

Success Stories: Amanda Brock

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Today, we hear from [Amanda Brock](#) who is a popular speaker at Berlin Buzzwords. Welcome, Amanda!

As a little girl, my Dad told me to ask questions. "If you want to know something or don't understand, then other people don't either, so just ask", he said. My hand has been raised ever since.

Having learned "to ask" from such a young age, it

never occurred to me to be embarrassed

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d. And I think that's a big skill to learn. It wasn't long before other people started to get me to ask questions for them because they were scared to look foolish or didn't like being wrong in front of others. **Not knowing the answer or someone explaining why I was wrong became something that really didn't worry me** - even when it was done in public. We're all wrong sometimes, right!

I firmly believe that the confidence garnered by asking those questions as a little girl led to my having the

confidence to speak out and, over time, to my being willing to speak at school events, then at University and in my work environment. It's possibly not surprising that I went on to become a lawyer and speak out for others.

I spoke at an event today and a friend who was part of the event described me as a "force of nature". That was OK, even nice, as he said it as a friend and I know it was well intended. It's a phrase people have used about me a lot over the years, and one that I am never 100% sure about. There are some very negative forces of nature as well as positive ones... I do wonder if it could be one of those phrases used about women to belittle a personality trait that would be praiseworthy in a man.

Speaking at conferences has probably been a natural progression for me as I love learning and finding answers, then sharing them. To some extent I think those of us who are like that are just like that. I have a nephew who is 9 and he's just the same. He already does a damn good deck and likes to entertain his classmates with it.

Of course, I **have often been what Heather Meeker describes as "the only one in the room". The only woman. It's not right.** But it's not something I would let stop me. I very much appreciate that's not the same for everyone and needs to change. This feeling of

being the only one in the room isn't just a question of gender. Social mobility, ethnic diversity, neuro diversity, anything that makes us feel different can create that same feeling and it's important to me, and the work that we do at OpenUK, that it's an open organisation and that people feel they are welcome and can participate.

About speaking in public: I tend to speak with images that help me remember the stories I plan to tell and the points they illustrate. I am absolutely terrified of drying up. So far it hasn't happened, but Winston Churchill, when he was Prime Minister, used to speak without notes. He got up to speak in Parliament one day and dried up. After that he always spoke with notes. If it could happen to Churchill, it could happen to any of us.

I was really delighted to keynote Berlin Buzzwords last year. It was absolutely gutting not to be able to go to Berlin to join the event. It's a city I love and I have never been to Buzzwords. I am determined to join in person in Berlin in 2022. The people I met at the event last year went to so much trouble to make me feel welcome and to pull off a great event, early in the world of pandemic and lockdown.

This year I am going to speak about commercial models, revenue generation and open source software. It's the subject of a book chapter I have researched for Open Source, Law Policy and Practice which is being

published by Oxford University Press in September. I am also the Editor of the book and really looking forward to sharing my thoughts with you.

*What about you? Do you want to share your story here too? Feel inspired by the stories you read? **Don't hesitate to contact us at info@berlinbuzzwords.de***