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Profile of Sabrina Cubbon

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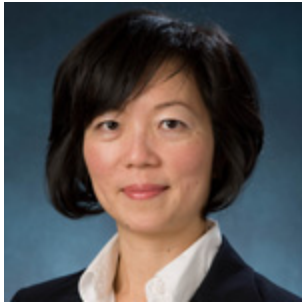
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Sabrina Cubbon
General Manager, Marketing
Asia Satellite Telecommunications Company Limited

Graduated from University of Manchester, United Kingdom with a Masters degree in Electronic and Electrical Engineering, specialised in digital encryption, Mrs. Cubbon joined AsiaSat in August 1992 as Regional Manager responsible for overseeing the development of business opportunities in several countries in the region. She was appointed as General Manager, Marketing in December 1993 responsible for leading AsiaSat's sales and marketing team into a more competitive and challenging environment. Her present responsibilities include sales and marketing, business development, corporate affairs and market research.

Prior to joining AsiaSat, Mrs. Cubbon held various major account marketing positions with UK based Case Communications and Australia based Datacraft. She has over 24 years of successful marketing experience in the competitive telecommunications industry in Asia. She specialises in digital communications and has published several research papers on encryption technology.

1) How did you join the satellite industry? What was your first assignment?

I joined the satellite industry totally by accident. After I had my second child, I was looking for work and found a job advertisement in the South Morning China Post. It turned out to be a position working for Andrew Jordon, who was then at AsiaSat. My position was 'Regional Manager' that included Hong Kong & ASEAN. Prior to joining AsiaSat, I had four years of sales experience with CASE Communications, where I sold data equipment (i.e. modem, multiplexer, X.25 interface equipment, etc.); and before CASE Communications, I worked at an Australian company, Datacraft.

I earned two degrees: 'Electrical Engineering' and 'Cryptography'. When I studied at the University of Manchester, I was one of only four female students in my engineering classes. Since my father didn't have a college degree, he could not imagine a profession for his daughter studying electrical engineering. My flat-mates at the university thought I was odd...because engineering students had to work much harder than students majored in history, language, or anthropology. For example, I had to write lab reports after a long day in classes. On the only 'free day' of the week, Wednesday, I was always catching up on lab reports or studying...with no time for social life. As for me, I didn't have a professional goal at the time, though I knew I was good at science and mathematics. And, I thought electrical engineers would work in a more pleasant environment than civil engineers who worked at one of those construction sites.

2) How have you been involved in changes (innovations, technology, services)? Why did you stay?

The revenue growth and brand recognition for Asiasat are my biggest achievements. I'm very proud of our brand...Asiasat is recognized worldwide as the quality brand with know-how in Asia. When I joined AsiaSat, I was the 18th employee. Asiasat had only one satellite and the business was transponder leasing. Today, we have nearly 154 employees, three operational satellites, and a wide range of service arrangement throughout Asia. The company has evolved through a few restructures over the years, it's still growing.

Asiasat introduced me to a new horizon, where I could use my knowledge and experience to understand the client needs and situations and liaison with my engineering/technical associates. Through my experience, I observed that engineers are not expressive and don't know how to probe or reach out to the clients. As a result, I played a vital role in filling this gap.

Having studied science and mathematics in a male dominated field, I grew up with boys vs. girls. I learned to work comfortably with men. As a woman in a male dominated industry, I stand out! I can express ideas and concepts well...as a result; clients prefer to deal with me. Clients will share their ideas with me about competition, needs, and problems. With good information, I have the opportunity to work-out solutions.

My priority is to do a good job, get the job done professionally. I don't worry about stereotyping, politics, and competition. Of course, I also have a soft side...I can step out of the boss role and become one of the people. And, I am a family person with my own daily family demands. I am human, and I learn from mistakes.

My boss, Peter Jackson, gives me freedom to suggest and implement ideas. We are a relatively small company, without a lot of internal politics. There is a good professional relationship among associates that is essential for building respect among peers. I believe Asiasat is the best company in the region offering a strong brand and quality service, there is no better place to work. Time flies when you enjoy your work.

3) Could you share an experience where you failed, though the lesson learned impacted your career?

I've made many mistakes through my career. For example, I was motivated to negotiate for the highest prices with regard to client contracts. Then I learned that my view was short-term because clients broke contract terms or renegotiated at will and the company could not manage its revenue forecast from one year to another. As a result of this situation, I learned to adapt to a pricing strategy that had a long-term perspective.

I also made many mistakes in hiring, and it is still a challenge for me today. It is difficult to qualify a candidate over an interview. There are many exceptional resumes and good job interviews, but few have the passion in the business. I find myself disappointed whenever I see employees making decisions based on a narrow perspective or short-term situation, ignoring the longer term business consequences and possibilities. I guess the best way to describe it is...I expect employees to 'treat the business as his/her own business.'

4) Fast forward 5-10 years, what do you see as opportunities and challenges for women? What skills will be critical for women in leadership role?

There are plenty of opportunities for women. There are women in many businesses today, doing a good job. I believe women are as smart as men, if not smarter. Women generally can visualize a big or small picture; whereas, men are generally best in creating the big picture...not the small things.

With respect to skills...I believe managing people will be a priority. And, women have to develop technology savvy as well as market understanding. It is very important to bridge technology and market development to be successful in this global economy. For example, timing of product introduction is very important for market acceptance and success.

Asiasat supports college internship program. Each year, we recruit two or three college students who work for a 12-month period before they complete their college curriculum. We have invited selected students to return as a 'full-time employee' after they graduate. It's a successful program.