

Online Journal of Space Communication

Volume 8
Issue 15 *Women in Space (Spring 2009)*

Article 31

October 2021

Profile of Joan T. Mancuso

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Recommended Citation

Frost, Mary (2021) "Profile of Joan T. Mancuso," *Online Journal of Space Communication*: Vol. 8 : Iss. 15 , Article 31.

Available at: <https://ohioopen.library.ohio.edu/spacejournal/vol8/iss15/31>

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Joan T. Mancuso, founder and senior consultant of Broadband International LLC, offers customized marketing consulting services for satellite and related technology companies. She applies a pragmatic approach to solve complex marketing problems, with proven success in the US and emerging markets.

Mancuso was formerly Vice President of Global Sales & Marketing at L-3 Satellite Network, GE Capital Spacenet, and AT&T Tridom, with a reputation for exceeding business and revenue plans. She directed global marketing teams to open markets in Asia, Europe and Latin America. As a result, she had recruited, coached and managed high performance teams geographically dispersed around the world, including Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Germany, the UK, Indonesia, India, and China. Additionally, she had extensive marketing experience in providing satellite network solutions for enterprise and media markets. Prior to the 1990's, Mancuso held various marketing management assignments at COMSAT, SBS, and Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Company.

Ms. Mancuso earned a BS in marketing from the University of Maryland, and an MBA in managerial economics from George Washington University. She is active in the community and serves on the board of SSPI Mid-Atlantic Chapter.

1) How did you get started in the satellite business?

I responded to a recruiter inquiry for a 'Regional Manager' position at Satellite Business Systems (SBS) when I was employed by the C & P Telephone Company. At the time, SBS created 'a buzz' around the telecom industry. Contrasted with the traditional 'phone company,' SBS had a high profile with plans to launch SBS-1, the advanced Ku-band satellite, that enabled (at the time very advanced) integrated digital network for voice, videoconferencing, batch data transfer, and electronic mail. This was the beginning of the digital revolution.

Prior to joining SBS, I had six years of experience at C & P Telephone Company where I learned about the fundamentals of telecommunications systems. I joined C & P Telephone Company after graduating from University of Maryland, as one of only two women in the position of Marketing Representative at the Washington Suburban branch. While employed with C & P Telephone Company, I earned an MBA at George Washington University, majoring in managerial economics.

2) How have you been involved in changes brought about in or by this business (innovations, technologies, services)?

Reflecting on my career of 25+ years in the satellite industry, I worked with very talented entrepreneurs marketing several innovative technologies, such as: Ku-band satellite network, International Business Service (IBS), very small aperture terminals (VSAT), and numerous advanced digital applications. I am fortunate to have witnessed the analog-to-digital transformation enabled by satellite.

For example, I joined AT&T Tridom in 1990 to lead the international business for VSATs through partnering with the licensed (value added) service providers when nations around the world announced deregulation plans. Within three years, AT&T Tridom emerged as one of the leading VSAT suppliers worldwide introducing digital services in emerging markets, including Brazil, Russia, India, and China. Prior to joining AT&T, as Director of Business Development at COMSAT, I led the account team that developed the first business case, sold the solution, and implemented the first IBS (2.048 Mbps) channel between New York and London provided voice/data service for Merrill Lynch. For this project, the first earth station was installed at the New York Teleport interconnected with fiber to the financial center in Manhattan. Following the successful service delivery, sales of IBS increased exponentially worldwide...provided affordable integrated digital voice/data solutions for multinational enterprises.

Over the past decades, business restructured through mergers and acquisition to respond to market changes and scale. For example, as Vice President of L-3 Satellite Networks, I managed the integration of acquired business units. Drawing from my experience as a member of the executive team that implemented the merger of Tridom and GE Spacenet, I understood the recurring process of redesigning the company to evolve quickly to change.

3) What do you think was the greatest event/situation/opportunity you experienced?

There were many memorable events, though the most extraordinary experience for me was developing the VSAT business in China during the early stages of US-China trade discussion and Chinese communications infrastructure investment. At the time, no one in the US could imagine China joining the WTO; and certainly no one would believe China could become the largest US trading partner.

AT&T Tridom was awarded the VSAT project, the first VSAT system used for airline reservation, for the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) in 1992. On my first trip to Beijing to meet with executives at CAAC, I had the unexpected opportunity to connect with my aunts and uncles. Prior to this trip, my parents had sealed off family history since my father served at the Embassy of Republic of China (Taiwan) in Washington; and they never talked about the past as tension mounting between Taiwan and China. Inspired by supportive relatives, I navigated through the competitive and protracted contracting process for the VSAT system.

As Vice President of GE Spacenet in 1998, I led the GE China team to win the VSAT Network for the Ministry of Railways of China through the competitive bid process. During the technical evaluation process, a Director at MOR traced my family name and confirmed that my great grand-father was the Chief Engineer (a senior official) at the Ministry of Railways and later served as the President of the Jiao Tung University (1911-1926). This was truly the opportunity for a lifetime!

4) What was the greatest obstacle?

There were different challenges personal and professional. Personally, my challenge was balancing professional and family demands, particularly when international travel required time away from home for extended periods. Professionally, one of the challenges was to comply with different regulations, US and international. For example, international projects could be unexpectedly delayed by evolving export regulations, foreign import licensing requirements, tariffs and taxes, and other US or host-nation requirements. Delays affect operational schedule and revenue reporting.

5) What do you see happening in the next five years in this industry?

There will be many opportunities...perhaps some careers that we don't know about today. Satellite and ground technologies will change rapidly to meet commercial and government demands for HDTV, space imaging, mobile TV, and evolving broadband services. Responding to market dynamics, organizations will collaborate and partner creatively. Additionally, satellite will continue to provide 'first response and disaster recover/backup' solutions around the world because events such as Sichuan earthquake in China, Tsunami in Indonesia, and Katrina in the US reinforce the need for satellite services. Finally, space tourism and sciences will introduce a whole new supply chain having unique business models.

6) What advice do you have for women interested in entering the industry?

I recommend a technical orientation to be able to explore business possibilities, openly and confidently. Leadership role in the satellite industry is similar to other industries, though this business is further complicated by concerns of national sovereignty, telecom and spectrum regulations and risk management. Satellite industry offers anyone interested a learning opportunity for a lifetime.