Simon Raper

Data Scientist and Founder
Coppelia Machine Learning and Analytics
INDUSTRY: TECHNOLOGY

What is the best part of your job?
I'm lucky as there are many! Solving fascinating problems using science and maths, staying on top of the latest developments in subjects like artificial intelligence and health care, talking to interesting people, playing with technology, being my own boss!

Biggest learning moment of your career?
I don't think there was one moment. The most valuable things I've learnt are about people: how not to underestimate them, how to see things from their perspective. It can be quite painful to learn these things because it usually involves making embarrassing mistakes. But it's worth it.

What does Black history month mean to you?
I can't even imagine what it's like to be made to study a version of history in which no one looks like you. But this is how it was for black and ethnic minority students when I was at school. How can history mean something to you, and hold your interest, if you are excluded from the very start? Black History Month changed this and I'm very glad.

Why is being a positive role model important to you?
I love the fact that we can tell students what it's really like in the working world and that it's a place where all your skills matter - not just the academic ones. And that it's not over if you make mistakes. There are many equally good routes through life.

What is your top tip to success?
Be useful, be thoughtful, be kind. People generally have long memories!

What is your greatest achievement?
There's no big one I'm afraid. I think like a lot of people it's a lot of little steps and quite a few backwards.

What advice would you give to your 16year-old Self?
On the Urban Synergy mentoring programme there was a lot of emphasis on taking as much time as is needed to build up rapport with a mentee. My 16 year old self needed the rapport way more than the advice.

What are you reading/ listening to?

The Think Again podcast, The Dawn Watch by Maya Jasanoff

Favourite food to boost your mood?
Noodles

Biggest change since lockdown?

I talk to our cats when no one is looking.

Ideal Mentor?
James Gleick (a brilliant science writer)

Role Model growing up?
I don't think I had one. I could have done with one though!