just a different breed. They have different ambitions than the male developers do.



But that being said, we get a good one and you keep them happy, then you're probably get many, many, many years out of them, which they're not a car or anything. But I guess, for us, we measure recruitment success on whether we can keep them more than two years, and that's a good hire. So two to three years for us is ideal.

Actually, I think back, I think most of our female developers that have left us have left us due to lifestyle choice and mostly because like life choices, like maternity and so forth, which is fine. Yeah, they definitely stay up to like their life situation changes. I actually had never lost one to another agency or because they wanted to do something different. They're also want to talk too about these things. They'll definitely be transparent and open about whether something's not working for them or not.

**[00:23:21] EQ:** That's good, because aren't I find – at least maybe in the bigger companies. They're either too scared to say something.

**[00:23:28] EG:** But I think that also has a lot to do with leadership. Obviously, I'm a woman. I feel like they're quite comfortable coming to me with concerns.

**[00:23:35] EQ:** Very true.

**[00:23:35] EG:** That I'll be a bit more understanding, I suppose. I feel like not that I represent all women or something, but I do feel like I have ended up in quite a few awkward conversations with a table full of men trying to explain why something happened or a particular candidate's perspective on an issue that resonated me personally. Yeah, that makes perfect sense. But might not resonate with other people around that table either.

I can see a particular perspective on an issue that it would just be like, "Why can't they just do the job?" I'm like, "Well, I can see what the issue is here," because I would have the same issue. I guess it's identifying. Again, that's one of the things like imagine if you're a women at a big dev house and like 99% of the men are – 99% colleagues are all men, you wouldn't feel comfortable speaking up in a particular thing, because they wouldn't identify, that wouldn't resonate with them.

You got to lead from the top-down.



**[00:24:24] BOK:** Yeah. Leadership is so important. I want to just quickly go back to what you were saying before about as you're adding or changing the balance of the team and that being a challenge for some people and a challenge for the team, is that something that you kind of – either you personally just do, like you said you're managing through, or is there something very structured and specific that you would try and avoid those circumstances?

**[00:24:50] EG:** That's a tricky one. I guess we're a smallish team. It's not like you have policies and procedures around that. It's kind of like a case-by-case basis and it's not obvious. It's just subtle things I think that are the killer sometimes.

Asking like why hasn't a certain development been assigned a certain task? Well, we think that person is not reliable. Why do you think they're not reliable? It's kind of questioning some assumptions, based on just some weird prejudices or ideas.

Because people have ways of controlling their environment and controlling what's around them to suit them and they'll kind of like say whatever it takes to kind of control those things. You kind of have to go in there and really question people's assumptions and prejudices. Because changes are it's just them trying to control what's around them to the best of their ability, which sounds kind of weird when I talk about it loud.

But I guess like, yeah, you really have to question, question, question a lot of the decisions to make sure everyone's kind of getting an equal voice and that they are thinking – that they aren't just jumping to a conclusion based on their crazy assumptions, that they are thinking about it in a rational - which sounds funny, because I just said all the guys are rational, but they can use that as an excuse and a way to hide behind something that they're not comfortable with.

**[00:25:55] BOK:** Earlier in the season we had a conversation with Dan Robertson about bias and the different types of unconscious bias.

**[00:26:02] EG:** It definitely resonates. As in like I have been in some very awkward conversations with some senior developers where you do have to kind of confront them on their bias. Even the whole premise of, "There are no female developers. There are no talented ones. So why bother?"



That in itself is a crazy bias that they just decided, because they looked through thousands of resumes and they never really think as to why there are no females there. They just assume, “Well, I put out a job ad. I got the responses. What are you getting angry at me about?” You really have to challenge them on that as well.

Not that I get angry about it, but they do like – it’s just like they just don’t see it. They just don’t understand it. It’s just so – it’s like you don’t know what you don’t know type thing. You could just see them shutting down about it and saying, “Well, you told me to go find a developer. I went and did my process. This is the outcome.” It’s like, “What’s your problem?” It’s like, “Well, okay. Let’s dig through this.”

Let’s ask some questions. If we’re not getting any applications, where are the applicants? What are we doing differently from other people, and really kind of digging into it rather than just saying, “Yeah, it’s all good,” and kind of glazing over and trying again in the next job ad. But this takes time.

**[00:27:04] BOK:** Yeah, huge amount of – and the amount of effort and energy and passion that you’re putting into it is really interesting. That reminds me of something else that we’ve talked about before about. You mentioned as well, is like being a leader and being a female leader and being that kind of role model, I guess. I know Erica has talked about that and we’ve talked about that as well.

Is that something that you think have thought about?

**[00:27:25] EG:** Oh, I definitely did that. It’s like I think what I said before was like, once you get one female developer, the rest will follow. It’s kind of like “like attracts like”. So I guess as a female leader, it does create the culture that we are, I guess, perceived as sympathetic to female issues.

