

12 amazing tech jobs and the women who rock them



Imagine what you can do



Jenni Flinders, US Vice President
Partner Strategy and Programs
Microsoft

*"Technology is woven into everything.
We need to do a better job of exposing
women to technology related jobs."*

Welcome

Why should you read this eBook? This is the first of a series that will explore amazing jobs in the tech industry and highlight the women who currently excel in those roles, with a wealth of examples to help guide you. If you are a woman trying to navigate career options, the high-tech industry is usually not the first place you might consider to be a natural pivot point. With that in mind, we have tried to be very diverse and thoughtful in the examples that we have used to show you that working in the technology industry doesn't necessarily mean you must be a programmer writing code. There are many roles across the high-tech industry, such as sales, marketing, support, consulting, and recruiting, to name a few.

What I've learned working in this fast-paced environment – and what continues to inspire me – is the fact that technology can have a profound impact on changing lives for the better around the world. For example, when I was in South Africa, we were able to help give schools and governments access to technology that could change their lives, through opportunities like access to medical care.

I hope that this book offers you some insight into many amazing opportunities in the market as well as the chance to learn from the incredible women who rock their jobs. To be sure we really begin to shape the future of the high-tech industry with strong talented women, I want you not only to read this eBook, but also to share it with your friends in all your networks. We will have succeeded in this first iteration if one or more people within your network find it useful and then continue to pass it along to others.

This industry is a dynamic place to be, and I am excited to have you join in!

Jenni

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On the cover: Sheng Moua, Business Analyst

Glossary of Terms

As you read the profiles, you will probably see some terms and acronyms that are unfamiliar. On each page, you can pop up a glossary when you rollover or touch the question mark.

If you are using an iPad, tap the red question mark to jump to the glossary page.



*"You have brains in your head.
You have feet in your shoes.
You can steer yourself any
direction you choose."*

Dr. Suess



Jackie Whitsett
Project Coordinator
System Integrator, Tampa, FL

One word to describe my career

Dynamic

Rollover or
touch for
glossary

Project Coordinator

What I do

I manage implementation and upgrade projects for Microsoft Dynamics GP, SL, CRM, and SharePoint. Once the customer has signed the contract, my job is to come up with the project plan. I am quite new, so the projects that I currently manage are small and I work closely with my manager.

Each project is very different, but in general, I review and understand the project scope, forecast the resources we will need, manage issue resolution, and monitor the documentation delivered to the customer.

I act as the overall voice of the project, both verbally and through written documentation. When we are working on more than one project for a customer, my job is to provide overall coordination of the services that we deliver across business units.

How I started in tech

When I was in college, I didn't have any real interest in technology. My dream job was to do marketing for a financial institution. My first impression of technology was that it was a better fit for introverted types, which didn't appeal to me.

At a career fair my senior year, I had a conversation with the leader of the my company's training academy. We talked about project management, which sounded exciting since it was more about helping people use the technology than working with the technology itself. After more research, I decided that I wanted to be a project manager.

How I got here

Most of my training was done on-the-job, but I also used our training resources. Our training academy offers classroom training, but also has tons of online courses – covering topics from the latest technology to time management.

Rewards and challenges

As an extrovert, I feed off the energy of other people, so I love being part of and leading teams. My favorite part of the job is when we go to a customer's location and see how the products are actually being used. Learning about the businesses we work with is fascinating.

The job can be challenging. When I am working on multiple projects in the same week, it's hard to stay proactive instead of reactive. I love it when proactive planning is in place, but there can be high pressure times when you have to react to changing situations. I have to choose where it's most important to focus my time.



iPad click
for glossary

How I make a difference

Some say that work is not personal, but it is. The work I do affects my team and my customers. At the customer level, that can mean that my work affects hundreds of users. One of my favorite things is finishing a project on time and under budget and making the customer look good to their boss.

As part of my job, I handle customer expectations so that consultants can completely focus on their work when they go on-site. If I have planned correctly, the project team members complete their tasks without working extra hours, which makes their lives better.

There have been some hurdles

Sometimes it's hard for me to communicate technical issues. When I am not with a technical consultant, I have to figure out which resource can best assist the customer. To manage those situations, I actively listen, confirm the issue, and write it down. Then I can bring it back to the team and explain it with confidence.

Work and friends

I have built many great friendships through my job but also value having my friends outside of work. I do try to keep my personal life separate from my career.

Ever since I started here, everyone has been so friendly. It's common for someone to stop by my office and ask me how things are going. My company does a great job of welcoming and mentoring team members.

Why I like a smaller company

There is an opportunity to move up and to build one-on-one relationships. Our company has a culture that encourages suggestions to improve our own processes. I feel like my ideas can really make an impact.

Benefits of a Microsoft partner

By the time I am working with a customer, we have already established trust – and a big part of that is our partnership with Microsoft. Our close relationship with Microsoft can really help when we need special help with a software issue.

In the end, I'm enthusiastic about Microsoft because I live on the products each day. We use SharePoint, Project, Outlook, OneNote, and Microsoft Dynamics CRM. They are all connected and make my day-to-day work easier.

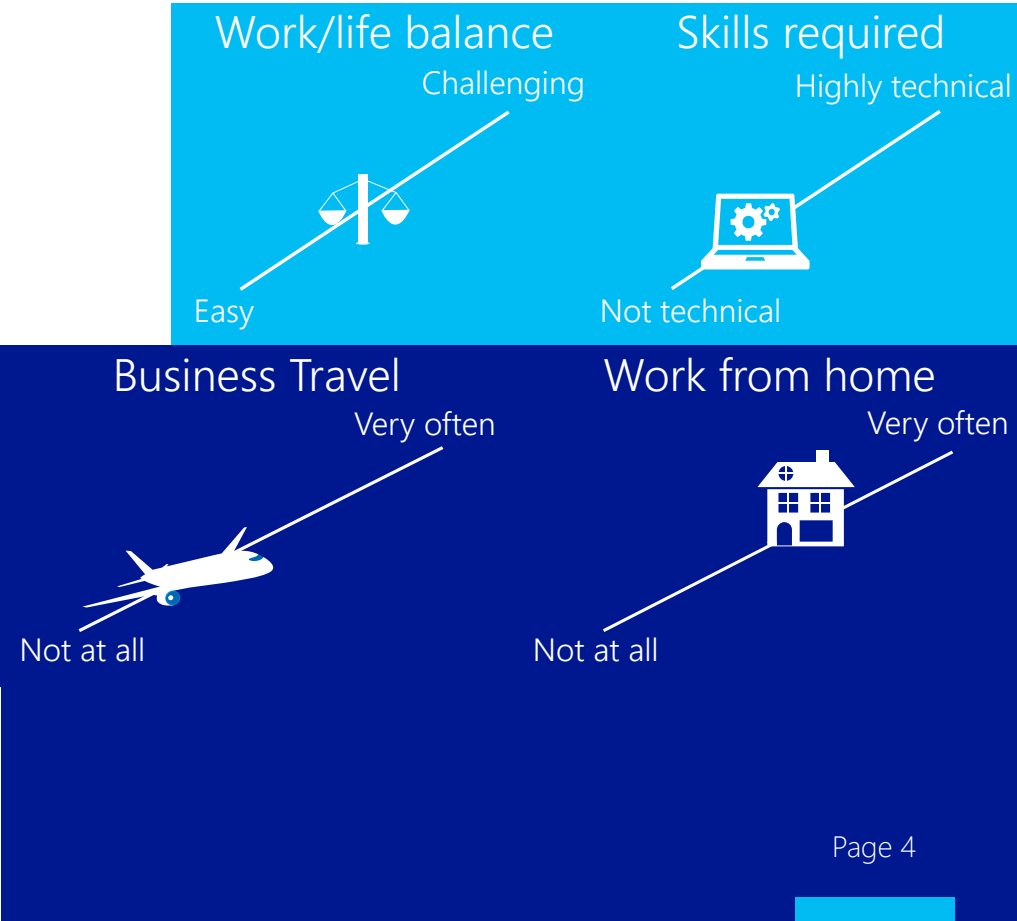
Who has influenced me most

Both my boss, Christina Channell, and her boss, Laurie Tomasovsky, inspire me. Christina gives me opportunities to try new things. She encourages me to work through tough issues and build my confidence. I've probably learned the most just listening to her conversations and how she interacts with people.

I also really appreciate everyone in my company's training academy. I wouldn't have this career if they hadn't seen something in me worth taking a chance on.

It's crazy to think what I know now versus when I started. I am so happy I work here... and not at a bank.

Jackie Whitsett





Colleen Alber
Product Evangelist
ISV, Cleveland, OH

One word to describe my career

Energizing

Rollover for
glossary

Product Evangelist

What I do

As a Product Evangelist, I translate technology into business value to drive adoption of our software. In simpler terms, I show our business customers how the software my company creates will help them do their jobs more effectively. I give a voice to the product, which can include presenting to a room of people, writing blog posts, or providing a software demo.

How I started in tech

I didn't know that I wanted to be in technology until I got here. I took a chance, taking a job that seemed to be a good fit for me at a really fun company. It wasn't until I started learning our product that I understood how powerful software and the technology behind it can be.

How I got here

I attended Miami University of Ohio, receiving a BS in Business with a Marketing concentration. While I took MIS classes, I was hesitant with technology, thinking that was the realm of programmers.

Right out of school, I took a role at a bank as a Business Analyst. While I was there, I built confidence in my ability to take on more technical work.

Through networking, I got the opportunity to interview for my current role at my company, which was an exciting, growing company in Northeast Ohio. So I went for it...and got an offer. I didn't have public speaking experience, but followed my heart and believed in myself.

Rewards and challenges

My favorite part of the job is presenting to a live audience. I know most people don't like to speak to large groups, but I love to get up in front of a room. I feed off the energy of the audience. The bigger the stage, the brighter the lights, the more I love it. Whether it's 2,000 people or twenty, I feel like I am speaking to each person individually.

My least favorite is the administrative stuff – the day to day tasks, like expense reports.

How I make a difference

As a Product Evangelist, I serve a marketing function, but report up to the office of CTO. My team is almost like a marketing department, translating the value of the software that the development team is creating to the rest of the company, our partners, and customers. The goal is to create that "AHA!" moment when they see how much the latest feature will help them.



There have been some hurdles

Though I don't feel like I have faced any serious professional hurdles, there are certainly challenges in my job. Sometimes when meeting with a developer, it feels like they are using a totally different language. I overcome this by not being afraid to ask questions like, "Can you please explain that again or in a different way?"

The willingness to ask these questions is what has made me successful. I have to understand because I take the answers and translate them for other people.

Work and friends

Literally and figuratively, the people I work with are my family. They help me prepare for presentations and provide valuable feedback, and no one is more excited for me when one goes especially well. In my professional and personal life, my friends at my company and our user community are always there for me.

Why I like a smaller company

As one of only five evangelists for the entire organization, the work we do truly makes a difference, providing residual value through the content we create.

I also get to work with people from all over the company and appreciate the challenges they face in their various roles and responsibilities. That personal understanding helps us work together as one team.

Benefits of a Microsoft partner

I am responsible for our product messaging so it's very helpful to follow Microsoft's lead and align with their communication. As I develop PowerPoints and other content, I try to translate a technical concept into the simplest terms that our employees and customers can understand.

It's also great to have the direct line with Microsoft employees in similar roles to mine.

