Martha Van Berkle

Senior Manager, Smart Web Technology Group Cisco

"Technology lets me live the life I want. I can be at home, and through video conferencing, manage my team in Cisco offices all around the world!"

Martha manages the self-service tools and business strategy for Cisco's support website for Cisco that sees 23 million users a year! "Using IT lets me help people globally."

Martha's CareerMash

Martha studied mathematics and engineering at Queen's University. There she learned to deal with complex theories and problems. After graduating she got a job at Cisco as a tech support engineer. "The Internet is about problem solving and understanding complex networks. Engineering studies allowed me to jump right in even though I didn't have a networking background." Martha has been with Cisco for 11 years in many different jobs. As senior manager, she leads a team of people based all over the world. Martha's CareerMash combines her passion for inspiring and leading others with her knowledge of services and networking.

A Day in the Life

Cisco customers can get technical help directly on the company website. Martha and her team keep these support tools running smoothly.

Known as a "troublemaker" in the company, Martha thinks innovation. She and her team seek out customer needs and figure out how to capitalize on them with new products and processes. They try out these ideas, in pilots with customers, that determine how these new tools can meet business needs. For example, "How can we help our customers access our website with tools they have written themselves?"

Martha also helped define Cisco's collaboration culture by championing adoption of Cisco Quad, a social network for collaboration, among the company's 16,000 services employees.

Why this Job Rocks

Martha has a very unique role in Canada. She manages a team based all over the world while living and working in Toronto. Her boss is in North Carolina, her Vice-President is in California, and her team is scattered across the US and India! "I live a very virtual, Cisco-enabled life. Work, in the future, is moving towards more and more living where you want, while contributing virtually."

Roadmap

Martha graduated with a degree in engineering (applied mathematics) from Queen's University in 2000. She was recruited to Cisco in San Jose, California where she started in tech support. Martha has held eleven different positions at Cisco (for example: project manager, product manager, program manager, adoption lead, change manager, manager) She has been senior manager in the Smart Web Technology Group, since 2009.

Speed Bumps

At first Martha felt tech support wasn't for her. "I soon realized that tech support allowed me to help people and I really enjoy that."

Tips for Success

Know yourself! "Spend some time getting to know yourself. Ask questions: What do you like to do or not like to do? This isn't about what your parents want. If you focus on things you enjoy doing you'll pick a career path that's right for you."

Start somewhere! Try picking a company and not a job. Do some research or a co-op. "Choose a good company where there will be places to grow. You'll learn along the way."