

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

Rhody Burton, Channel Director SAP



What is your current role and what is your scope?

I am the Sales Director for the channels organisation at SAP. I lead the establishment and expansion of our channel team across all sales segments and routes to market. I also have the overall responsibility for our small and midsize business segment, which is an extremely important focus area across SAP.

What attracted you to a career in ICT?

After speaking to many other women in IT in non-technical roles, I know that my story is not that unique. I fell into IT. I was temping in London and I had a choice of two roles – the one in IT was way more interesting than the other. I was a young backpacker. It was the mid 90's. I suddenly had an email address and access to the Internet, was flying

to Dublin to meet hardware vendors, travelling across Europe to meet with software vendors and being involved in discussions on how to bring the two together. It was exciting stuff. My love for IT was born. I arrived back in Australia and wouldn't settle for a job in any other industry, and I've never considered leaving it.

Tell us about the highpoints and lowpoints of your career?

The highpoints have been many. Working for fast growing companies in a world that is changing and evolving, being given new opportunities, having mentors, driving change.

I was lucky to have strong mentors and sponsors early and throughout my career. Their faith in me gave me confidence to forge ahead, take my seat at the table and have a voice.

VMware gave me so many opportunities to grow, contribute, gain confidence and force me outside my comfort zone.

Getting involved in women in IT initiatives, both inside the organisation and out, also helped me build my profile, meet and network with other amazing women in our industry and even gave me an edge for my latest opportunity at SAP – which is my biggest challenge to date. I am enjoying it and feel I'm in the midst of a new stage of growth, which is so exciting.

The low points have been tied to trying to balance building a career and a growing family. I have struggled at times to find what "balance" means. I coined a phrase called "GMS... Guilty Mothers Syndrome," but realised that it wasn't just women that suffered from the guilt syndrome.

Men suffer from it too. Finding a company that is willing to support you is key, but a very wise mentor once said, "the company will take everything you give it."

"YOU have to own the balance".

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I still struggle with getting it right all the time, but I am committed to being as present and authentic as I can with every situation I'm in – personal and professional.

What does work life balance mean to you?

I measure my work/life balance over a two-week period. I know that may sound crazy to other people, but I truly believe work/life balance is different to all of us and you have to find what works for you. I share custody of my kids week on/week off. The week I have them, I made a commitment to myself and to them, to be present and available to the things that are important to them while giving what I need to SAP. So the hours I work revolve around them. Finding time to exercise and other things for myself is a challenge, but I make sure the weekends are as work free as I can make them.

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

The attraction is knowing we are changing the world. The opportunities, the people, the possibilities. Technology is driving everything we do and it is getting more and more exciting. I honestly do not know any other industry that is changing and evolving at such an incredible pace and that impacts as many other industries as much as we do.

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

I want to continue to drive change, grow myself and the things that surround me. Be brave enough to make choices, but not limit myself to a pre-conceived plan. I want to continue to see my children grow into confident, polite people that have a drive to do the things they are passionate about.

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

Be confident, learn about “imposter syndrome” and ignore it, get mentors and sponsors, become a mentor or sponsor. Learn, listen and be open to ideas, people and opportunities.

Most of all, stay authentic and be true to yourself. I learnt all this along the way, but who knows where I would be now if I had known it earlier!

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

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