Who has influenced me most

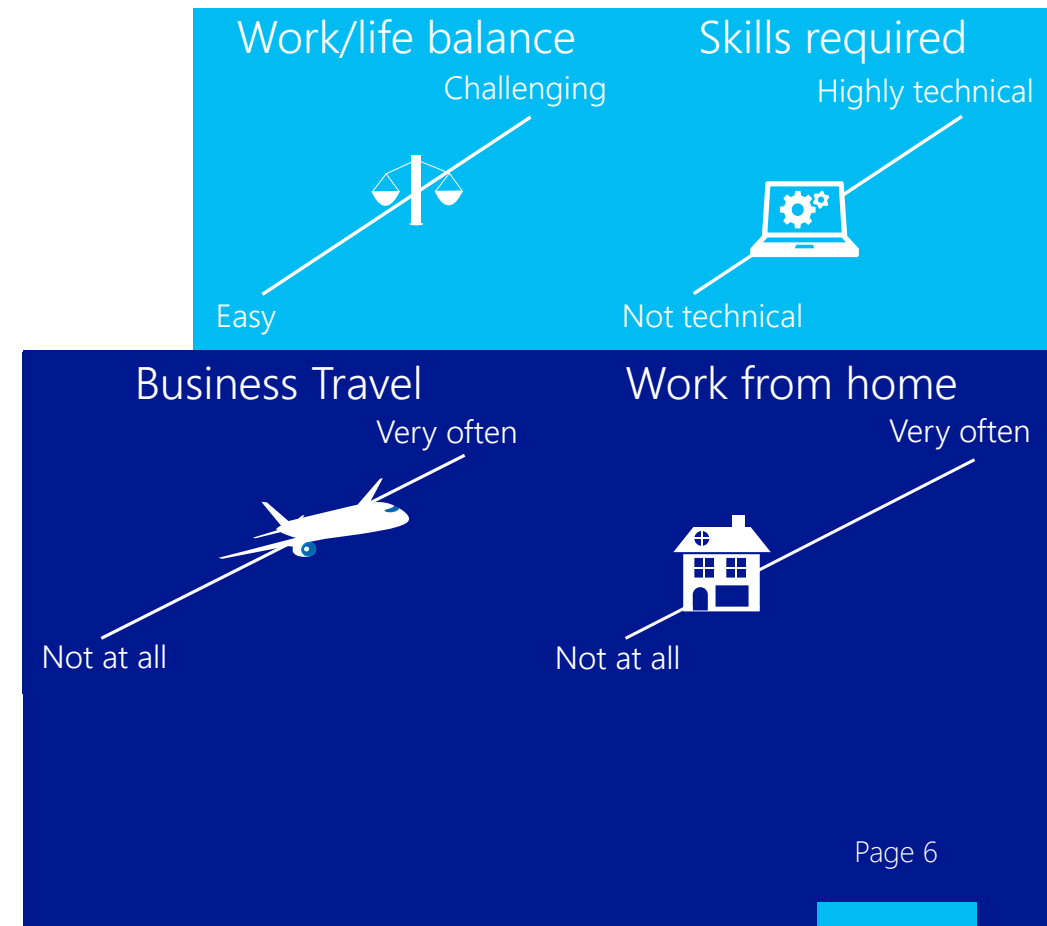
Almost my entire time at the company, I have reported to Tom Vitale, my Team Leader. He is an exemplary mentor and manager to me, although neither is his official role or title.

He has influenced my career by encouraging me to follow my passion, giving me the confidence to do more than I thought I could and fully supporting me in both new opportunities and difficult decisions.

What I like the best about him is that he helps me laugh at myself (he's great at holding up a mirror – in a kind and funny way – so that I can better see myself). He also knows exactly when to say "it's just work...go focus on and enjoy your life."

Here I am in Cleveland, Ohio, working for this amazing software company. I have been able to grow my career with them as I never imagined. I'll be here as long as they'll have me.

Colleen Alber



Channel? Partners? Explain, please.

The Microsoft partner channel

Every industry has its own language. Just like LOL and BRB are familiar terms to you, the technology industry uses acronyms, abbreviations, and common terms that become a part of your day-to-day speech over time.

We've compiled some of the most widely used terms to help you feel more comfortable in those first interviews. But, don't be afraid to ask when someone throws out a three letter acronym you don't understand.

What is "the channel"

When a software company, like Microsoft, sells their applications through other companies, it's called channel distribution. Just like cars – you don't buy your Prius directly from Ford, you buy from a local agency which is a distributor.

Using the same business model, Microsoft sells much of their business software through distributors, individually called "partners" and collectively called "the channel."

What is a partner

A Microsoft partner is the common name for a technology service company that supports Microsoft business software. The term partner is used because Microsoft and the company work together, combining software and services to solve business problems.

From the beginning, Microsoft's business strategy was to focus their efforts on developing the software that businesses and consumers use. They wanted the local technology service providers to work with individual businesses to put the software to best use. While Microsoft has grown into a global powerhouse, they continue to depend on partners to provide most of the services to their business customers.

What exactly do partners do?

There are a number of partner types, which we will explain later, but for the most part, **partners help other businesses use technology.**

That help can be delivered through training employees to use software, setting up hardware, or configuring and customizing software to solve a specific problem.

Partners come in all sizes, but most employ fewer than 50 people.

Microsoft Partner Network

Through the [Microsoft Partner Network](#) (MPN), Microsoft provides training and certification as well as sales and marketing support to partners. More than 430,000 businesses are members of MPN, serving more than 160 million mutual customers worldwide.



Nadia Isata
Customer Sales Manager
System Integrator, Bethesda, MD

One word to describe my career

Exciting

Customer Sales Manager

What I do

As the Customer Sales Manager, I manage over 100 client accounts. I work with our existing Microsoft Dynamics GP and Microsoft Dynamics CRM clients to help them maximize the value of their investments in the software. I help our clients take a holistic view of the organization and create a roadmap that allows them to take advantage of the technology available and streamline their processes. I also work with our VP of Sales to develop programs and events for our existing customer base.

How I started in tech

As a teenager, I worked at a Hispanic owned pasta manufacturing company. Since I spoke Portuguese, Spanish, and English, I could communicate with the employees and vendors and assist with Payroll and Accounts Payable related questions. With that foundation in accounting, I was hired by an international money transfer company and assigned to work with the banks in Columbia and Brazil. At the time, they were going through a Dynamics GP implementation which provided me knowledge of the solution.

Wanting new challenges, I applied for a Project Accountant position at my current company. I knew

nothing about what they did, or about project accounting, but I knew that I wanted to grow my career. They gave me the chance and a new direction.

We used Dynamics GP in the accounting department where I gained hands-on experience improving business processes. That's when I fell in love with technology.

How I got here

When a position on the sales team opened up, I wanted to challenge myself and develop new skills. I was very shy but knew the product and understood our clients' challenges. The VP of Sales saw potential in me and gave me the opportunity. It allowed me to open up, blossom, and be a bit more aggressive and fearless. It was a great move for both of us, as I'm consistently a top performer on the sales team.

Rewards and challenges

My favorite part of the job is the customer interaction, understanding their problems and connecting the dots to provide a solution. With my accounting background and knowing the challenges that we face in our own business, I can identify with the issues that our clients experience. When the light bulb goes on in my head



during a meeting with our clients, it's a great feeling. I understand the problem and the solution that will get them where they need to be.

While it's minor in comparison to everything else, having a quota driven sales position is stressful at times.

How I make a difference

At the end of the day, we are problem solvers. We understand challenges and help clients improve every aspect of their business. Most often it involves helping them think outside the box and see the bigger picture. It's helping them understand that the decisions they make today will impact their long term plans. It's the relationships we cultivate that allows us to be trusted advisors and helps them take their business to the next level. Even more fulfilling is anticipating a client's needs before they do.

There have been some hurdles

When I was a young girl, we moved from Angola to the US. My father was a diplomat and we lived a privileged life. Circumstances changed once he returned to Angola, leaving my mother to raise my sisters and I on her own. To help support the family, I began working at an early age. When most teenagers were hanging out with friends, I was developing a strong work ethic by balancing a job and homework. I see my next hurdle as advancing on what I love to do so I can devote myself to philanthropy. The big question for me is: How can I help those who have not been as fortunate?

Work and friends

I've had the opportunity to make long lasting friendships and a number of my best friends are or were employees of the company. It's a dynamic environment full of personalities that makes it enjoyable to come to work.

Why I like a smaller company

I have had such a great opportunity to grow with this company and the relationships are very important to me. In many ways we are like a family. We all have our quirks and we definitely have some characters, but that is what makes us a family.

Benefits of a Microsoft partner

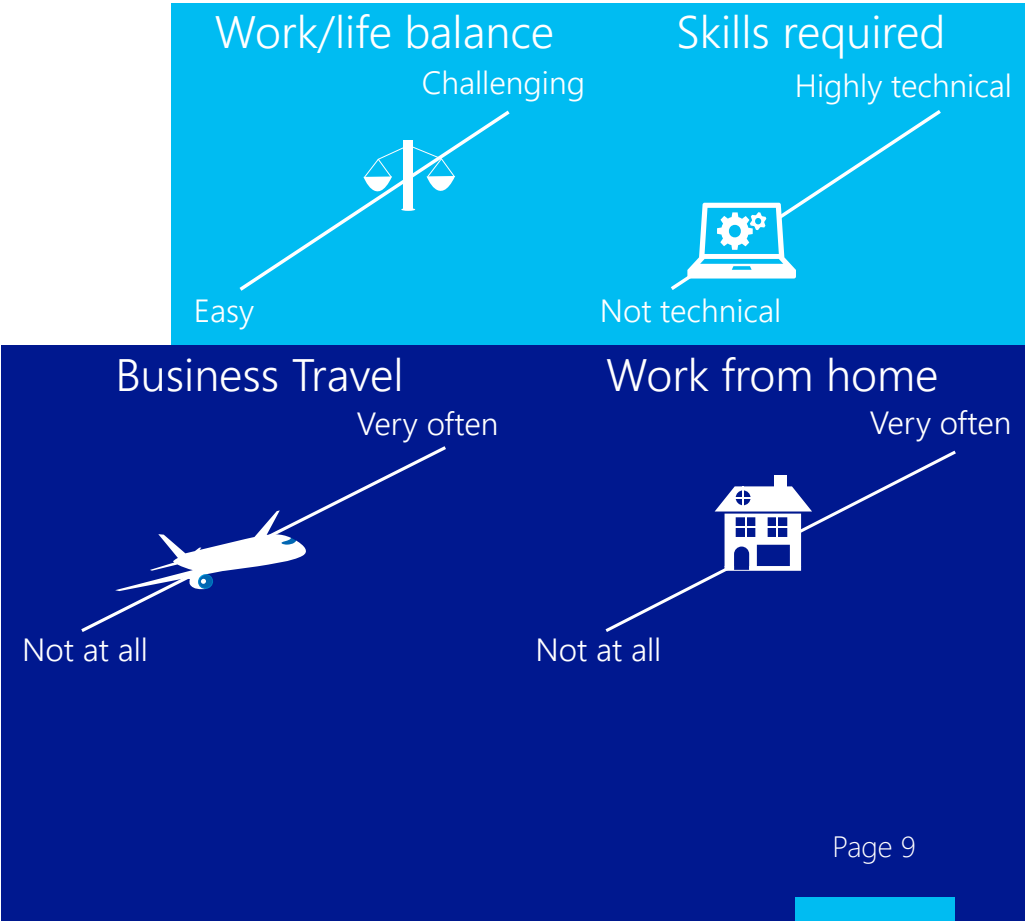
It's exciting to work at the cutting edge of technology. We get to see the latest advancements that can help our clients and then educate them about how that technology can improve their business.

Who has influenced me most

The person who's had the most influence on my career was an Account Executive at my current company. She had the perfect combination of product knowledge, industry expertise, and familiarity with each one of her customers. Her ability to balance being a mother while meeting all of the requirements of a sales position is inspirational.

I was just a young girl from Angola. If I can do this, anyone can. I love my job and know that it is just the beginning.

Nadia Isata





Tiffany Wallace
Director of Business Development
Learning Partner, New Orleans, LA

One word to describe my career

Vision

Channel Manager

What I do

As the Director of Business Development, I manage our partnerships to grow revenue. My company, a learning partner, is a franchise business with 300 worldwide locations. My role is with an ownership group that has 22 locations delivering technical training to businesses and career changers. My job is to work with our partnerships and other businesses to expand opportunities and grow our revenue.

