CompTIA

Spotlight on Success

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Mariano Dy-Liacco X

Hunger, Heart and Harmony: Ingredients for a Long, Rewarding IT Career

Many people talk openly about the importance of giving back. Whether referring to the things they do in their communities or for their employees or customers, compassion is good for the soul and the industry. Mariano Dy-Liacco X, Vice President of Services (U.S.) for Insight Enterprises, believes having a philanthropic philosophy has been instrumental to his personal and business accomplishments over the years. His story and recommendations for aspiring IT professionals is this month's CompTIA Spotlight on Success:

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CompTIA: First off, what do you enjoy doing outside of work?

Mariano: I enjoy spending time with my family traveling and attending a variety of sporting events. In fact, my son and I have a personal goal of visiting every NFL stadium. I am also Insight's executive sponsor for the Ronald McDonald House of Tampa Bay, we volunteer our time feeding/serving kids and their families. Many of our employees have signed up months in advance to volunteer their time to serve meals to the kids and their families. The company donated money to build out their kitchen/dining area last year. Our next project involves setting up a technology center for the families and kids to use between treatments. It's been a rewarding experience for the insight team and those who volunteer.

CompTIA: How did you end up with a career in the IT industry?

Mariano: I grew up in a family of engineers. I went to school to be an electrical engineer and my dad is a mechanical engineer, my siblings are biomedical engineer and an architectural engineer (you can imagine what those conversations are like when we all get together). While in college I worked part-time for a small computer reseller called Entre Computers. I was a systems engineer providing pre-sales and post-sales support to small and midsized clients. I was fascinated by how much growth there was in the technology industry with endless opportunities (early 90's). That's when I decided after college to stay with the company and in the IT industry. Our small ten-person shop ended up with 900 employees in a short amount of time through acquisitions and organic growth. I had the opportunity from being a technical person to managing and leading an organization. From there, the company went from being a small private business to a major publicly held computer reseller in the U.S. It was a exciting times and I was grateful to be part of it all.

CompTIA: What aspects of the business did you handle?

Mariano: Building services business.

CompTIA: What was your secret to scaling the business so quickly?

Mariano: It's all about growth, and in the mid 90's, consolidation started OEMs, distributors and other channel companies, they were all being acquired or merged. We certainly wanted

to understand where the industry was going and watched industry trends closely. For us, it was all about understanding how to you capitalize on new opportunities. That included finding companies that were offering the right solutions, especially what our customers were looking for.

CompTIA: What other technology-related positions have you held?

Mariano: In 2003, I was the Chief Operating Officer and Executive VP of a managed security company. We built the business from the ground up, grew in a short period through acquisitions and sold within 3 years. It gave me a new perspective and a great respect for anyone who has had experienced starting their own business.

My career with Insight came about through an acquisition. My original position was director of technology services and I earned my way through different roles in my career as VP. Today, I am vice president of services for Insight for U.S. It's a great organization with tremendous opportunities and growth for our employees.

CompTIA: The transition from technical work to the business side can be difficult. To what do you attribute your success making that leap?

Mariano: That came early when I was technically a systems engineer working for a reseller part time while still in college. It was a turning point for me when the company offered me a fulltime position and asked that I build their services business.

With little to no experience, I quickly reached out to a lot of different people in the industry that not only helped me but inspired me with what it meant to be in the IT business. You really have to have the passion to run and build a business, especially when it comes to finding great talent. Surrounding yourself with great people to work with is what motivated and excited me about what I did every day.

CompTIA: What is key to effective leadership?

Mariano: Surround yourself with people that you believe in and they believe in you. Loyalty, trust and integrity are very important factors to having a successful business, so you need to find (and hire) people with those traits. The key is to build a solid foundation of great people with great talent and a solid leadership team that are willing to take the risks and rewards throughout the journey.

CompTIA: Who influenced your career and business success?

Mariano: There are a number of people who come to mind, but three really stand out. I look to my dad first, especially his influence on me as an engineer. He inspired me by what he did every day and much of what I learned came from him, whether directly or indirectly.

Early in my career, the person I reached out to that help inspire me to be in the services business is Aaron Woods. He got me involved in the industry and with CompTIA where we both were part of creating an industry standard for technical certifications, called A+ Certification. Today, it is widely used around the world and has expanded its certifications requirements to many IT companies as their standard.

The other influencer is my business "partner in crime", Mickey Bland. Currently Vice President and General Manager of Sales at Insight, we have worked together for 27 years. He basically "sells it and over commits" (with laughter) to our clients and my job is to "deliver and make it happen!". We've worked together in a number of different companies and gone through several acquisitions over our careers, and we still bounce ideas off each other. It's a strong and unique partnership with a lot of trust and loyalty.

CompTIA: What's your "personal philosophy" and how has it helped you in your tech career?

Mariano: It goes back to what I said earlier, you need to surround yourself with great people with talent who complement each other. You need to believe in them and they must believe in you. Of course, you also have to take care of them. If you do, they will take care of your clients and the company. We continually remind our teammates who their number one customer is: their family. Balancing work and life isn't easy, especially when you spend a lot of time on the job, but we do what we can to reinforce that standard.

We also work hard to reinforce Insight's core values of hunger, heart and harmony. It says a lot to our teammates and our customers, and reflects what those who enter our industry should expect of their careers and employers. You really have to be excited about IT. You can run a business or be a technologist, but if you're not passionate, you're missing out.

CompTIA: What do you tell kids and adults who are considering IT careers?

Mariano: There is never a dull moment. It is truly a world of constant change and IT is at the heart of it. If anyone wants to be actively involved in this industry, there's a lot to choose from. They just need to pick a lane, if you will. What specific part of the IT industry interests them the most?

Expect to go through a lot of changes and ask a lot of advice from a variety of people before jumping on. There are many experienced people who can guide you and provide great ideas. So be excited and get engaged. If you're passionate about the opportunities and have the hunger and heart to do it, I truly believe the tech industry is the one to get involved with. More so now than ever before. Technology is getting more sophisticated every day and there is still so much to learn, so the opportunities definitely continues to grow.

CompTIA: Any other insight to share?

Mariano: Every day there is still something new and exciting to go after, whether that's technology or business-related. IT can be quite inspirational to the younger generations, and we actively invite students and potential recruits to come explore our business each year. Many are looking for answers to questions such as "Is this really what I want to do?" and we encourage them to come spend a day or so with our team to observe.

CompTIA: Why does Insight get so involved so early in the career development process?

Mariano: The overall growth of our industry is what's driving the demand for us to get ahead of it. Finding great talent and getting them excited with the IT industry is more important than ever before. It's more of a "how do we help you" type approach with prospective IT professionals. Many of our own employees have college and high school-aged kids who are

trying to decide what they want to do for careers, so we started off bringing them in. With CompTIA kicking off a similar plan to pair college students with IT companies, we expect to get involved and expand our outreach. CompTIA gets a lot of credit for driving that. Essentially, we're just following our own business philosophy.