



Spotlight on Success

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Tracy Pound



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An Interview With Tracy Pound

This month we talk with Tracy Pound, owner and director of tech company MaximITY, member of the CompTIA board and winner of the PCR Woman of the Year Award for 2016. Tracy shares what drives her, challenges she has overcome and how she sees technology influencing her business in the future.

CompTIA: Could you let readers know a little bit about your background and business?

Tracy: I've always worked in tech, partly in the channel and in automotive manufacturing, and through this I have seen both sides of the coin. At school, I had a difficult job in persuading teachers that I could study IT. The assumption was that you needed to be good at maths to be good at IT. I persevered and started my career as a programmer. I've had the good fortune to work with some amazing companies and people and have done everything from installing cabling, crawling under desks and fitting expansion cards through to project managing large scale global system implementations.

I set up MaximITY in 2000 primarily because I'd started a family and didn't want to work for someone else anymore. I wanted the flexibility to choose who I work with, where and when. For me, technology is a means to an end – facilitator. But many struggle to get anywhere near the real potential from their investment because they don't know how to use their systems fully.

My company offers training, consultancy and project management, and is about helping businesses get value from their systems and a better understanding of how to get real time information and insights that help them make clear business decisions.

We have grown year on year, and we have an expanding team who are always looking at ways we can reach and help more people and companies. We are also a little unusual in that we work with everyone from a sole trader to international household brands.

CompTIA: Your business has a strong focus on training. Do you feel that technology is making things easier to use or creating a more complex environment?

Tracy: I think technology has the capacity to make things easier to use, but that doesn't always translate into reality!

Apps seem to be more intuitive in their design and use, but traditional desktop apps have been much slower to change. It's still way too difficult to learn how some applications work, which hampers business efficiency, so consultancy and training are still very much needed to help users understand complex systems. Integration and technical setups also remain overly confusing in many ways.

About ten years ago, someone asked me if I thought I'd still have a business in the future as people wouldn't need training, but that situation hasn't transpired – yet!

We still have a workforce comprising people who grew up without learning how to use a



computer at school and need help understanding how to get benefit from technology. On the flipside, we have the millennials, who expect technology to just work having to use systems that aren't intuitive. Over time, technology is slowly making things easier to use, but there's still room for improvement.

CompTIA: Is there a job you enjoyed the most?

Tracy: I think the role I have now is the most enjoyable, all paths led to this, and I now have knowledge, understanding and control over what I do. I have loved every job and each taught me valuable lessons. I still love walking around factories and seeing things being made. I now get to travel the world and work with all sorts of people in different countries and that's very special to me.

CompTIA: You have overcome many obstacles; some gender-based. What has been your drive to overcome these?

Tracy: As bad as it may sound, I feel one of my biggest hurdles was around my gender. This started at an early age, being a girl who wanted to program rather than cut hair. I was never very good at being told I can't do something, especially where there's no sense behind it. To a degree this attitude has remained, with me having to prove myself probably more than most of my colleagues.

I am pleased to say that this issue is one that has been recognized and is continuing to be addressed, and I actively encourage more girls and woman to start looking at working in technology.

CompTIA: What do you see as your biggest achievement?

Tracy: Personally, my biggest achievement has been proving the doubters wrong; those who didn't believe that I could have a great career and balance having a family. This requires a lot of work and organisation, but it can be done and I am proud of what I have achieved in both.

CompTIA: As a business, what is the biggest challenge you have had to overcome?

Tracy: A major business challenge is growth; it's hard to start a business on your own and then to relinquish control enough to let other people deliver work that isn't the same as yours!

It has also taken a long time for me to accept that other people can deliver the result as well as me, but in a different way. So my challenge was the fear of letting go.

CompTIA: What changes have you seen in the industry over the last few years and did you need to evolve your business to adapt to these?

Tracy: Clearly, one of the biggest shake ups has arrived because of better connectivity and the cloud. With the growth in SaaS and application-based models, the industry, both in terms of vendors and service providers, has changed over the last few years. However, the education level of staff has not changed at the same pace, which means there is sometimes a gap in systems and the ability to use them effectively. This has seen us working to understand and identify new areas where our training services can plug holes,





switching focus away from network diagrams and systems to look at what options are available for clients from both a training and system perspective.

CompTIA: Do you see your business changing in the future?

Tracy: I see it evolving but not hugely changing. There will be a need for training for a long time to come, but our delivery mechanisms are more flexible now with cloud apps and collaborative working tools. I think we'll work more with companies on integration between systems and data, and we're already moving more into data analysis, which [where] the power of systems lies. Having the ability to see through data and turn it into meaningful information will become a competitive advantage for businesses.

CompTIA: What made you commit your time to being on the CompTIA Board of Directors?

Tracy: After joining CompTIA, I was blown away by the community spirit and attitude of people, all working to the same goal; to create a community and help shape our industry. The more involved I got the more rewarding and enjoyable I found it. Finally, I got the opportunity to sit on the CompTIA board, which I am very proud to be part of. It gives me an opportunity to start to give back to the industry that has given me such a great career and help shape the future.

CompTIA: You recently were recognised as PCR Woman of the Year. How does it feel?

Tracy: It's amazing and a great feeling. It's always nice to be recognised for what you do. I feel honoured to have been awarded such an accolade, and have a duty to use it to encourage other women and girls to look at a career in technology.

It's also great that we are starting to recognise the contributions that women make in the IT channel. We still have a long way to go to bring balance in terms of diversity, but we are making incremental steps to reach the finish line.