How I started in tech

I went to college for Ophthalmology and, after receiving my degree, went to work for a chain of optometrists. After watching our selling process for a while, where we would price glasses for customers and then offer them additional options, I thought there was a better way. Instead of adding on, we gave customers the price with all the options and then let them choose which ones they really wanted.

As a result, we saw a huge increase in sales which was noted by the central office. I was asked to train the opticians at our other locations in the new process, which turned into a full time training role.

While I liked my work, after a time I felt there was not much potential in career development. That is when a friend told me about a computer training company that had an opening I should consider.

I didn't think I could do it, since I wasn't technical, but decided to give it a try. During the interview, they made it clear that it was a sales role – more about personalities than about product knowledge.

How I got here

I started in sales, but knew that I wanted to evolve into a management career. When you move from sales to management, you have to justify replacing your revenue production. I moved to management through a business development role and then into partnerships, making sure that there was added value for the company at every step.

Rewards and challenges

My favorite part of the job is building relationships with people in the industry. Even though you may not have an immediate business opportunity with someone, at some time along the way that personal connection will likely help you both. Relationships are extremely important to me.



While I love to present the results, analyzing and reporting data is not my favorite way to spend time. It's ironic that I remember the smallest details about people I have only met once, but I don't like digging into data.

How I make a difference

I want to put my head on the pillow every night and think that what I am doing impacts the lives of other people. At my company, the training that we provide changes lives. Many of the business people who take classes with us are working to take on new roles and move up in their company. It's very gratifying to see people succeed and grow.

There have been some hurdles

The biggest hurdle that I have overcome is learning that when you hit a roadblock, you need to understand the root of the issue. When I approach a challenging situation, I try to understand the priorities and pressures of every person at that table – taking the time to understand what they have to gain and what they are risking in the situation. After the situation has resolved, I try to figure out how we could have done things differently to improve the outcome.

Work and friends

I have a lot of very good friends through my job. Making personal connections with the people you work with every day is very important to me.

Over the past several years, I have become very active in organizations that help women make more strides in technology. It's important to share best practices and work together to change some of the old perceptions.

Why I like a smaller company

Our company currently has about 350 employees, and I have been able to rise into the higher management level. I still feel like I can connect with every employee. With an organization this size one person can make a difference and affect change.

Benefits of a Microsoft partner

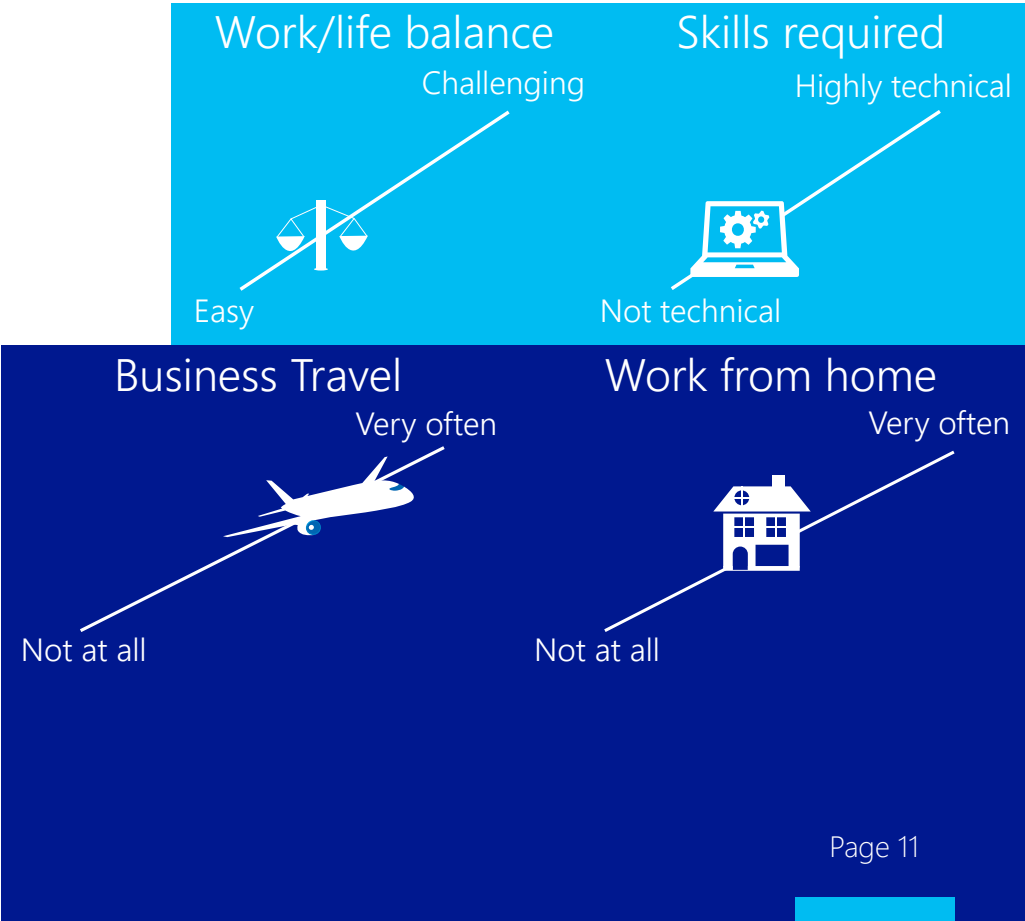
Our Microsoft affiliation lends credibility to what we do in the eyes of our customers. Even though I represent a relatively small organization, when I walk into an enterprise company I am representing the Microsoft brand. We are part of a bigger vision that businesses understand is the Microsoft community.

Who has influenced my career

If I had to name one person early on that really inspired me to strive and break down barriers it would be Carly Fiorina. As I was just entering the workforce, Fiorina was appointed as the CEO of Hewlett Packard. It was world news for a woman to earn that title and every action she took was examined through a microscope. She was the first woman to grab my attention and inspire me to be better every day.

Sitting in the lobby waiting for my interview, I was looking at a software manual and thinking, "There is no way I can do this, I will be lost."

Tiffany Wallace



Just to make
it a bit more
complicated
- there are
many kinds of
partners.

The many forms of partners

Not all partners are the same, to say the least. It's probably more accurate to say that no two partners are the same. We can simplify a bit, though, and explain the basic taxonomy of the partner ecosystem.

Most partners join the MPN (Microsoft Partner Network) as a Community or Action Pack member. These partners have access to a large range of educational, sales, and marketing resources that Microsoft provides.

Competencies

For those partners who want to validate their expertise in the solutions that they provide, MPN provides them with an extended level of membership when they demonstrate competency in one or more solutions. In approximately 25 areas of specialization, partners attain Silver or Gold level competency through a combination of employee certifications, specialized training completion, and customer references.

Most partners focus on a specific set of services and achieve one or two competencies. Some of the larger partners achieve many competencies. Competencies are grouped into a number of categories, including:

- Application Platform competencies, held by partners who develop and customize software.

- Business Productivity competencies, held by partners who implement communication and collaboration solutions.
- Business Applications competencies, held by partners who implement customer, financial, and operations management software.
- Core Infrastructure competencies, held by partners who manage hardware and software installation and support.
- Customer Segments competencies, based on the size of the businesses that the partners serve.

Enterprise versus SMB markets

Partners often differentiate themselves based on the market or customer base they serve. Enterprise refers to companies with more than 250 computers, which generally means they employ more than 250 people. SMB stands for Small and Mid-size Businesses with anywhere from one to 250 computers.

And there's more...

In the next channel section we'll describe specific types of partners.



Erica Toelle
Solution Architect
System Integrator, Redmond, WA

One word to describe my career

Fun

Solution Architect

What I do

As a solution architect, I help businesses use technology to be more efficient. To achieve that I visit the business and talk to the employees about their jobs – what processes they use, what information they need and how they spend their time. I build the initial solution and then we work together refining it until the final solution meets their needs.

How I started in tech

While I was growing up, my father taught business operations at a university. He wrote a lot of computer programs, including one for my sister and me that taught us to read. I used the computer in high school, but wasn't a real "techie."

In college, I got a work-study job with the IT help desk supporting faculty and staff. I was hired because of my customer service ability, built through working at McDonalds, not my computer knowledge.

Through the help desk job, I learned a lot about different technologies, but what I enjoyed the most was talking to people. It was fun learning about their jobs and fixing an issue that was preventing them from doing it. That was when I knew I wanted a career in technology.

How I got here

After graduating from the Business Leadership honors program at the University of Puget Sound, I joined Hitachi Consulting as a management consultant. Through my experience from the help desk job I became the SharePoint expert for our office. Working on a large-scale enterprise content management project for Microsoft and a number of other projects, I built my knowledge of complementary applications and how they all work together. That's when I committed to the role of solution architect.

In 2009, I started my own firm, building on my client relationships. I began speaking at SharePoint conferences to establish industry credibility and share my experience. About two years ago, I joined my current company to focus my time on speaking and consulting instead of the details of running a business. I speak at events around the world and work closely with companies, helping them make the most of the Microsoft products.

Rewards and challenges

My favorite part of the job is getting to know people – their values and what motivates them. I'm very interested in psychology, understanding what makes people tick and collaborating to figure out how technology can help them achieve their goals.



A challenging part of the job is that I don't always get to see how my work affects the company in the long run. While I do stay in touch, I miss seeing the day-to-day results of the advice that I provided.

How I make a difference

When someone is passionate about the work they do, but has to spend too much time on manual or tedious tasks, their job can be frustrating. I hope that the work I do removes those roadblock so that each person can focus on what they do best.

There have been some hurdles

Several times, I came to a fork in my career path where I had to choose to focus on either business management or technology. While there are a few roles that blend the two, you have to focus primarily on one or the other. I chose to focus on a technology path because I felt that combining business acumen with the ability to communicate the details of technology had more of an impact.

Work and friends

I have become very involved with the SharePoint user community, which is a tightly knit group of people. We find opportunities to get together, whether we talk about work or not. With SharePoint projects, you never encounter the same situation twice so it is helpful to have a support system to exchange ideas and brainstorm. That brings us together.

Why I like a smaller company

You have more opportunity to make an impact at a smaller company. From bringing in new clients to organizing events to finding new processes – it's not tied up in bureaucracy. You get to know your fellow employees better by working on projects together.

Benefits of a Microsoft partner

Our job is to help our clients get the most value from the Microsoft products that they purchase. I think we get the best part of the relationship with clients – to hear about the company's goals and aspirations and to implement the Microsoft technology to help them make it happen.

