



TECH STAR



Ennio Carboni: Pursuing Technology to New Heights

[By Akbar Ali]

In this era of high-tech cyber connections where we can exchange information with someone on the other side of the world with a simple click of the mouse, it takes a certain amount of ingenuity to come up with new and improved ways to exchange information. That's where Ennio Carboni comes in. As Director of Product Marketing for software developer and marketer Ipswitch, Ennio leads the pack by steamrolling product strategy and marketing functions of the company's core products, WhatsUp Network Management and WS_FTP, the industry standards for sharing data and documents.

Ennio's formal training goes back to his days at Boston's Northeastern University, where he received both his bachelor's and master's degrees. His undergraduate degree is in criminology, and his master's is in finance and marketing. Ennio will always remain indebted to his university education as it served as the catalyst to changing not only his life but his family history: "I was the first in my immigrant Italian family to attend college, and there was much pride amongst the family," he said.

His time at Northeastern was a time of both learning and growing. He observed that "Northeastern in an uncommon place—though the demographics have changed slightly, the experience of being in classes with individuals and cultures representing the world was an invaluable education."

His professors at both the undergraduate and graduate level were especially effective at applying real-world lessons to the classroom curriculum, which proved to be a highly cogent method of teaching.

"Combine all of that with a co-op program that allowed every student to practice what they learned in the classroom in a real world environment, and you can understand why I had the great experience I had. I graduated at the undergrad level and graduate level with the full confidence and knowledge most young people attain after a few years on the job. It has been invaluable in today's global market," he asserted.

During his time at college, Ennio involved himself in several activities, many centered around alumni organizations. He served as president of the Student Alumni Association,

Q. What do you do for fun?

A. My son is my primary focus— he has added a new perspective to all I do. I also have a very active neighborhood filled with lots of techies by day and home remodelers by weekend and night, and I thus spend lots of time at Home Depot, Lowes, and home working on projects.

Q. What CD is in your CD player right now?

A. Van Halen, *5150*.

Q. What is the last magazine you read?

A. *CIO*.

Q. What is your favorite TV show?

A. *House M.D.*

Q. Who is your role model?

A. My dad played a big role in who I am today, but I think in terms of work role model, I would say that I respect and appreciate John Chambers most. Chambers represents everything good about a leader to me – he has vision and can make the vision digestible by all audience types. He has technical know-how, he has charisma, and he knows his audience well.

Q. What makes you laugh?

A. Life and the day to day absurdities I witness in all aspects of it. My wife and son make me laugh every day, too, and that is the best kind of laughter.

a group which maintains ties between current students and 130,000 alumni around the world. As an undergraduate senior, he served as co-chairman of an organization called Senior Challenge, a fundraising effort that sponsors the Class Gift. Through their efforts, they were able to raise an astonishing \$80,000 from senior class members. Ennio also served as vice president for the senior class, elected by his peers to represent them for the duration of the five-year program.

Ennio's initial foray into technology was not one he had planned: he was working as a business consultant for three years after completing business graduate school. He always professed an avid interest in technology and the latest innovations, but a career was not in the offing for him. Consulting, however, grew to be a tiresome and thankless career, largely because after completing his work with a client, he was forced to sever all ties and simply move on to the next, never knowing how the company performed after his services had been implemented.

After leaving graduate school, Ennio moved on to a private firm known as The Franklin Network, to which he was recruited by a mentor from Gillette. They specialized in business consulting for technology companies from Canada and other nations vying to enter the U.S. market.

From there he moved on to a position at Baranof Software, a company specializing in email server availability and performance monitoring. Soon thereafter he was recruited to RSA Security, joining the new PKI group that was created to make public key technology more prevalent.



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“RSA for me was the pinnacle of places to work. Lots of intelligent folks and great marketers supported by a sales force second to none. I spent five years in tech heaven, building, marketing, and selling technologies. As a product manager, I was responsible for global visits with sales for requirement gathering, and it was at that point that I learned the realistic power customer touch can have on you and your product direction,” he said.

He then graduated to a position at IMlogic, a company which developed many innovative programs in the security of instant messaging for corporations.

Ennio’s next stop was Computer Associates, a company he describes as being widely misunderstood by those in the industry: “Yes it’s a big place, and it has had its challenges, but it’s an organization with sound technology and sound people. I am hopeful they will continue recreating themselves,” he affirmed.

At this point his ambition shifted: he wanted to work with an SMB focused vendor. He recalled that, “For years I had been involved in retrofitting products to sell to the SMB, but I felt I was missing real operation know-how, and I wanted to fill that void. A friend I worked with in the past called me and recruited me to Ipswitch, where I now reside.”

His greatest career achievement thus far has been working on the launch team for RSA for the Keon product line. He professed that “we literally started from scratch, and, with

the proper mix of product management and development collaboration, we were able to partner with sales and marketing and make a measurable and notable entry into the market.”

He also credits Ipswitch with having given him the opportunity to expand with a development team and the marketing and sales functions: “The ability to come into a growing company and share your experience and knowledge for process improvement and new efficiencies has been a phenomenal experience, and the customers we service are the ones that have reaped the biggest reward. Today, we build solutions that map and solve problems from which our customers need relief. It’s a winning combination.”

Ennio also believes that the best teachers he has had on the path to success have been his customers with whom he has shared endless conversation and visits. “I have learned more (as have my developers) from customer visits than I could have hoped to from any other experience,” he said.

There have been several special individuals who have also served as mentors to Ennio: Art Coviello, CEO of RSA Security, demonstrated true leadership by conveying to him the “value of blending technical knowledge, business acumen, and unsurpassed people skills.”

Lina Liberti, his direct supervisor at the time, also showed him how to achieve his ambitions by pooling all of the available resources, an invaluable strategy he continues to practice at Ipswitch.

Two of his colleagues at Computer Associates, John Giubileo and Rick Trapp, also served as important mentors: “These two individuals left me with great lessons in how to best manage a development effort and getting both development and the marketing and sales folks all on the same page.”

Having worked in several fields and with a wide array of industry leaders, Ennio believes there are four crucial concepts up-and-coming technology professionals need to keep in mind as they build their careers:

1. Attitude and will are more important than knowledge alone. I have met a lot of “smart” people in the business who will not succeed because of their inability to communicate vision and motivate their co-workers to charge to that market.
2. Know what you want to be – individual contributor or manager/ leader – and drive your career in that direction.
3. Keep current on all technologies.
4. Last, but non-negotiable, be close with your customers and use them efficiently for knowledge and as idea incubators. Your ability to interpret and take actionable intelligence from this group of users will determine (or not) your success.

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