

TABITHA GOLDSTAUB IS ON A MISSION. WHILE determinedly “not techy” and an advocate for the non-digital among us, she wants to prove that being interested in the broad subject of “tech” doesn’t mean you have to be a coder.

Over the last decade, she has made a name for herself as a leading figure in the tech sector, having co-founded the online video platform Rightster (since rebranded as Brave Bison). In 2017, she co-founded CogX, an annual festival of technology and leadership that has featured speakers such as iPod inventor Tony Fadell and former Prime Minister Tony Blair. This year’s CogX hybrid event had 18 stages and almost 1,000 speakers.

As that scope might imply, the mission of CogX goes well beyond a single event: It is to create a better world, by making the current knowledge base more accessible and facilitating applications of artificial intelligence to solve practical problems. The festival itself is part of a network of experiences through the organization’s app. Participation spans 58 countries and over half a million global viewers.

Most recently Goldstaub has written an A to Z manual, *How To Talk To Robots: A Girls’ Guide to a Future Dominated by AI*. She is also an advisor to new tech publication *The Stack*, social impact initiative TeensInAI, digital maker foundation Raspberry

**Brunswick’s
KIRSTY
CAMERON**
speaks with
CogX co-founder
**TABITHA
GOLDSTAUB**
on the
fast-changing
field of tech
and artificial
intelligence.

who has an amazing product that hasn’t had much visibility and giving them a platform. I recently met a woman called Yodit Stanton, who before the pandemic was creating air purifying technology using sensors and she is now really riding the wave, providing air quality sensors for schools. You can follow her on Twitter.

What’s really cool about CogX though, is how it’s become so much more than just an event. We have now launched an app which makes it much easier for people to discover thought leadership content and podcasts—the experience is kind of like TikTok for brainy people.

What do you think are some of the most exciting uses for AI?

I think the two most exciting for me are healthcare and climate change. We have a crisis in the NHS—so many people who haven’t been able to be seen due to COVID—and the cases for AI in improving human outcomes is clear. Kheiron Medical Technologies, for example, is a company that is able to look at women’s past mammograms and figure out whether or not they need to fast-track. It’s a cool use case showing how AI can be used to prioritize and save lives. I believe AI working in conjunction with human intelligence will always yield the best results. People are not modular and there are

thousands of factors to consider.

Data is so vital but there is distrust of health and government services, particularly from those from disadvantaged backgrounds. My friend works at Genomics England and she can’t get any samples from specific groups—it becomes really tricky to ensure the data isn’t biased.

Do you still think tech, AI in particular, is a male-dominated environment?

Not for me personally—I’m lucky, I’ve surrounded myself with an amazing group of female leaders from the start so it doesn’t necessarily feel like that. They are set on helping others be part of tech. “Brotopia” in tech is more a problem for the general public. These tech leaders who think they genuinely lead the free world. I do feel uncomfortable about



**“IF WE CAN
BEGIN TO TALK
ABOUT AI AND
DATA AS TOOLS**

**WE CAN USE TO
SOLVE SOME OF
THE WORLD’S
BIGGEST PROBLEMS,
IT WILL STOP BEING A
MALE-DOMINATED
AREA.”**

the unvetted control and power these men have over the products and services we use every day.

How do you think we get more women and girls into AI and tech?

I’m passionate about this. That’s why I’m working with Raspberry Pi, a charity that works to put the power of computing and digital making into the hands of people all over the world. I think we need to focus on the outcome, not the technology—the angle is “solve this human problem” instead of “learn Python.” Women like solving problems for other people. If we can begin to talk about AI and data as tools we can use to solve some of the world’s biggest problems, it will stop being a male-dominated area. Every woman I know would want to get involved!

PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF COGX

Ironically, I think that women are needed more than ever now. You can’t just be a bedroom coder bashing away on a computer. Women are thinking about real world problems. Take acne, for instance: Let’s think about an AI tool that tells you what food or nutrition works best with your skin type. Every woman is going to care.

What do you think of the qualities of an entrepreneur?

People always ask me, “How did you get into tech, you’re not technical?” Tech just got into me. I was just starting uni when tech, and particularly social media, was so exciting. Facebook had just launched. Traditional jobs seemed boring. I think resilience is probably the key quality you need. And a crazy obsession with solving problems. I’m addicted to things that are a bit broken.

I’ve also always worked with others in partnerships. I’ve never been a solo founder “type.” I’ve had lots of women mentors over the years. I love having the advice and guidance of other women. It’s taken me everywhere. We do these women’s dinners and I have probably 50 women I can go to. I’m having 20 of them for dinner next week—Martha Lane Fox, Hannah Fry, Rachel Caldicott, Poppy Gustafsoon at Darktrace, I could go on, all amazing women! I hope they learn something from me as well—reverse mentoring is so important.

And finally congratulations on your book. Can you tell us about it?

Thank you! The book was written for all the young women in my life—I’m not expecting them to get into tech necessarily but to explain that tech is coming for them. I never set out to write a book originally, but I gave a talk at a fashion magazine, and someone pulled me aside after and said, you need to take this stuff “offline” as all the people you want to reach won’t find it if it stays in the digital realm.

It’s more of a handbook really. The central premise is whatever job you do, there’s a bare minimum of this stuff you need to know. I want to make sure these technology leaps are not disadvantaging women. It’s more a self-help book than a tech book, providing reading lists, telling stories and detailing the risks and rewards of data and AI. My readers should come away with a better understanding of how the world is changing and how you can navigate it. ♦

KIRSTY CAMERON is an Associate and Digital Specialist in Brunswick’s London office. She is also on the Digital Advisory Board of the Sir John Soane’s Museum.

Turning a Page on **TECH**

Pi and The Alan Turing Institute. She is the chair of the UK’s AI Council, and a member of the DCMS Digital Economy Council and the TechUK board.

She spoke to Brunswick’s Kirsty Cameron about why we all need to understand the value of AI and data, how to get more women into tech jobs and her passion for entrepreneurialism.

CogX has become an unmissable event for those in the industry. What do you look for in speakers at CogX?

My favorite thing in the world is to have two titans talk to each other, ideally a veteran with an up-and-coming star. When you put those two together, it really makes magic. I also love to find unsung heroes, women and people of color who tend to be overlooked in this space. I love finding a founder