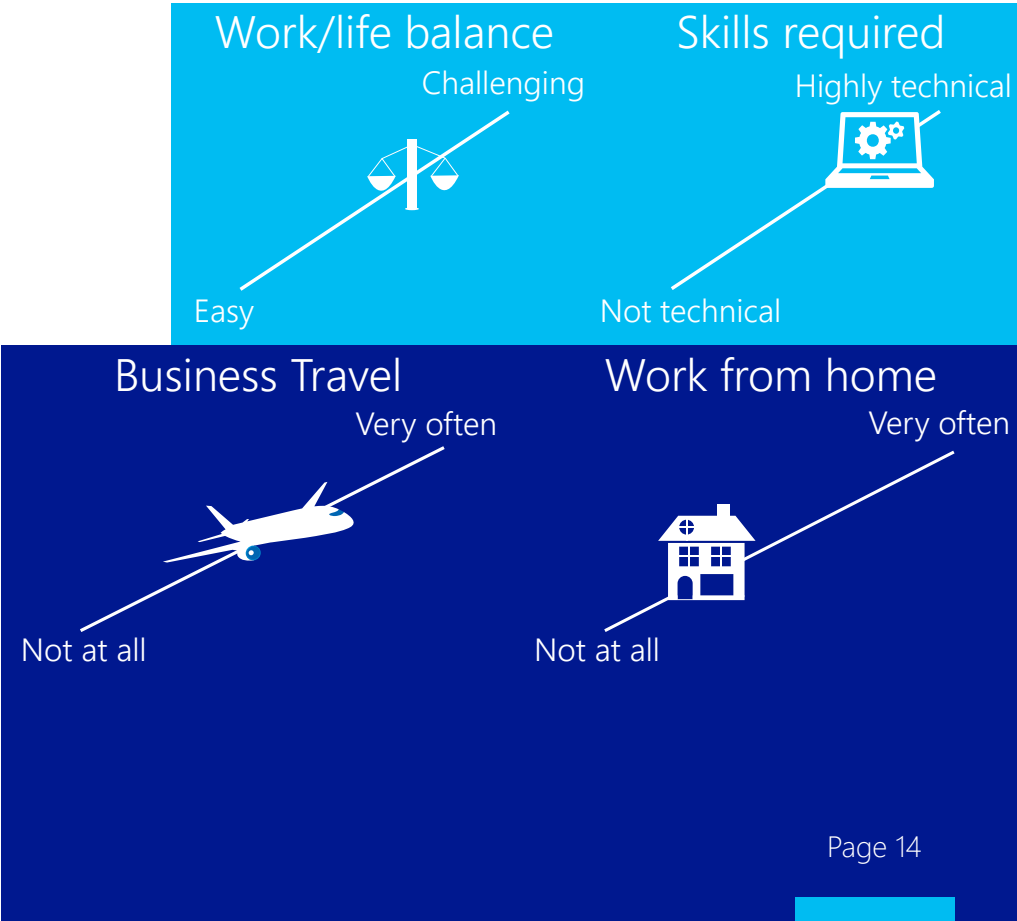
Who has influenced me most

It's hard to pick one person. The people that were more experienced in the industry, like a VP or senior manager of a client, who told me my work was helping them inspired me. The words of encouragement along the way helped me get through the days when I wondered if the work I was doing was really making a difference.

One person does stand out, though. I met Ross Cook my first day at Hitachi Consulting and he is now a Senior Manager at my company. Ross has been very supportive throughout my career. Recently, he's given me insight to help me build out our solution architecture practice.

There are solution architects on every continent, even Antarctica. Recently, I spoke to a peer in Norway who was dealing with unique user issues that stemmed from cultural differences.

Erica Toelle





Abby E. Moore
Team Lead, Remote Services
System Integrator, Peachtree Corners, GA

One word to describe my career

Evolving

Remote Support Manager

What I do

I manage the Remote Consulting Services Team to provide post-implementation support to our Dynamics clients. Once an implementation of Microsoft Dynamics AX, GP, or CRM is complete, we provide ongoing support for issues that can be managed remotely and require less than 80 consulting hours to complete.

Our team includes experts in Dynamics AX, GP, and CRM as well as related solutions such as business intelligence and supply chain. Our goal is to provide proactive support to clients once their core implementation team has completed their work.

How I started in tech

While I was in college, I majored in finance and wanted to go into investment banking. Our college recruiters advised us to take advantage of any interview opportunities to gain experience.

Taking that advice to heart, I submitted my resume to my current company without really understanding what they did. The first interview was unlike any I had ever been on, and when they invited me on-site, I really liked the people that I met.

They assured me that they could train me on the skills I needed to do the job through their training program. They believed that I had the interpersonal skills needed to be successful.

How I got here

The role I am in is a recent position. I spent the past five years here as a Microsoft Dynamics GP implementation consultant. Working on several long-term projects, I've built my skills in large part by just doing. I would never have seen myself writing an integration – but I did it.

I recently finished my MBA, which was a personal goal that provided me with the skills to move into a management role.

Rewards and challenges

The people are the best part of the job. I love getting to meet different types of people in different industries. I have been fortunate to work on long-term projects where I have been able to build relationships with clients.

The other side of the coin is that people can be the hardest part of the job. Sometimes clients get upset and helping them understand why they need to make changes to the way they work can be challenging.



How I make a difference

Our clients look to us as the problem solvers. First we listen, to understand the business issues they are facing, and then make recommendations. We help them improve business processes and save them money.

In the end, our purpose is to make life easier for our clients. We take an issue that is currently causing headaches for the business and figure out how to smooth out that process.

There have been some hurdles

On my very first project, the client's team leader thought I was too young to be assigned to their implementation. I had to work extra hard to prove my skills and value. In the end, it was a great learning opportunity, developing my skills to manage client relationships. In my new role, I am managing people that are older than me. There is no doubt that age can be a hurdle and you just have to prove yourself.

Another significant hurdle for me has been going back to school to get my MBA while working. The company has been very supportive, assigning me to an in-town project over the course of those years. Since there are only 24 hours in each day, I've had to learn to prioritize my time and excel at task management.

Work and friends

I work with a fantastic group of people. We get along really well, working hard and playing hard. Our team is

very collaborative, and we know how to laugh at ourselves when we make mistakes. I have formed relationships that I know will last for many years to come.

Why I like a smaller company

I grew up in a household where both of my parents owned their own businesses. I was used to the small company feel where everyone knows each other. When I went on interviews with large corporations, I felt like I would be a small fish in a big pond.

Here, I know everyone and feel like I make a real impact on the organization. I have definitely had more opportunities to advance my career here than I would at a larger company.

Benefits of a Microsoft partner

When you are not in this industry it is hard to grasp what exactly we do. When I explain that I work with Microsoft software, I build instant credibility because people can connect with the brand name.

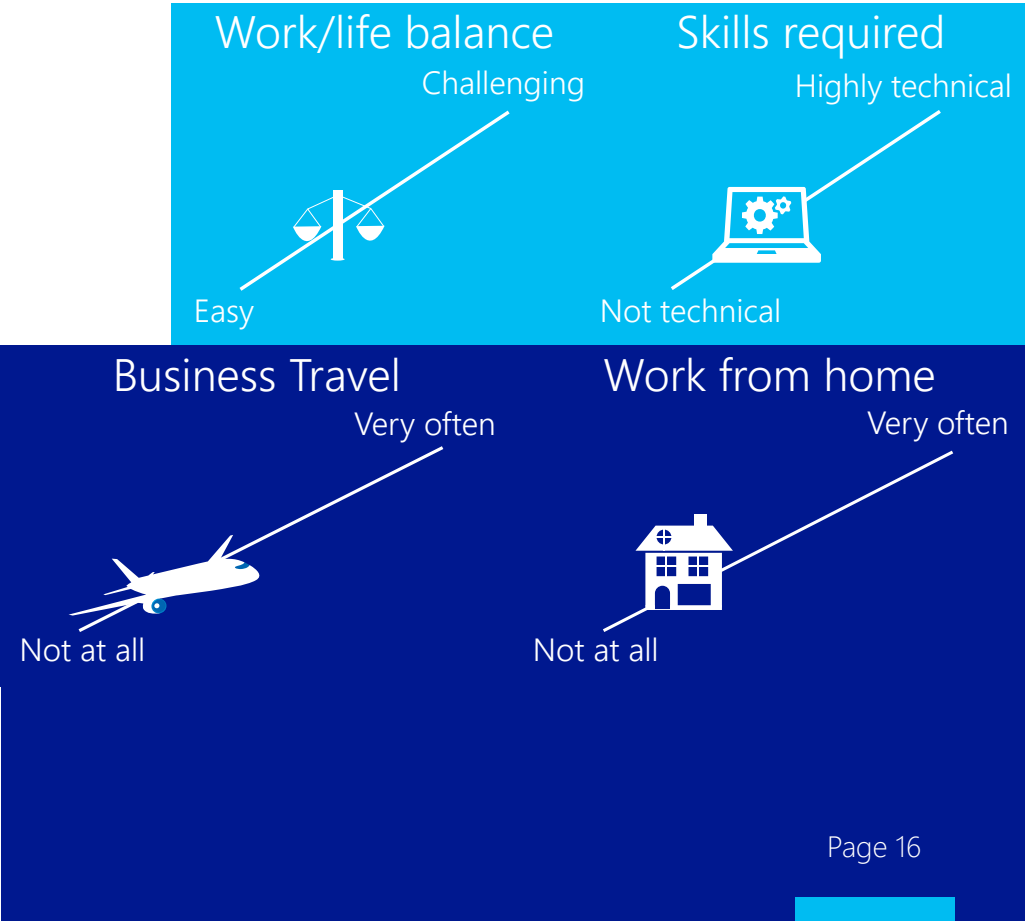
Who has influenced me most

My first boss, Clinton Weldon, took me under his wing when I first started, helping me build my skillset and confidence. I truly appreciate his support.

The other person I credit is my mother, whose work ethic is unmatched. She has owned multiple businesses, raised a family, and accomplished so much in her life. She leaves a lasting impression on everyone, which is a goal I hope to achieve.

I never envisioned myself going into the technology world, but I wouldn't want it any other way.

Abby E. Moore



Cloud Dynamics ISV Learning LSP

LOL, more
acronyms

Types of partners – part 1

As we described previously, there are many kinds of partners with different business and revenue models. The following are some common types of partners and what they do. Keep in mind, these are simplified explanations of work that can be very complex.

Cloud partners

We'll go into cloud in more depth later, but Cloud partners help businesses use software like Office 365. Companies pay a monthly fee to access the software, which is managed in Microsoft data centers

Dynamics partners

Dynamics partners sell and provide services that support Microsoft's Dynamics CRM (Customer Relationship Management) and ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) solutions. Dynamics solutions help companies manage the sales, marketing, financial, and operational functions of their business.

ISV: Independent Software Vendor

ISVs develop software applications that address specific industry or niche market requirements. They either sell the software directly to businesses or work with distribution partners to sell it for them. Not all ISVs are Microsoft partners, but those who are build software that works with or adds value to Microsoft applications.

Learning partners

Learning partners provide training to end-users and technology professionals through Microsoft Official Courses. Employees of all types of partners often attend Learning partner training classes to prepare for certification tests. Learning partners generally offer both classroom and on-line training opportunities.

LSP: License Solution Provider

The licensing, which entitles a company or person to use business management software, can be very complex. As you can imagine, the IT department of a company with thousands of employees doesn't want to buy an individual copy of Word for every new employee. So vendors like Microsoft developed "easier" ways to buy the right for a group of people to use their software. Called volume licensing, these programs have evolved into complex contractual agreements that require experienced people to navigate. Licensing specialists can save companies a lot of money.



Tasha Scott
SharePoint Consultant
System Integrator, Germantown, MD

One word to describe my career

Tenacity

SharePoint Consultant

What I do

As a SharePoint Consultant, I use my in-depth knowledge of SharePoint to help our customers solve business problems. I work with customers to understand the challenges and align them with the out-of-the-box capabilities of SharePoint or define the requirements for custom development.

To design the best solution for the customer, I use the SharePoint administrative tools and some HTML and CSS coding. If they need custom development, I articulate the customer's problem to the programmers and evaluate their solution for technical and cultural fit. When a solution is complete, I train the users to make the transition go as smoothly as possible.

I specialize in serving defense agencies, like the Department of Navy and Department of State.

How I started in tech

I got a late start, but knew I wanted to learn SharePoint when I used it in my job as a newspaper page designer. To learn more, I took it upon myself to take classes, get trained, and apply for the role of SharePoint administrator for the newspaper.

How I got here

As part of the SharePoint admin role, I attended the local SharePoint User Group meetings. I fell in love with the open, sharing atmosphere of the group. I was encouraged by the group to pursue a career with SharePoint.

After my job at the newspaper, I worked in several other positions building my SharePoint knowledge and skills. I knew some folks at my current company, and once my skill levels met their standards, I joined them.

