



TECH STAR



## Nichole Goodyear: Leading the Way to Innovation

[By Akbar Ali]

As vice president of operations and co-founder of Brickfish, an online marketing platform, Nichole Goodyear is charged with a host of responsibilities ranging from product management to campaign services to engineering. She has served as a pioneer in the technology industry, having spent over 15 fifteen years as a serial leading edge product builder and having helped to implement many of the current standards in Internet technology and digital media. But the true measure of Goodyear's leadership lies in her long-standing ability to inspire and encourage others to new heights of professional success, raising the bar for what is possible in their lives and making technological innovation something of a way of life.

Goodyear admits that her first professional ambition was far removed from a career in the technology industry, saying that in school she dreamed of becoming a lawyer. Her academic advisors, however, noted her unmistakable and innate prowess for something else altogether.

"I majored in business administration with an emphasis in computer information systems and a minor in economics. During my senior year, I worked for the dean of the law school. After taking the grueling LSATs, he called me into his office and informed me that both he and my computer advisor felt that my gift was for computer technology. They advised me to pursue ten years working in the computer software industry followed by law school in order to practice as a lawyer in the computer software discipline later in life.

"I was crushed at the prospect of not becoming a lawyer right away, but I am grateful that I took their advice. I relish the computer software arena and haven't looked back."

Goodyear completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Montana, an experience she describes as "amazing." But her academic pursuits weren't the only things keeping her occupied. She busied herself with extracurricular activities which helped her build her leadership and collaborative abilities.

"Keeping active and involved in

extracurricular activities was important to me. In addition to my engineering coursework, I was captain of the varsity

**Q. What do you do for fun?**

**A.** I love to play sports and go on adventures with family and friends. New movies and Saturdays on the soccer field make up my weekends. And I love to cook!

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

**A.** Luther Vandross.

**Q. What is the last magazine you read?**

**A.** My one escape — any pop culture magazine.

**Q. What is your favorite TV show?**

**A.** *American Idol*.

**Q. