

# Cyber Smart Career Spotlight

BY ACTUA

CAT  
COODE

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## **Data and privacy strategist. Privacy consultant. Speaker.**

I work in cybersecurity and privacy and run my own company called Binary Tattoo. I also speak to all types of audiences about how they can better protect their information. We are so used to having data “out there” that many of the companies collecting this information have not thought out all the ways data is used, shared, stored and retained. To keep individuals safe, we need to minimize the data collected and keep what’s left protected. I help companies understand what personal information they collect from individuals, how to handle it appropriately, and how to keep it safe.

CYBER  
SECURITY

actúa

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## **Describe your career path:**

When I was in middle school I wanted to be a lawyer. I liked the idea of coming up with clever ways to defend people, but I realized law was largely reading and paperwork, not what you saw on TV. As I got older, I fell in love and had an aptitude for math and science. My post-secondary education is a combined degree in electrical and computer engineering. After university, I became a software developer at Blackberry, where I moved up and around into other positions including team leader, manager and eventually director. I then launched my own company, Binary Tattoo, to help people better understand privacy for themselves and their companies. As a privacy consultant, I have taken certifications in privacy law, which oddly enough plays back into my original interest in being a lawyer.

## **What challenges have you faced and overcome in your career?**

When I started, I had two big challenges. First, I had to establish myself as a privacy expert by finding ways to market myself and show the world that I could help them with their privacy issues. This took time but after a few years of speaking, publishing articles and posting videos, I began to be seen as an expert in my area. Second, I had launched right before privacy regulations became important and companies didn't want to spend resources on privacy if they didn't have to. Once the European privacy regulation (GDPR - the General Data Protection Regulation) launched in 2018, everyone suddenly needed privacy guidance. I had been in business for five years, so I was in the right place at the right time.

## **What advice would you give youth about their future career paths?**

Do something you enjoy and leverage your skills. Cybersecurity as a field has many different facets from white hat hackers that try to break things, to project managers that keep detailed processes and help move things along. If you like computers or people or both, there is a role that you can find that incorporates your interests. When I was younger, my main hobby was dancing. I also directed my high school play and swam on my swim team. These hobbies gave me balance, which I think is equally important.

## **Why does diversity and representation matter in cybersecurity matter?**

Cybersecurity is protecting machines and data from unauthorized access and distribution. From the systems side, hackers can be 15-year-old girls or 75-year-old men and can come from anywhere in the world and have any motivation. You therefore need a diverse set of cyber professionals who think like the criminals. On the data side, we see risks with re-identifying data, AI bias or revealing information about an individual that can be damaging to their reputation. Without diverse perspectives, it is difficult to foresee these risks.