Rewards and challenges

Trying to find the simplest and most efficient way to solve a problem with the least amount of custom code is my favorite part of the job. I like to take the time to find the sweet spot of solving the customer's problem using SharePoint's standard functionality. Seeing the smiles on the employees' and managers' faces when we solve a problem makes me very happy.

The hardest part for me is when you have to overcome people's resistance to change. It can be challenging to convince both the internal IT folks and the end-users that there is a better way to do their work.



How I make a difference

The reason that we are engaged by a customer is that they have an inefficient process or a problem that they need to fix. The end game is making workers happy by solving the problem.

The great thing about SharePoint is that it's an end-user focused technology. For those who want to embrace the change, they really get excited about SharePoint. Just like I did.

There have been some hurdles

One is not trusting in my ability to learn what I need to learn. It's scary to take on something altogether different. The strong community I found with SharePoint helped me overcome that fear. Their support was the key to helping me continue.

A related hurdle was to build my skill set so that I didn't have to ask so many questions. I took it upon myself to continue to learn, going to night classes and taking advantage of any training opportunities. If you are passionate about what you do, you are going to find ways to get better at it.

Work and friends

Embracing SharePoint has given me a second family. All of my friends and everything I do in my spare time revolves around the SharePoint community. My life is richer in every way possible because of my involvement with SharePoint.

Why I like a smaller company

I prefer the smaller company size because I know the vast majority of the people in the company. I know their skill sets and I know them on a personal level.

The president of the company knows who I am – I appreciate that. It's important to me to apply my capabilities in a place where the contribution is noticed.

Benefits of a Microsoft partner

When you work for the caliber of partner that I do, many of the hurdles have already been cleared for you because the customer recognizes you as a member of a respected business. It makes me very proud that my company trusts me to represent them as a Microsoft partner to high level clients.

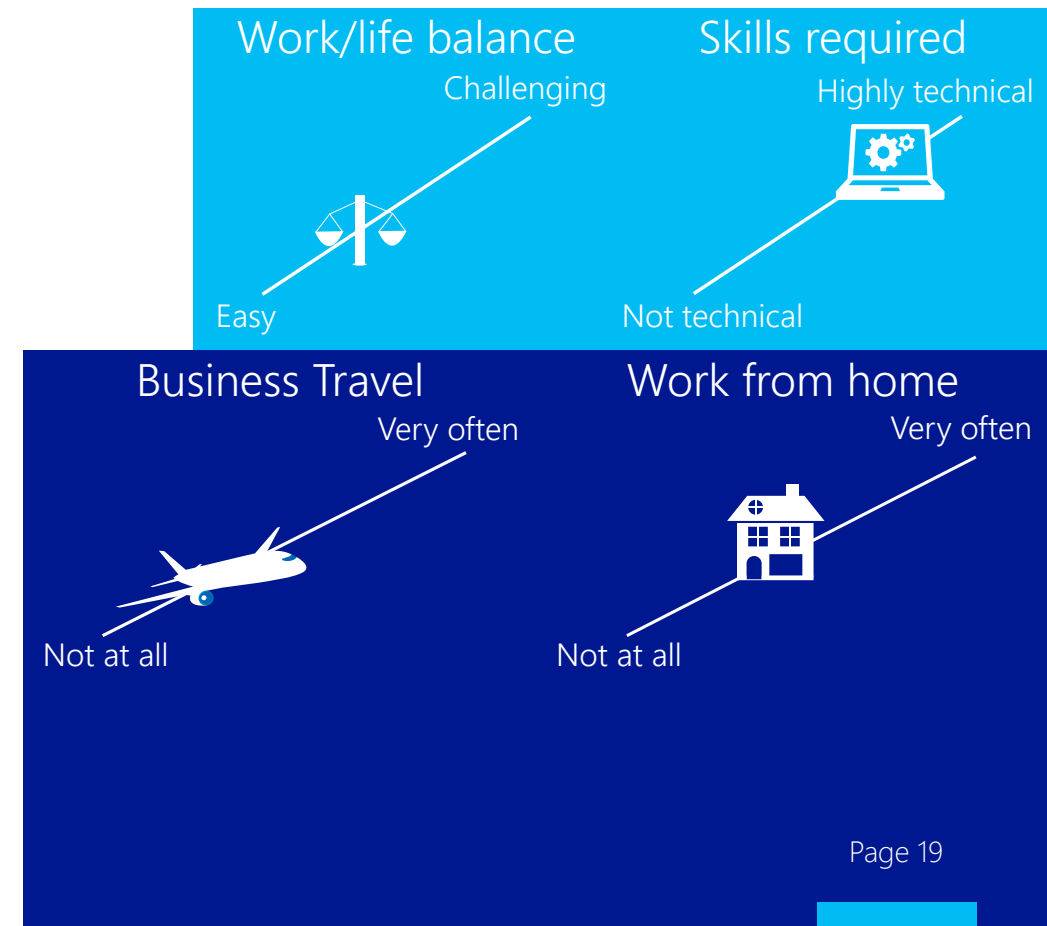
In addition, we have interactions with Microsoft at a meaningful level, exchanging and sharing information. Five of our team members have achieved master certifications, so I can also reach internally for the knowledge and get the help we need.

Who has influenced me most

My relationship with my mentor, Susan Lennon, one of the founders of SharePoint Saturday, has literally changed my life. I met Susan at my first SharePoint User Group and she took me under her wing. She gives freely without expecting anything in return.

I never expected to be in a technology job...not in a million years. But if there is something that you want to do, you can do it.

Tasha Scott





Sheng Moua
Business Analyst
System Integrator, Seattle, WA

One word to describe my career

Successful

Business Analyst

What I do

As a technical and business analyst, I act as a liaison between our clients and the technical teams. I work with the business to capture requirements and understand their pain points and then collaborate with the development team to address them.

How I started in tech

Growing up, I didn't have a lot of access to technology. It was actually the Internet that interested me most. I would stay after school just to use the computers in the library. Being raised in a small town and living in a tight-knit Hmong community, it was uncommon for someone from my culture and gender to be interested in technology.

I wanted to go to college to study technology, but it was a very difficult decision for my parents to let me go. While my parents were very supportive of education, we were raised in a traditional culture. It took a lot of convincing, but they supported my choice.

After completing my degree in computer science at Gonzaga University, it was again very difficult to convince my parents to let me leave our community. I knew, though, that it was important for me to set an example for others, so I persevered.

How I got here

After an internship, I was hired full time as an application developer. While I had the technical skills gained through my schooling, it was very natural for me to make the shift to business analysis. It's not just skills that help you to do your job – it's the mindset to communicate with people. No matter how smart someone is, it's the ability to effectively interact with people that determines how successful you will be.

In both career tracks, programming and business analysis, I've had an amazing support network of folks ready to share their knowledge, including managers and mentors who have helped steer my career.

Rewards and challenges

I feel good when I know that I have made a difference to our clients. It can be something as simple as updating a SharePoint form to track metrics or automating a process that saves a person eight hours of manual work. That is a success story. Helping our business clients improve their processes is very fulfilling.

As to challenges, I tend to think about the projects I am working on too much – finding it a bit hard to shut off solving whatever issue we are fixing. I can be my own worst enemy.



How I make a difference

Projects can get complicated really fast. Part of my job is to keep everyone on a project on the same page, so I'll suggest we take it back a notch and approach it from a different angle. I try to help both the developers and business people see both sides and meet in the middle.

Any application that you build is going to have end users, so I always advocate for them. If a process takes ten mouse clicks and there may be a way to simplify, you can bet I am going to find a way to simplify.

Taking part in the design of a great solution and seeing it come together to help a business is very rewarding. Everyone on our team is passionate about enabling our clients to improve their business.

There have been some hurdles

I tend to strive for perfection, which can be a strength but also a weakness. I now try to focus on the bigger picture to keep details in perspective.

Work and friends

I have great friends through my job. When you think about it, you spend a third of your day, five days a week with the people you work with – it helps to have friends who share the same struggles and accomplishments.

Why I like a smaller company

My company has a great combination of a startup atmosphere with the structure to grow your career. I have the opportunity to work on a variety of projects but I don't have to travel.

I get to apply my technical and analytical skills to several different industries, like high tech, retail and insurance, which has given me a breadth of experience.

Benefits of a Microsoft partner

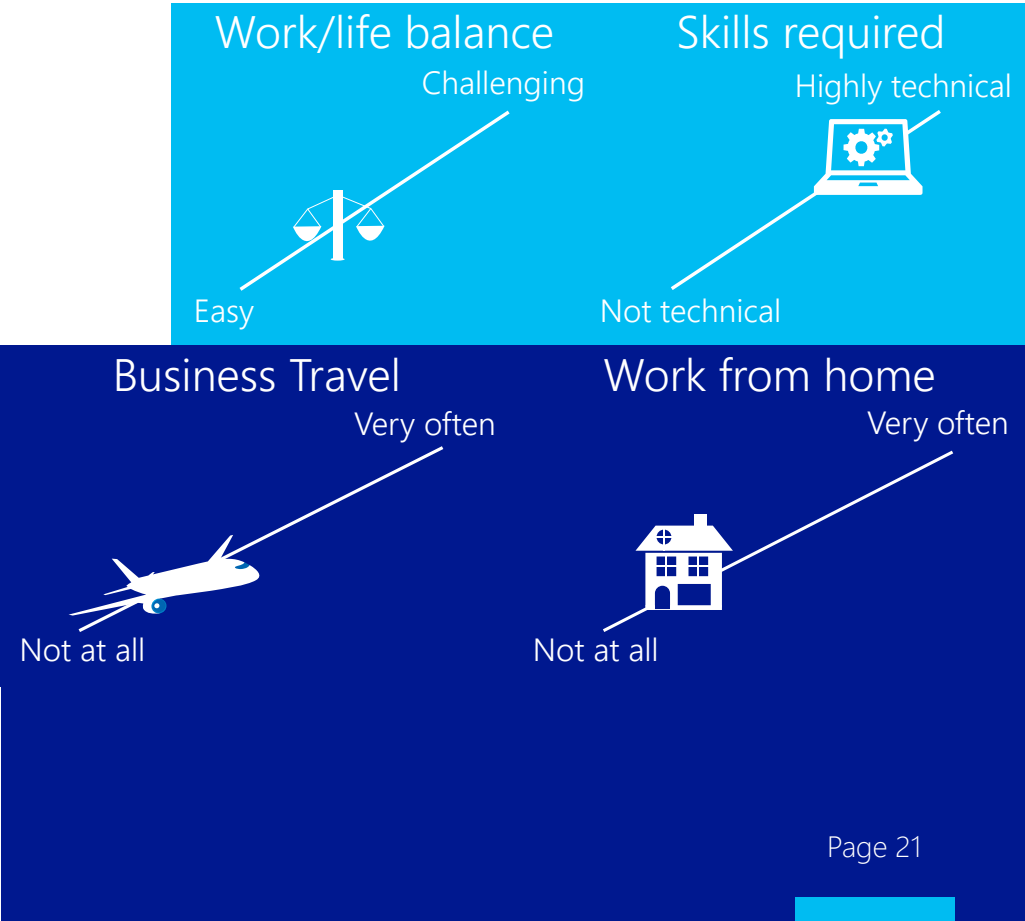
As a partner, we have the opportunity to become subject matter experts on Microsoft technologies and products and help build sound solutions for clients. Additionally, we are exposed to programs such as the Technology Adoption Program (TAP) so we are able to see products before they are released to the public.

Who has influenced me most

My parents are the greatest influences in my life. They came to America as war refugees with only a few personal belongings. My drive to do well comes from knowing the hardships that they have endured along with other people who have come to America for a better life. The best way I know how to do that is to capitalize on my opportunity. I was the first female in my immediate and extended family to graduate from college.

I had no idea what I was getting into, but I knew I wanted to go somewhere... and technology was my route.

