

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

Tara Ridley

Director of Enterprise Sales and Operations for Cisco Australia



What is your current role and what is your scope?

I'm the Director of Enterprise Sales and Operations for Cisco in Australia. In this role, I'm responsible for identifying and leading growth and development for the top-100 companies on the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX) as well as managing the sales force that drives Cisco's engagement and business in this area. I lead a team that spans across multiple industry verticals (e.g., Finance, Banking and Insurance, Retail, Manufacturing, Transport, Mining and Utilities).

In this role now for 16 months, I've focused the team on helping to ensure these top private sector companies are able to navigate critical industry inflection points such as cloud, mobility and video to achieve business outcomes such as increased productivity, competitive advantage and sustainable growth.

What attracted you to a career in ICT?

While ICT wasn't my original career plan, through positive experiences and being open to trying new things, my career has evolved to ICT. Originally from the UK, I studied marketing at University and had grand plans of getting into brand management or PR. As part of my BA (Hons) degree, the 3rd year was spent working in industry and a number of companies came to campus to promote themselves. HP was one of those companies and I was really impressed with their comprehensive graduate programme. I did my 12 months at HP supporting the sales team and absolutely loved it! Upon completing my degree, HP offered me 1 of 5 graduate places available and I've never looked back!

Tell us about the highpoints and lowpoints of your career?

Of the numerous highlights in my career, the common theme is the talented people I've had the privilege of working with at the three companies I've worked for in the UK and Australia. With the mindset that every role has provided me with new opportunities to learn and be challenged, I've never had what would generally be termed 'low points'.

What does work life balance mean to you?

While 'work-life balance' might sound like an unachievable aspiration, particularly in the fast-paced, ever changing ICT industry, I feel very privileged to work for Cisco. Cisco provides great flexibility in the way we work and enables us through technology to be able to collaborate effectively wherever we are at home, on the move or at work.

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

There is only one constant in the IT industry and that is change. Some people resist change, but I embrace change and view it as an opportunity to try something new and/or different every day- it also keeps me on my toes! I thrive under pressure and constant change, so pursuing a career in sales for an IT company suits this drive and passion!

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

Personally, my desire has been to become a mum which I'm shortly about to do and I'm so excited about it! Professionally my goal is to always be in a role that challenges me and in an environment where I can learn. It has served me well so far and I'm sure it will continue to do so when I get back from maternity leave.

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

Embrace every opportunity that comes your way. It may not seem to be the obvious or a desired next step but you never know what door(s) it may open.

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

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