

Learn how Rosa Swaby, Microsoft PM, wants to bring diversity both in and outside of the workplace

Rosa Lina Swaby is a Data & Analytics PM at Microsoft for the Intelligent Conversation and Communications Cloud team. She recently joined Microsoft and before that she was working as a front-end engineer at American Express on the Customer HomePage team for around 2 years. She is currently based in NYC and is a 2018 NYU Computer Science Graduate. When she is not working, she loves to cook and find new rom-coms to watch.

What inspired you to transition your career into Product Management?

When I joined American Express as a front-end engineer after graduation I honestly did not have much experience or context around what a PM did. I came into the role expecting to stay in engineering, and my perspective

changed as I started working closely with the PM's on my team. When I was at Amex I worked with some really amazing product managers and I remember thinking to myself that it was so incredible how much impact they had and how closely they got to work with different aspects of the business such as tech, design, marketing, finance, etc. Having the chance to work with great PM's definitely inspired me to learn more and it started to make me question what I wanted out of my career. As my interest peaked in product, I started to do coffee chats and meet more PM's within the org to better understand the role and why they became PM's and from there is when my path to transitioning kicked off and I knew from there that going into Product Management was going to be a great fit for what I was looking for from my career.

What advice would you give to someone with a technical or non-technical background looking to make this transition?

From my experience of transitioning from engineering to product, I realised through talking to so many PM's that there really isn't a one size fits all for a Product Manager and that's one of the great aspects of the role. If you are not technical and want to get into a Product Manager role, I would recommend building those skills for you to understand on a high level what the development process looks like and how you would collaborate with a tech team. There are some great online certification courses like Product School and General Assembly that provide really great resources for folks who aren't technical and want that boost and knowledge. This will help you immensely when interviewing and when you land the role so you can come in with a solid foundation.

For folks who are coming in with technical backgrounds, like I did, the great part is that you already have that technical understanding. I would recommend highlighting your technical skills and knowledge and making sure to emphasise how that will help you be a better PM. I believe the key here

for technical and non technical folks would be to understand why you want to be a PM and what you could uniquely bring to the role.

Once you have that understanding, I would recommend meeting and chatting with as many PM's as you can and start building those relationships that will eventually lead to a job offer. From my transition experience, what I learned is that the relationships you build and keep are going to be essential and there's so much to learn so take advantage of your networks and communities as well.

How do you see yourself making an impact in and outside your workplace?

I have always been passionate about diversity and inclusion and recently by joining groups such as Products By Women and BPM (Black Product Managers) I want to make an impact by driving the importance of diversity and inclusion within the product space.

Having a diverse set of perspectives and opinions in the product space is critical towards building technology that is inclusive and that takes into account use cases that might have not been considered if there hadn't been a different perspective in the room. In and outside of the workplace, I want to push towards increasing diversity within the product space.

As someone who just transitioned into PM, I want to also give back to the community that has given so much to me and be a resource to anyone who is also interested in making the move and needs help. This was a journey for me where I certainly could not have done it alone and I had so many amazing mentors and peers along the way that helped me and supported me that I understand how important it is to have folks around you that support you.

Products by Women is a global professional network for women in innovation, tech, and beyond. The network offers women the opportunity to connect and learn from peers from around the world, find jobs beyond borders, and get matched with recruiters and mentors to accelerate their careers.

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