Sheng Moua



MSP

OEM

VAR

SI

Types of partners – part 2

MSP: Managed Service Provider

MSPs are technology service companies that manage hardware and software for other companies. An MSP remotely monitors and performs daily back-ups of a company's in-house computer servers, for example. MSPs are in a transitional time – they used to care for hardware and software that was located in their customer's office – but now many of them provide the same services with the software housed in the "cloud."

OEM: Original Equipment Manufacturer

This acronym has pre-computer roots. OEM is used to describe a company that supplies equipment to other companies to resell or incorporate into another product using the reseller's brand name. For example, a washing machine manufacturer sells its washers to a retailer like Sears to resell under a Sears brand name. In Microsoft partner terms, OEM is used to refer to a hardware company that includes Windows or other software installation with the system.

VAR: Value Added Reseller

The term VAR evolved from the services that these partners deliver to support the software. They "add value" by making the software that a business buys work better.

VARs are professional service companies that specialize in the installation, configuration, and training services that support the implementation of business management applications and technology solutions.

SI: System Integrators

SIs are the most diverse of all the partner types, helping companies connect and improve the business management systems all across the organization. There are so many uses of technology in companies, especially large, global businesses, that most SIs specialize in a couple of functions.

A few (very simplified) examples of SI specialties:

- Development SIs build custom software to solve specific business problems.
- Business Productivity SIs help businesses use software like Office 365 and Yammer to improve the efficiency of their employees.
- Collaboration SIs help businesses use software like SharePoint and Project Server to promote teamwork among employees.

Building on the diverse set of Microsoft business management solutions, SIs are the mashups of the partner community.



Leslie Powell
Recruiting Specialist
System Integrator, San Antonio, TX

One word to describe my career

Thriving

Recruiting Specialist

What I do

My job is to recruit Microsoft professionals across the full stack of solutions that my company supports. I find those candidates using sources that include an internal data base, LinkedIn, and other on-line resources. I support the human resource requirements of the senior technical managers and the internal hiring managers.

How I started in tech

I got my first taste of the technology field during college through an internship with an IT staffing firm in Baltimore. Seeing how passionate IT professionals are about their job was so impressive. They love what they do. Coming right out of school, I loved working with people with that kind of energy.

How I got here

I got my BS with a concentration in Human Resources from Towson University. Human Resources appealed to me because I love talking to people and learning about them. My internship with the IT staffing firm solidified my interest in working in the technology industry.

Originally from Houston, I went to school in Baltimore to experience a different part of the country, but wanted to come back to Texas after I graduated. My current company has a great reputation and is located in San Antonio, so it was the perfect combination for me.

Rewards and challenges

The culture here is wonderful, so I am passionate about finding great people to bring on board. I enjoy hearing about the projects that candidates have worked on and what they love to do. Matching a great candidate to a role they fit perfectly is very fulfilling.

The hardest part is when you have to pass on someone that you personally like. Even though you like them, you have to move on if they are not technically qualified.

How I make a difference

The most obvious difference that I make in people's lives is helping them find a career. But at my company, people have long careers here and we help them develop their technical skills over time. The technical folks always want to learn the latest technologies – Microsoft is always coming out with something new – so we provide extensive training opportunities for them.



There have been some hurdles

When you come out of school, you don't know what to expect or how to express yourself. To grow my career, I had to learn how to share my ideas. I work closely with the senior recruiters and they have helped me build confidence. For one issue our department faced, I had a specific suggestion and they urged me to take it directly to the general manager. I received positive feedback, which really helped me build confidence in the value of my ideas.

Work and friends

When I moved to San Antonio, I didn't know anyone, coming here solely for the job. But now, some of my closest friends are people here at the office.

Our company also holds lots of group activities. The company's Volunteer Brigade sponsors projects to give back to the community. We have quarterly events like going to the zoo or a fajita cookout. Each of our offices sponsors their own team building events.

Why I like a smaller company

I feel like I am making an impact here. I am sending great people up to be recruited and know I am making a difference.

Our executive team has a very open door style of managing. When new people come on board, they travel to the headquarters for a boot camp led by the executive

team. Once a month, the people from each office gather in a restaurant and an executive comes to give us a company update and get feedback from the employees. I sit two doors down from the COO and have a great relationship with him.

Benefits of a Microsoft partner

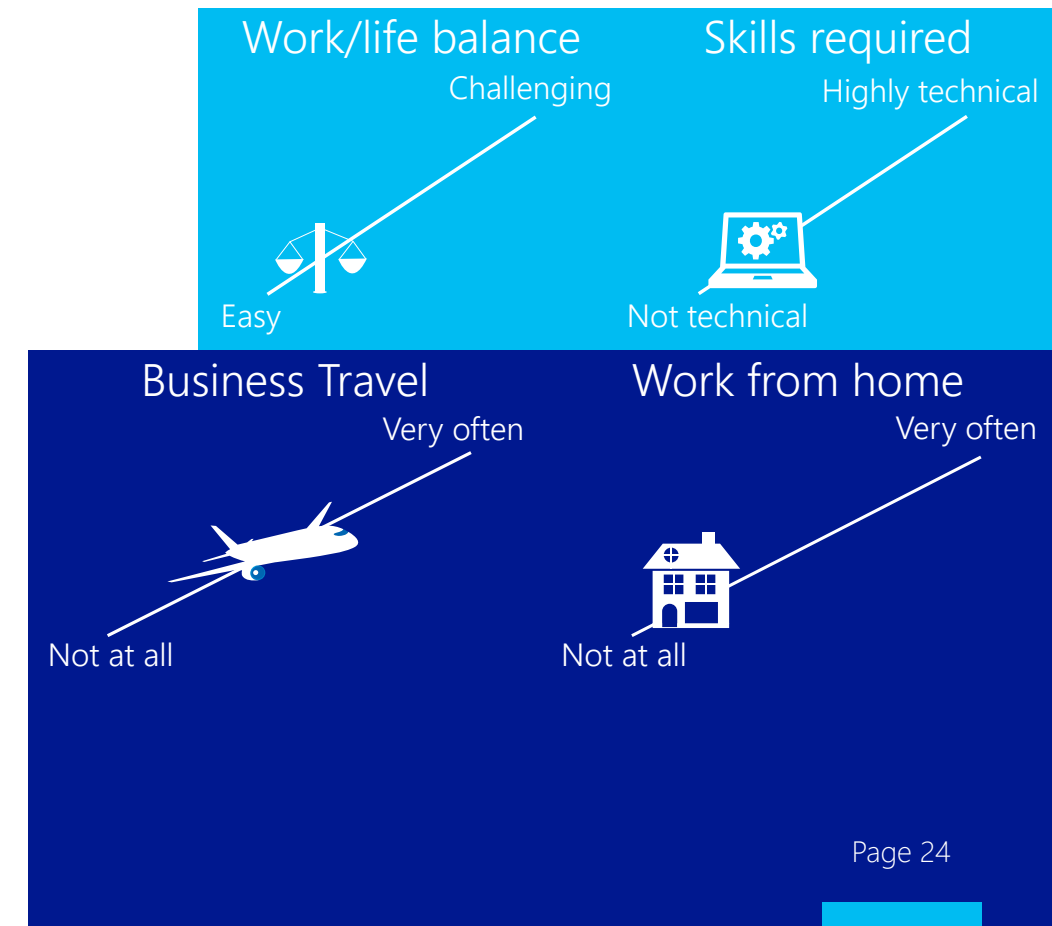
We are 100% focused on Microsoft so we get to see the latest and greatest technology as soon as it comes out. We get to participate in the Microsoft conferences like Convergence and SharePoint Fest. We also sponsor Systems Center Universe which is a live streaming event with a worldwide audience. It's an awesome event that I am proud we support.

Who has influenced me most

Having a coach is important to help guide your career. In my first job out of school, Terry Craft, the VP of our division took me under his wing and mentored me. I learned so much from him – from general business to recruiting to interview tactics. He inspired my career choices and helped me to develop into the recruiter that I am today. I still stay in touch with him.

Even though I am not hands-on with the technology, I still think it is very exciting. Working with people who are so passionate about their work is inspiring.

Leslie Powell





Sarah Woodruff
Sales and Marketing Manager
MSP, Detroit, MI

One word to describe my career

Budding

Sales and Marketing Manager

What I do

The core of my job is to manage all the internal and external communication with our partners, clients, and prospects. That communication includes publications like our newsletter, events like webinars and seminars, public relations, and speaking engagements at conferences. I promote all that messaging through our website with blog posts and podcasts as well as through social networks like Twitter and Facebook.

Another big part of my job is managing the relationships with our partners, including Microsoft. I work closely with our Microsoft Partner Marketing Manager, as well as all the Microsoft field personnel who work with our clients.

On the sales side of my job, I oversee the visibility and management of all new opportunities. I work with sales people to drive the pipeline and close new business.

How I started in tech

I fell into technology accidentally. In college, I knew I wanted to be in business but found accounting a bit dry. I earned two BBA degrees, Marketing and Decision Sciences, from Miami of Ohio.

After graduation (and a side trip through Europe) I took a position as a Management Trainee at the auto group where I had interned during college. I stepped through all the roles in sales, marketing, and even auto parts.

How I got here

I like challenging environments and pushing outside of the box, so I wanted to move into a growth industry. At the time technology was doing well and the constant change of the industry appealed to me. I started at my current company as the marketing coordinator.

Rewards and challenges

I love that my job is different from day to day and minute to minute. I may be working on the newsletter, then join a sales call, and then end the day interviewing a potential employee. It can be demanding at times, but we all pull the oars in the same direction.

Everyone here gives the job everything they've got, we don't have any B players. Every day, I am amazed by the abilities and knowledge of the people at my company – and the amazing work we do for our clients.

My least favorite part of the job is the commute, which is 50 minutes each way – on a good day.



How I make a difference

When I build the visibility of our services and create sales opportunities for the firm, I am helping my peers put food on the table. Since we are a services business, our consultants need to be engaged with our clients for the business to prosper. My job is to keep them busy.

I also work to educate the community about technology. We create a number of publications that share our knowledge about the solutions that we support. I believe the content we produce makes a positive impact on our clients.

There have been some hurdles

There is still some of the boys' club mentality in the technology industry, so being a female I try to go the extra mile. Similar to the automotive industry, when you are a young female, you have to work a bit harder to prove your worth.

Work and friends

We have a very collegial environment here. I have made friendships that will last a long time. I still stay in touch with several folks who no longer work here.

I also have made quite a few friends through our partner network. Relationships are a key to doing business, so I invest in building those with our partners. When you make a personal connection with someone in your network, it's easier to engage with them, and it makes work more fun.

Why I like a smaller company

The company encourages us to share feedback and to constantly improve our business. I have an impact on the business and actually see the change happen.

I also like the opportunity to wear multiple hats which you get with a small company. We get the opportunity to try new things all the time and are encouraged to grow both personally and professionally.

Benefits of a Microsoft partner

When you say you are a Microsoft certified partner, there is an immediate trust factor. Prospects feel confident that Microsoft ensures that partners are qualified to support the solutions they represent.

