

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

Shara Evans

CEO Marketing Clarity



What is your current role and what is your scope?

I'm a technology futurist, keynote speaker, and the CEO of Market Clarity, a professional services firm.

I track a wide range of cutting edge technology developments by examining what's happening in research labs, talking to global thought leaders about these developments and the latest scientific

advances, and then I use my imagination to put it together into scenarios of what our future will look like.

I use these insights to help companies harness the fast moving world of technology innovation to develop new lines of business, as well as helping them assess their strengths, weakness, potential opportunities and threats from emerging technologies. I then work with them to develop a disruptive competitive advantage. And, I regularly speak about futuristic and technology topics at public and private events.

Areas that I cover include: telecommunications services and technologies, smartphones + other devices, wearable tech, implantable tech, sensors, augmented reality, virtual reality, holographic displays, home automation (and the many different types of Internet-connected devices within homes), drones (transport industry, spying, hacking), robotics, cars of the future, 3D printing, cloud services, security + privacy, and the next wave of innovation.

What attracted you to a career in ICT?

I've always been fascinated by science fiction, future technologies, civilisations, and far away worlds. As a young girl I often read several books a week — sometimes even devouring a book a day. However, it wasn't until my last semester of studying Political Science at Temple University that I discovered that I had an aptitude for the then newly emerging field of computer science. I was using a statistical analysis package called SPSS when, to my amazement, I found that I was able to very quickly learn a range of

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programming languages, without ever having taken a course in the subject.

At the time, I was interning for a State Legislator, and had been tapped to run for a local election. I decided that if I were to win the election, I would follow my planned career in law and politics, and if I lost I'd pursue my new-found aptitude in computing. I lost the election by 10 votes! It truly was a sliding door moment in my career path.

Tell us about the highpoints and lowpoints of your career?

I'm fortunate in that I've had some amazing high points. Early on it was having great managers / mentors who pushed me to my limits, encouraging me to volunteer my time at industry organisations whilst taking on really challenging technical projects. Being elected to the Board of the International Tandem Computer Users Group at 24 was a springboard to many opportunities that followed. A subsequent promotion to the role of International Program Manager, and later Sales and Marketing Manager, enabled me to travel the world, and later immigrate to Australia.

I launched my first analyst firm, Telsyte, in 1997 — right at the start of telecommunications industry deregulation. Selling the firm to publicly listed UXC was certainly a highlight of my career, but seeing that Telsyte is still successful in the market is equally gratifying.

Another highlight was winning the 2007 ACOMMS Award for Professional Services to the Telecommunications Industry within the first 18-months of starting my current firm, Market Clarity.

Without a doubt, serving on advisory committees and boards for top science organizations such as CSIRO and NICTA, and having access to global thought leaders across a wide technical spectrum, ranks top of list in terms of personal satisfaction (satisfying my inner Sci-Fi geek).

Running a small business is hard work, and having done this for the past 17-years, I can attest to the amount of effort that goes into keeping everything running. In professional services, it's a constant cycle of business development, delivering projects and speeches, researching new technologies, creating new intellectual property, marketing, and a lot of time spent on back-end administration and financial stuff. Spending a weekend working on admin tasks when its gorgeous outside is definitely a low point!

What does work life balance mean to you?

I've always struggled with work life balance, even more so now that I'm single. When you own a business, there's always something that needs to be done, and it's tempting to fill my "down time" with work. Having recently pivoted my career from being known as a telecoms analyst, to now focusing my research and speaking engagements on emerging technologies, and being known as a futurist — the time that I spend



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researching and writing about future technologies really crosses over into the things that I consider fun. So, I make it a point to plan non-work social activities, and I'm also planning to travel when things slow down for the holiday period. Exercise and meditation are an important part of my daily routine, which also helps me keep things in balance.

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

One of the things that I've always found fascinating about the ICT sector is the increasingly rapid pace of change, and the never-ending opportunities that arise from new technologies.

There are so many emerging technologies that I find truly fascinating: augmented reality, robotics, 3D printing, artificial intelligence, just to name a few, that will create a world 10 years from now that may, in many ways, be unrecognisable. Ultimately, everything is going to be connected, every gadget that we own, our homes, our cars, our clothing, and even our bodies will be connected to the 'net.

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

I have to say, that not even in my wildest dreams did I imagine that I'd end up as professional futurist. In the past year, I've identified new product sectors, industries and entire job categories that don't exist today. Taking these concepts and turning them into reality is certainly on my radar.

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

Take a chance. When an opportunity presents, seize it. Dare to be different. If something stretches your talents, or takes you out of your comfort zone, it's a good thing. Get in touch with your inner self; if your intuition is saying "no" or "hold back" there are probably subtle clues that are niggling in the background. Pay attention to these, and do your due diligence before jumping in headfirst. Always be true to yourself, do the things that make you happy.

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

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