

Africa

August 11 - Doing IT Around the World



Sarah -
Africa:
Director



About My Career
About Me

Interview with Sarah – Business Development Director: Africa

What do you do?

I am the Director - Business Development at SkyData Ltd. SkyData is a reseller, distributor and developer of ICT solutions across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Challenges?

The challenges my job presents is getting new products into a market, and also trying to get clients to change the way they have done some things by embracing technology. It involves coming up with a good business case and as always clients want to know if the solution will make them money or save them money! This is even tougher in Africa where most businesses are on tight budgets.

What is a typical day like??

I usually get to the office at 7.30AM. I check e-mails to see if there is anything urgent I have to respond to such as product issues for clients or requests from potential clients. I then have a quick look at the daily newspapers. This is followed by a brief management meeting (usually 8.30AM) about the day ahead - as we are small outfit this is mostly informal unless there is something substantial to discuss. Depending on the diary I work on proposals and quotations for potential clients, followed by visits to make presentations. I also visit existing clients to see how they are doing and if they have any issues with products. I set aside time to do some research on our competitors and internet research on products available in other countries that could sell in Sub-Saharan Africa. Once a week i meet with our sales agents to assess their progress.

What do you enjoy the most?

What i enjoy most about my role is meeting new people and learning about their business. I am constantly amazed at how most businesses are really not what the public perceive them to be! My best experience on the job is always closing a sale!

How far reaching has your work been?

My achievements to date have been spearheading the building of a sales team, and being instrumental in setting up the strategic direction of the organisation, particularly driving the positioning for expansion into other markets by identifying, negotiating with and signing up agents in those markets.

Will you continue this work?

These are very exciting times for me as we have just started implementing a five year strategic plan for our company SkyData Ltd. I will definitely continue with this work for a long time as i am keen to drive the expansion of the company into other countries and get our partners' products into these markets.

How do you find firms?

As a Member of the Gold Coast Region IT Forum(Australia), I came across ICT companies in Queensland with products that I felt could do well in Africa. These companies needed someone with the knowledge and understanding of the intricacies of Sub-Saharan Africa to help market their products. I found a business partner and we set up Sky-Data Ltd in Kenya to help these ICT companies get their solutions into Africa.

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What are 3 words that describe you?

Spirited, Diligent and Extroverted

What qualities do you have that make you good at what you do?

good interpersonal skills, entrepreneurial and enterprising nature, diligence and strategic thinking.

What past jobs have you had?

I have been a Research Scientist, Lecturer, held Policy and Programme roles in Economic Development, ICT and Health (in the Public Service in Australia and Kenya) and Business Development Manager for a Volcano Adventure, Photography and Filming Company.

What motivates you?

A good challenge and to be the best that i can be in whatever I chose to do.

Relationships?

The relationships i have are with my spouse, family, friends who are all over the world and my colleagues.

Do your get to travel?

As Director - Business Development, I get to travel with the job looking for new opportunities. The travel is mostly within Kenya, however, this is set to change later in the year as we venture into other countries in Eastern Africa.

What qualifications do you have?

I have completed a Master of Science in Biochemistry and a Post Graduate Diploma in Project Management.

What hobbies do you have ?

My hobbies are travelling, hiking, mountaineering, sports (Cricket, Tennis, Rugby Union, Badminton and Basketball), SHOPPING and Theatre.

What is your advice to other women?

Technology is the solution to our planet's problems. There are lots of opportunities in a technology career and it offers you the ability to challenge and stretch yourself in endless ways. My advice is "give it a go" and surprise yourself on just how much you can achieve!

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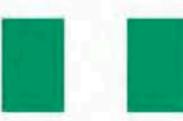
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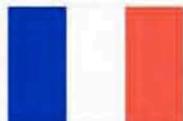
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