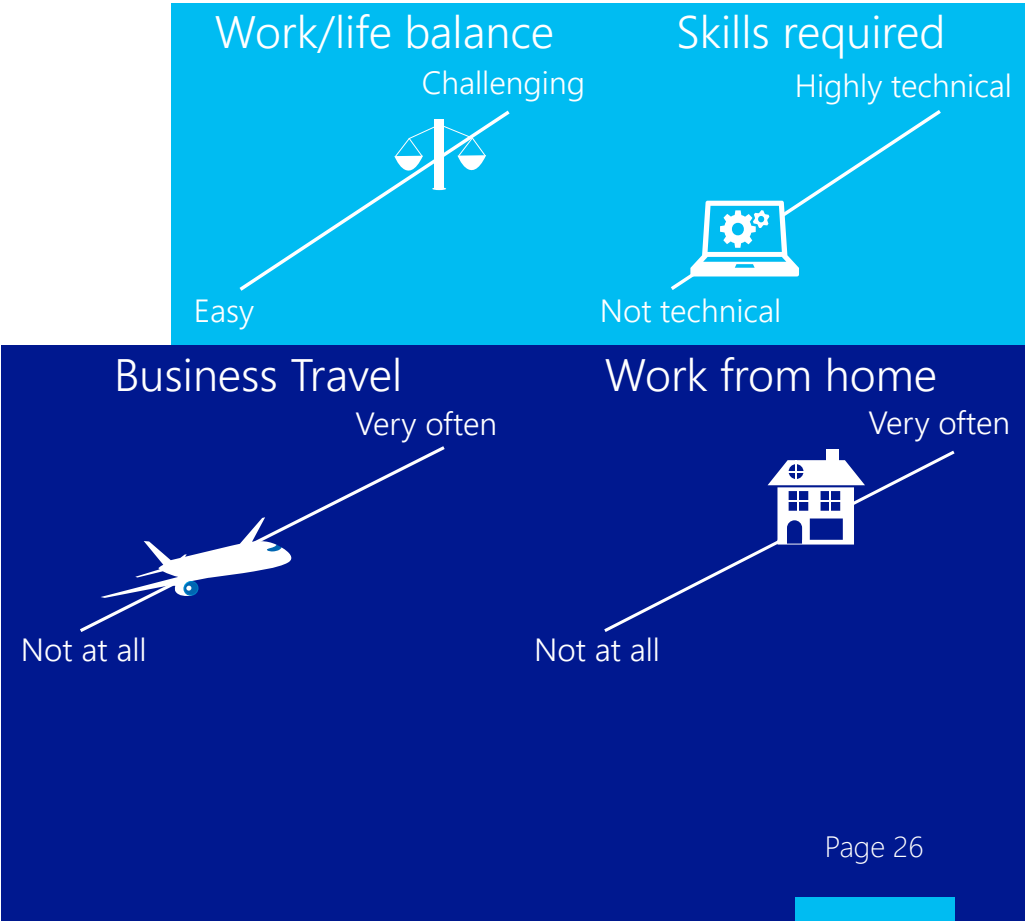
Microsoft understands that the success of their business is dependent on their partners. Their partner network provides a whole range of support like sales tools and marketing programs. They invest heavily in people to help us, including account managers and technical specialists.

Who has influenced me most

My father always challenged me to try new things and he inspired my work ethic. Specific to my job, Karen Downard stands out. She helped me grow and learn technology when I was getting started. She also introduced me to the power of networking and partnering.

If you are a good communicator and want to work hard, anything is possible. You don't have to be highly technical to do well in this field.

Sarah Woodruff



A “high level” view of the Cloud

The cloud changes the game

Cloud computing is having a huge impact on the entire partner community, and Microsoft as well. This is a transformational time in the industry, making it even more exciting to work in a technology job now.

Let’s take a quick step back and explain just what “the cloud” means. At the basic level, “the cloud” or “cloud computing” refers to software that users access through the Internet. Cloud computing allows all companies – no matter how small – to use powerful applications like Office, SharePoint, Lync, Microsoft Dynamics CRM, and Yammer without expensive hardware or extensive IT support. The cloud helps big companies reduce the time they spend managing their technology infrastructure.

There are other benefits from moving to the cloud, like disaster recovery and easy access for employees working remotely. For all of these reasons, businesses have been eager to switch some, if not all, of their applications to the cloud.

Changing revenue models...

Before the cloud, the software and the hardware that partners sold was installed on-site in the customer’s building. The partners made margin (a percent of the sales price) from each sale and also got paid to visit the customer’s site to keep the systems running smoothly and securely.

With cloud-based computing, businesses pay a monthly fee instead of purchasing hardware and software upfront. Partners get their margin each month, but it is often significantly less than it used to be. Technicians don’t need to go on-site as often.

In this changing environment, partners need to find new ways to add value to the businesses they serve.

...and new opportunities

There is a silver lining for partners. Businesses are always looking for ways to be more competitive, cut costs, and build innovative products. The cloud has opened up new ways for partners to help:

- Companies need specialized applications to capitalize on the popularity of mobile devices.
Partners do that.
- Businesses need the capacity to store, “crunch,” and share all the data they are collecting.
Partners do that.
- Organizations need to keep their workers connected to information no matter where in the world they are working.
Partners do that.

It’s a great time to have your head in the clouds!



Pratima Surapaneni
Senior CRM Developer
Dynamics Partner, Boston, MA

One word to describe my career

Dynamic

Developer

What I do

When we implement Microsoft Dynamics CRM for a customer, I am involved in the design requirements and act as the technical lead to oversee programming work like data integration and data migration. Most of my work involves interaction with our customers to help them use Microsoft Dynamics CRM to improve their business processes.

I also sometimes work on the development of custom applications. Every project is unique and my role will change depending on the requirements of each one.

How I started in tech

From the time I was in high school, I wanted to be in technology. I attended undergraduate school in India and received my bachelor's degree in Computer Science.

How I got here

I moved to the US to attend graduate school at Illinois State University and earned a masters degree in Information Systems. During grad school I worked part time for the university providing programming support for their websites. I have family in Minneapolis, where my company is headquartered, which is

why I applied for the job with them. They hired me and I worked in Minneapolis until I got married and moved to Boston. The company has been very accommodating in supporting the change in my life.

Rewards and challenges

My favorite part of the job is learning the new technologies. Microsoft Dynamics CRM is a very dynamic application with updates coming out monthly. With the rapid development cycles, we have to stay current to understand how changes can affect our projects. I find it very exciting to discover new ways to use the application to solve a problem and help our clients.

The least favorite part of my job is documentation. It's really not that I mind it – documentation is very important and essential communication for our clients – but I would rather be coding than doing anything else.

How I make a difference

The solutions that we develop improve the day-to-day work activities for our customers' employees. For example, we recently worked on a project where the marketing team was hand-labeling hundreds of letters. We were able to fully automate that process so that they could focus on more important parts of their job.



It's rewarding to know that you have had an impact on improving a person's life.

As a senior consultant, part of my role is to help the people on my team be more successful. I guide them through company policies and help them build their skills. I really enjoy assisting the people on my team.

There have been some hurdles

Since this was my first job, the transition from being a graduate student to a consultant was challenging in the beginning. Being client-facing was new to me, including attending meetings and working with the customers.

I was fortunate to have great mentors from the start. On my first project, our CIO accompanied me to all of the design meetings. It was a huge advantage to help me build my presentation and communication skills.

Work and friends

Over the years here, I have made a lot of good friends through my job. Most of my colleagues are friends as well. The team meetings that the company sponsors are another one of the things that I really like about my job. We enjoy spending time together and, while we work hard, we have a lot of fun at the meetings.

Why I like a smaller company

When I started we were only twenty people, so I have seen the company grow quickly. From the start, I could see that I was adding value as the company expanded.

I feel valued as an important part of the company, not just another employee. Everyone is treated as equals here – I am perfectly comfortable talking to the CEO.

In addition, we have a very strong continuing education program. I can develop my skills through the online classes that the company provides for us.

Benefits of a Microsoft partner

From the time I was working on my bachelor's degree, I dreamed of working with Microsoft technologies. Working for a top Microsoft partner gives us access to technology before most businesses get to see it. It's fun to have a preview of the latest technology.

Who has influenced me most

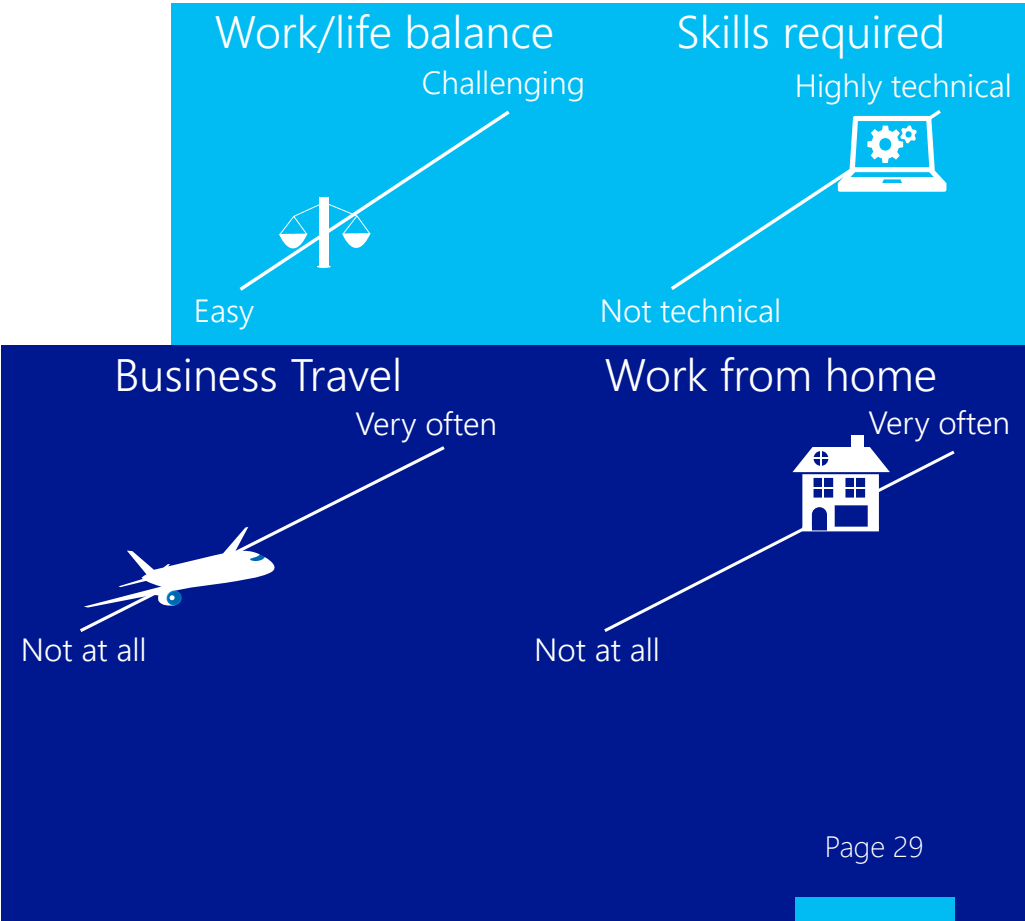
There have been many people who have helped me along the way. During my graduate work, several of my professors guided me to focus on the database side of development. That really helped to shape the direction that I took in the technology industry.

I have learned so much from the people at my company, especially our CIO, Alex Fagundes. He is one of the senior managers of the company and a Microsoft MVP, but is down to earth and humble, always sharing his knowledge.

So many people at different points in my career have contributed to my success. I have been very fortunate to have many dedicated mentors

On my first project, our CIO accompanied me to the design meetings. I couldn't imagine sitting in that room by myself, but now I am confident on my own.

Pratima Surapaneni





Lauren Schwartz
CEO and Owner
MSP/Cloud Partner, Conshohocken, PA

One word to describe my career

Unexpected

CEO

What I do

Our business is to provide technology support services to companies that don't have their own internal IT department. As CEO of the business, I have to do many different things from finance to human resources to making technology recommendations to marketing. We are a small business, with 14 people, so we don't have departments that handle all the details. It's often not glamorous work, but it needs to be done.

Since I love the technology, I also try to stay as involved as possible with the engineering side of the business. Engineering develops the technical solutions, but I'll help with getting Microsoft support or molding our service offerings.

I joke that I am chief sales officer and chief marketing officer because I stay very involved in sales and marketing. Professional development of the team is also a high priority for me.

Managing the relationships with Microsoft and our other vendors is an important part of my job. And, I have a responsibility to forge relationships in the community that supports us as well.