But I guess also that there’s lots of opportunity and they feel they have a voice. I think also just getting your first female developer, signals to the developers that, yeah, things must be good here, because obviously this one’s been here for a couple of years and she seems normal. So that must mean it’s going to be normal for me too.



It's kind of like that like attracts – It's like when you go to coffee shops. You always go to coffee shop, like I would always go to one that's hip, overpriced and ridiculous because I'm like, "Yeah, those are my people." I wouldn't go to like your Dunkin' Donuts, because those aren't my people. That's too generic. Yeah, you kind of go with who is on brand and it matches your values.

**[00:28:16] BOK:** We've been talking mostly about developers. Is this something that you've seen with other roles that you're recruiting as well?

**[00:28:23] EG:** We have been pretty evenly matched. We definitely had an even spread of female to male designers over the years. That's not really ever been an issue. Same with project managers. We have had a pretty even split. It's just the other developer roles – I was like, I was very passionate about having a backend developer, a female one. Which was probably the toughest thing you'll ever do.

Yeah, I think – I just felt that there's really one female in every team across all disciplines. Clients had also hasn't been that tough. Frontend developers, there seems to be a lot more females in that area probably because not based on my ridiculous knowledge, probably not true, but I do feel like frontend developing is a bit more visual. It's a lot more rewarding and so forth and it's not so mathy, sciency and stemmy as the backend development is. Frontend is a bit more glamorous.

Yeah, backend development I think can be perceived as a bit scary. Getting a female in that area I thought was really important. So that we could, I guess, have that kind of level of diversity and have a different voice or perspective.

Actually, the female developer we did get in that area has definitely really kind of cracked things open and really had some unique perspectives and really challenged some of the more senior guys on some of their beliefs and assumptions. It has been a great asset to the team. So I was very – the outcome was really great that we did push forward in that area. We like gained in spades.





**[00:29:41] BOK:** Yeah. That was going to be my next question actually. That's brilliant, is like what is the impact that it has made to you. You've said you've added a couple of female developers at the moment, and has that changed both what you're describing there in terms of challenging and bringing new perspective and adding value that way? But has it changed the rest of the team? Have you seen other developers, for example, have you seen them change in any way?

**[00:30:02] EG:** I would say probably they are way more empathetic. So I think prior to that they were like, "Yup, this is how I do my job. What I do all day. No one talk. Be quiet." They had all their headphones on and they're all very kind of insular. I think maybe because this particular individual was a lot more talkative, a lot more vocal about what was going on, wanted to engage with them more, that was a big shift for them.

Originally, there was a lot of pushback that they just want to keep their headphones and do their work and not talk, not communicate. Yeah, we added a female, it definitely opened the lines of communication. Definitely got the headphones off and got them engaging in the work in a different way. But that's not necessarily gender specific. It could just be a cultural fit as well, but that was just, I guess, our experience.

**[00:30:44] BOK:** Yeah, and maybe that's – in a broader sense, like if we think about diversity in a broader sense of not just male-female, but different types of people.

**[00:30:53] EG:** It's really easy I think when you are hiring developers, just hire the same, the same, the same, the same. Yeah, thinking about it a bit differently. But there isn't that much variety. When you look at applicants, yes, there's gender, but a lot of them are all kind of the same.

There's a certain personality type, especially backend development that exists, which is cool. There's nothing wrong with that, but yeah, I think if you can find a different variant, like gender, or maybe background and so forth, it does definitely help the team's health. You want that kind of different perspective, especially in backend development, where it is quite heavy and it is – you are dealing with some quite advanced logics and algorithms and so forth.



It is quite beneficial to have a different perspective. Everyone talks about talking to the rubber duck and explaining your problem. So instead of rubber ducks, why not get different people, and they can also explain your problems to them and work it through.

**[00:31:42] BOK:** Instead of talking to a rubber duck. You're obviously right. That's really interesting. I've always thought that interesting is that describing the problem, but for some reason we need a rubber duck instead of actually –

**[00:31:50] EG:** Or maybe just hire some different people, replace the rubber duck. Yeah, in that scenario, you're talking about this lonely developer talking to the rubber duck because no one else will listen to them. I'm like, "What? Just talk to your neighbor."

We can do a whole podcast about communication sometime. Yeah, it's quite interesting that I think the female developers are a lot more – they do like to talk about things more. They like to express themselves more. I think they have a lot more things they need to say and different ways of saying it, versus some of the male developers, in my experience at least, they are a bit more insulated. Definitely like to communicate on Slack more.

They're not really as outward in how they're going. But that's like also in other area, is like even in product management, if I had a dime for every time a developer hid something from me, I'd be like wealthy. Because they just don't want to tell you anything anyways. You have to break down those communication barriers.

