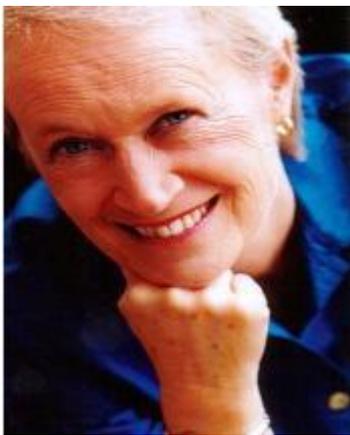


## ICT Executive Profile

*Based on feedback from the annual survey around having access to more senior women as role models, each month we have an executive profile compiled from 7 questions posed to key executive women in the ICT industry*

**Di Ryall**

**CEO of Xplore for Success**



**What is your current role and what is your scope?**

I am currently the CEO of Xplore for Success, which I founded in 2002 to provide services that support up-and-coming career women to take more leadership positions in Australia. Our gender imbalance in IT and also most other sectors is a major waste of talent. Unfortunately our workplaces are often based on a paradigm assuming men are more suited to leadership roles and that work is about presence rather than outcomes and a difficulty in embracing flexibility.

**What attracted you to a career in ICT?**

My natural affinity was for Mathematics and Sciences, which for women in the 70's mostly led to a career in teaching.

After moving to the US and finding that teaching was not possible I obtained a role programming computers. Having not had the opportunity to study computing at university I was fascinated by this new area. I could see that there was rapid change in the power of the technology and this would lead to exciting new ways to work, learn and play.

Upon returning to Australia, I recommenced teaching but found I missed the excitement of technology and what it had to offer. After having two sons and doing some part-time work and post-graduate study, I gained employment with a technology distributor, who managed Apple products in Australia.

In 1984, Apple opened their offices in Sydney and I moved over to work for them. Over the next nearly 20 years I held many roles in sales, marketing, customer support, business development, training and developed support, culminating in my position as Managing Director of Apple in Australia from 1997 to 2001.

I found the IT industry was always innovative and exciting and being a new sector there were opportunities for me to flourish as a businesswoman.

**Tell us about the highpoints and lowpoints of your career?**

Becoming the Managing Director of Apple was definitely a high point. It allowed me to foster a workplace where we valued diversity of thought and style. We were a highly successful subsidiary of Apple with strong market shares in education, design and music. The ways that these clients were able to achieve extraordinary outcomes was exciting to see. During 2000 we were awarded Employer of the Year, which is based around workplace culture and the opportunity for all employees to thrive.

A low point was making the decision to step down from this role after treatment for breast cancer. I felt and still do that this was the right decision for my health but 2001 was the beginning of a huge turn around for Apple globally. I still use Apple products for all my work.

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### **What does work life balance mean to you?**

Our lives are made up of many inter-connected factors including personal development, career success, health and fitness, recreation, personal relationships and financial management. At any time in our lives we are likely to find on reflection that some component or components of our lives are out of balance. The important thing for life-balance is taking the time to reflect and having the strength to make changes so that we are leading the life that will give us a feeling of balance.

### **What attracted and kept you in the ICT industry throughout your career?**

The ICT industry is a sector of rapid change and opportunity. For me, the change in technology was a key factor as it allowed me to see how our civilisation would be changed and how people would adapt to the new opportunities. To have been part of the move from tape storage to digital CD and the cloud is something I value.

### **What ambitions personal or professional do you still want to achieve?**

When I stepped down from my position at Apple I wanted to encourage other women to have the career to which they aspired. Xplore for Success was set up to provide pragmatic advice to women and support them as they face challenges of unconscious bias, being in a minority and for many the challenges of motherhood combined with a rewarding career.

### **What's the one piece of advice you'd give to yourself starting out on your career?**

Take the time to reflect on a regular basis and have strong conviction that you can achieve your own career aspirations.

*NB: As appeared on FITT e-newsletter July 2014 and also features on the website.*

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