How I started in tech

I was interested in technology from an early age, taking programming classes in high school. While I liked computers, design was my primary interest. Attending the Illinois Institute of Technology, I majored in Product Design where I learned to collect requirements and communicate with engineering. That served as a great foundation for my first job, at DEC (Digital Equipment Corp), designing software for CAD/CAM systems.

How I got here

I moved on to Microsoft and continued to focus on user interface design, which combined my interest in design, technology, and people. While at Microsoft I worked in New York, Redmond, and the UK.

During time working for a System Integrator, I built my general business and sales experience. Several years ago, I executed a management buyout of my current company and took the role of CEO.

Over the years, my ability to comprehend new technologies has helped me to grow professionally and take on new challenges. Since I didn't have the operational business training like accounting and contracts, I had to build those skills over time. I found out that I was good at things that I didn't realize.



Rewards and challenges

We work with small businesses and get to know them very well. The most rewarding part of my job is being able to have real impact – helping our clients take advantage of technology to change and grow their business.

The hardest part of being CEO is that I sometimes have to deal with uncomfortable situations. That can include collecting past due bills, negotiating contracts, and calming clients who are frustrated by technology.

How I make a difference

We see the direct impact of technology on our clients' businesses. Physician's groups deliver better patient care. Non-profits and social services organizations are able to reach more people and serve them better. The professional services companies that we work with, like lawyers and engineering companies, provide better service. All because of technology.

There have been some hurdles

The technology field changes a lot over time, and that change has only accelerated over the past couple of years. That means that you must keep your knowledge growing over time and that your role will continue to change. Those are both challenges, but also opportunities.

Work and friends

As you move up through management, your work relationships change. We have a tight-knit group of people in our company, but in my role as CEO, I need to balance leadership with friendship.

Why I like a smaller company

As I sometimes tell prospective employees, "Working for a small business is like camping. You may not have all the amenities, but you can pitch your own tent." It's great to be part of growing something where you can recognize opportunity and do something about it.

Benefits of a Microsoft partner

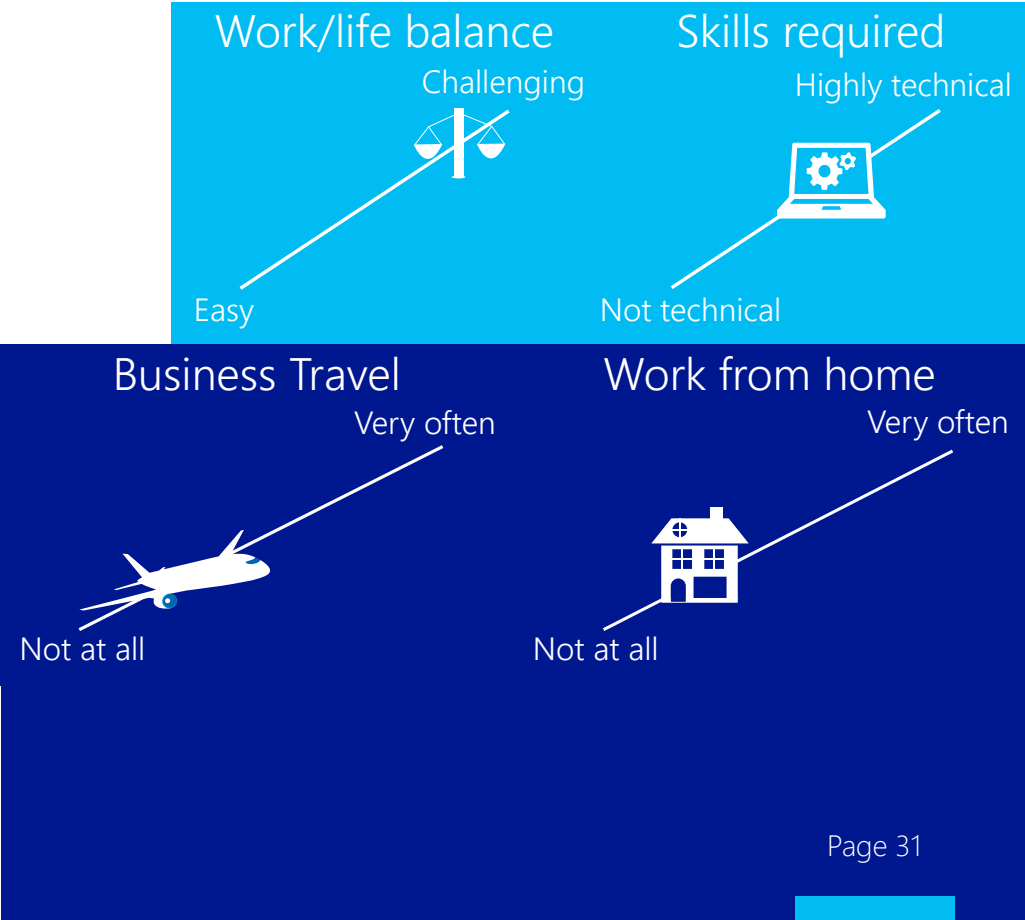
I firmly believe that Microsoft offers the best value for small- and medium-size companies to help them with their business problems. When our clients use Microsoft products, I have confidence in our ability to integrate and manage their data to solve any issue.

Who has influenced me most

The guideposts for my professional life have come from my family. My father was an engineer and commanded a lot of respect. My mom is a wonderfully empathetic person with great people skills. Many of my family role models grew up in modest means but accomplished so much. They taught me good values – how to do business with honesty and integrity – as well as resiliency.

I believe that technology will always be a part of the solution in making people's lives better...from health care to education to business.

Lauren Schwartz





Jacky Wright, Vice President
Strategic Enterprise Services IT
Microsoft

Understanding your passion is the pathway to being successful and liking what you do.

Imagine what you can do

Like many of the young women who have shared their stories here, I didn't plan a career in technology. While attending university, I got a job as a statistical typist, manually typing up bank statements. In the corner of the room where I worked, there was a computer that no one used.

Being the curious sort, I dug in, teaching myself how to write macros in the spreadsheet to create the bank statements. The work that had taken me a week to do now took ten minutes on the computer. With my extra time, I helped other employees offload manual tasks and built my reputation as "that college kid who works wonders with the computer." My passion for technology was born.

From that simple start, my career progression has been a balance. There were times when family was my highest priority and times when I took on career challenges. In every role I filled, I applied my curiosity and passion to the job.

Be curious

The ability to explore the world and the career opportunities out there are as close as a search of the web. As you are thinking about your career, be curious and look at what people are doing around the world. Open your mind to possibilities that are unfamiliar.

Just as importantly, learn more about what you like. Understanding your passion is the pathway to being successful and liking what you do. Curiosity coupled with that passion will help you figure out where you belong.

Technology touches every part of our lives today. If you are not focused on technology today, look for those careers where the technology plays to your passion and your curiosity. If you are in a job that is not progressing, doing something you like is achievable. Make a bold move and take a risk.

Put your curiosity and your passion together and there is no limit to what you can do.

Jacky

Resources

Learn more about the Microsoft partner channel

CRN News, analysis and perspective for VARs and technology integrators

Redmond Channel Partner Independent advocate for Microsoft partners.

The Var Guy The IT channel's most popular blog covering emerging, disruptive technologies for VARs, MSPs and IT service providers

ZDNet/All About Microsoft Microsoft watcher Mary Jo Foley's blog covers the products, people and strategies that make Microsoft tick.

Channel Pro Network Business and tech content and videos targeted at our channel pro audience of VARs, MSPs and IT consultants.

MSDynamicsWorld Independent leader for Microsoft Dynamics news and views.

Learn more about Microsoft business solutions

MPN Microsoft Partner Network portal

Microsoft Business Hub Microsoft technical and business solutions mega-site

Find partners who specialize in your area of interest

Pinpoint Microsoft's partner directory

From the author

My heartfelt thanks go to Jenni Flinders and Todd Nemes for allowing me to collect and share the stories of these amazing young women.

The topic is dear to my heart since much of my professional life has been spent in the Microsoft partner channel, first working for and now writing about partners. It's a fascinating industry that attracts people who don't quite fit the corporate mold, looking to make their impact on business from a front row seat.

Inspiring people abound in the partner channel. Please consider joining them to love your work and dedicate your career to building the technology foundation of American business.

Barb Levisay

blevisay@marketingforpartners.com

Glossary

Application developer is a person who writes the code to create software applications.

CAD/CAM Computer Aided Design, Computer Aided Manufacturing. Software used to assist in the creation, modification, analysis, or optimization of engineering designs.

CEO Chief Executive Office

CFO Chief Financial Officer is the person in a business responsible for the accounting and financial management functions.

CIO Chief Information Officer is the person in a business responsible for the company's information technology systems.

COO Chief Operations Officer oversees the overall operations of the business.

CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) describes the look and formatting of a web page.

CTO Chief Technology Officer. The CTO heads a company's internal technology operations, keeping the software and hardware current.

Channel Businesses often sell their products and services through other businesses, which is called a distribution channel. It is the way that the business "distributes" its products or services. The term channel has become a shortened term to describe those businesses that sell for others.

Convergence is a yearly conference, attracting 12,000 people, sponsored by Microsoft that provides training and networking opportunities for Microsoft Dynamics customers and partners

Decision sciences is the study of statistics in business.

Demo is short for demonstration. A common term used to describe a presentation of the software to prospects or customers.

Developer is another term for a person who does computer programming.

Dynamics The Microsoft Dynamics solutions include CRM (Customer Relationship Management) and ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) software. CRM software helps businesses manage marketing, sales, and social interactions with prospects and customers. ERP software helps businesses manage accounting, human resources, operations, and supply chain functions.

Enterprise content management is a system used to store and provide access to documents and other company content.

Franchise business is a group of independently owned businesses who share a common name and receive support service from a central office.

Go-live The process of "turning on" a business management application after testing and training is complete.

HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) is used to create web pages.

ISV stands for Independent Software Vendor. ISVs develop software that adds functionality to the Microsoft software products.

Implementation The process of planning, configuring, and training organizations to use new business management applications, like Microsoft Dynamics CRM and ERP.

Learning partners offer classroom training to teach business people and technology professionals how to use software.

MIS stands for Management Information Systems.

MSP Managed Service Providers are technology service companies that manage hardware and software for other businesses.

MVP stands for Most Valuable Professional. A Microsoft program that recognizes people who actively contribute their knowledge to the user community. Very few people achieve the MVP designation.

Microsoft Dynamics CRM Businesses use this software (CRM = Customer Relationship Management) to manage their marketing, social media, sales, and customer service functions.

Microsoft Dynamics GP One of four applications that Microsoft offers to businesses to manage accounting and ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning).

Microsoft Dynamics SL Another of the four Microsoft Dynamics ERP solutions.

Microsoft stack A common term used to describe the breadth of Microsoft applications. The term stems from the way the products "stack" on top of one another to provide businesses with end-to-end infrastructure and business management software.

PMO Project Management Organization is a team or department specializing in project procedure oversight.

Out-of-the-box means using software without customizations.

Sales pipeline is the term used to describe the set of potential sales opportunities the sales team is actively pursuing.

SharePoint One of Microsoft's flagship business applications, SharePoint provides the foundation for internet portals where companies store, organize, share, and access information.

SharePoint Fest training conferences for SharePoint administrators, software developers, information architects, business analysts, and power users.

SharePoint Saturdays are very popular Saturday gatherings of SharePoint end users and practitioners in cities around the US and the world

System Integrator A technology service provider that helps businesses "integrate" the separate systems that are used to manage different aspects of the business.

TAP Through Microsoft's TAP (Technology Adoption Program) partners work with select customers to implement an application before it is released for general use.

User group Meetings held to provide end users and practitioners the opportunity to share ideas and best practices about a product or solution.

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[Customer Sales Manager](#)

[Channel Manager](#)

[Solution Architect](#)

[Remote Support Manager](#)

[SharePoint Consultant](#)

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[Recruiting Specialist](#)

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