

A professional portrait of a woman with short, light brown hair, wearing a dark blue blazer over a white collared shirt. She is smiling slightly and looking directly at the camera. The background is a soft, light blue gradient.

325 CONSULTING

INTERVIEW

SERIES

WITH

NATASHA WINTON

Executive Manager HR
GenesisCare

INTERVIEWED BY TIM CARROLL

BIOGRAPHY

Natasha Winton is the Executive Manager HR at GenesisCare, the largest private provider of services to patients with cancer or heart disease in Australia, the UK and Spain.

Prior to joining GenesisCare, Natasha was at the Boston Consulting Group where she spent five years consulting, largely on people and organisation-related topics, and six years in a range of internal HR/people-related roles. Natasha has worked for the Australian Trade Commission, including three years as Trade Commissioner Manila, and in the finance sector.

She has an MBA from AGSM and a Bachelor of Economics from the University of Sydney.

CAREER RELATED QUESTIONS

What is the best thing about your job?

I love the sense that I am building, creating and developing an organisation that delivers a much-needed, high quality and efficient service to people in need. I love that we have big aspirations and the appetite and hunger to reach them. I love that we are taking our culture into our own hands and proactively shaping it to underpin our business strategy.

It's incredible to put into practice in my own workplace many of the concepts/topics I used to work on with consulting clients.

I feel incredibly fortunate to be in a dynamic, transformative and rapidly changing work environment with committed and passionate people. There isn't a day I am not challenged personally and professionally and there is a feeling of purpose, that anything is possible.

What is the most challenging project/problem you have worked on either as an external consultant or an internal strategist?

The most challenging projects/problems I have worked on all relate to change. The biggest so far is in my current workplace where we are morphing from a medium-sized domestic business to a much larger global one.

As the HR Executive, the challenge is around pivoting a set of immature, manual, Australian-focused support functions to best-in-class, system-enabled, internationally-focused, scalable ones. I have worked for both medium-sized domestic organisations and large-scale international ones. This is, however, the first time I have taken a domestic organisation global. There is the added complexity of rapid growth. At the same time as we are putting in HR and Finance systems, delivering day-to-day services, building Centres of Excellence and attempting to shape and build a culture and workforce for the future, we are growing day by day, both organically and via acquisition.

What a great challenge to have!

What advice would you give someone transitioning from a consulting firm to a role in industry?

First, keep your consulting networks alive. There are so many wonderful people you meet during a consulting career that this is hardly a chore. However, making time to speak to and meet up with your ex-consulting colleagues is easy to deprioritise when work gets busy. Don't! It is both a personal pleasure to stay in touch and frequently helpful professionally.

Second, be prepared to flex expectations and manage people in a way you don't need to in consulting firms. There is greater variability in talent in industry than in consulting. Managing different capability levels, working out when someone is giving you all they can and when they are/are not motivated is a skill that requires fine-tuning.

The luxury in consulting is that almost everyone is highly motivated. Finding talent in industry feels even more precious than in consulting and, as a result, holding onto it seems even more important.

Who has influenced your career the most and why?

I had a family friend who worked for Austrade. His life seemed so interesting and exotic to me. He lived all around the world and he was my inspiration for working there. I loved my time with Austrade – particularly the overseas work – and am grateful for his role modelling. I learnt a lot about working in different cultures and about going outside my comfort zone.

What is the favourite piece of advice you have received and from whom?

The first formal career advisor I had at BCG was a Melbourne-based partner. I tend more towards direct than indirect and, over the course of my career, had been advised by different people to ‘tone it down’. One day, out of the blue, my career advisor said to me, “Don’t ever lose the piece of you that speaks up...even though people will suggest you do so.” I recently passed that same piece of advice onto a lovely, forthright person in my team. Her honesty and courage to speak up is something we need more of in the workplace, not less.

PERSONAL INSIGHTS

As a child what did you want to be when you were older

An ‘air hostess’ (that’s what they were called then). I loved the idea of all the travel. I still love it.

What are your three favourite books and what are you currently reading?

I’d love to spout off an array of strategy and business books but the truth is I love to escape into fiction.

Three I have really enjoyed are:

1. ‘The Book Thief’ by Markus Zusak
2. ‘Mao’s Last Dancer’ by Li Cunxin
3. ‘Stasiland’ by Anna Funder

I’m currently reading Magda Szubanski’s autobiography – ‘Reckoning’ - and ‘Fight Like a Girl’ by Clementine Ford (both very slowly).

Who is your personal or business hero/heroine and what quality do you most admire in them?

I really admire athletes who, post playing sport at an elite level, have carved out new careers for themselves. I am passionate about netball Liz Ellis comes to mind. She has played netball at the top level, captained Australia, and then commentated. I think it's fantastic that people find new avenues for their passion and reinvent themselves to excel in them.

Who would you like sitting next to you at a dinner party and why?

Liz Ellis (for the reasons above) and my partner, John, because I don't have much opportunity to go to dinner parties with him at the moment.

What is your favourite quote or motto?

'Nothing to defend, nothing to prove'. It's got me through a fair bit lately.