**[00:32:39] BOK:** That's the impact it's had on the team and I think that sound really positive. At the start you described the reason you had this – I think you've been used on a mission. I think you even used that phrase. Now that you've kind of done some of that, how does that feel and what's your thinking going forward?

**[00:32:55] EG:** I think how I feel about is obviously I feel very confident in challenging other people when they say they can't find female developers. I'm like, "You're just not trying hard enough." Yeah, that's kind of what happened. I do feel I have a lot kind of tools in my tool belt that I can approach some of these things. I think like hiring is just one part of the story. You have to think about how to retain that individual, is also really important.



Yeah, you have to think about the whole picture and then what's the lifecycle of that individual going to be as well. I think a lot of people think, "Okay, I hired them. Job done. Work." There's a lot of thought and consideration that has to go into employee's lifecycle within your company. Even just managing – for example, even when you hire someone, you give them a letter of offer, then they might be like four weeks before they start because they have to quit their old job, whatever, or they're taking a break, whatever.

Even just staying in contact with that individual over that time is really important. Touching base with them. I just make crap up, like, "Hey, we have a pizza day coming up. What pizza do you like?" Just showing that you are that engaged in their start date.

Then I try to bring people in before their start date for like pizza lunches or the staff social so they can start getting more into it, because just because you have a signed contract, it doesn't mean they're going to bail on you. I really try to engage them through the whole process. Then the day they start, we try to make a little bit of a hoo-ha-ha about it and give like little welcome gift and like submerge and so forth just to keep them really excited to be here and then keeping that kind of engagement level high throughout the lifecycle and those kind of constant touches.

Probably what's so easy for me in that way is that I treat it almost like a sales deal. This is a client acquisition strategy. I just apply the same thing to a staff acquisition strategy, like what makes this individual happy. How am I going to engage them over the course of this lifecycle? How am I going to close this deal? How am I going to keep – keeping the base to this individual or meeting their expectations?

Which sound probably crude, but I think the same principles apply, because it's so expensive to be hiring in the first place. It is a very expensive exercise and time and money and resources that you want to get the best bang for your buck for at least two or three years in that investment.

**[00:35:02] BOK:** Awesome. Thanks, Elizabeth. We're running out of time unfortunately.

**[00:35:06] EG:** That's okay.



**[00:35:07] BOK:** Yeah. I don't think it's okay. I would like to keep talking. What would be – first, if somebody like looking – running an agency or running a small team who's looking to increase their diversity or find more female developers specifically, what's the maybe one piece of advice or one thought you would leave them with?

**[00:35:23] EG:** I would say look at your website and kind of your online presence through a different perspective. I would maybe like ask your mom or sister and so forth as what they see on your digital assets, because I bet they see things that are completely different indicators than what you see. It was really challenging for us to look at some of our assets and some of our collateral and our job look at them through a different perspective and think like if you were like a female developer, what do you see here versus what would a male developer see.

I think the findings are quite shocking that some female candidates will zoom in on - like in the job ads and particular wording or in your website. A bunch of like guys playing poker, I don't know. They might find that scary or they might find that intimidating or they might find that as an obstacle, like, "Ooh! I don't want to work there. It looks too bro-ey or something." You have to kind of really look at everything that you're giving out or your portraying the public and see it through a different lens and different perspective. If you can't even do that, then you're probably doomed.

For some agency, that's confronting. Some of the hardest things you'll do as an agency is looking at yourself and saying, "How am I portrayed publicly?" Because probably what you see is so biased, because it's your baby. It's your child. No one sees anything bad in their child. But if you ask someone else to give their honest opinion on your child, you'll probably cry. So it's a really tough thing to do, to put that mirror up. It usually brings up some of your biggest insecurities and some of the biggest fights you'll have as agency is around your public perception.

**[00:36:54] BOK:** Brilliant stuff. Thanks again, Elizabeth. Just to finish this off, can you – For people listening who want to find out more about you and about Zeroseven, where do they go?

**[00:37:01] EG:** I just laughed because I'm like, "Who wants to hear more about Zeroseven?" You can find us on our website, so we're zeroseven.com. That's probably the best way to see



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what we're up to. Same with our Instagram, I think it's zeroseven\_brisbane. Yeah, just check out our website. Everything is out there.

I think we might do more on the cultural piece more for generic agencies. But you never know. If there's demand, we might do more content. Obviously, our Zeroseven website is more about client acquisition. But if anyone is interested, they can just find me on LinkedIn under Elizabeth Gibbons and I'd love to chat more.

**[00:37:33] BOK:** Awesome. Thanks again, Elizabeth.

**[00:37:34] EG:** Cool.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[00:39:01] BOK:** You can get all the links and notes from this episode on [happyporchradio.com](http://happyporchradio.com) where you can also find out how to send us questions, feedback and get involved in the conversation about this series.

If you enjoy the show, please share with anyone else who might enjoy it too. Thanks for listening.

[END]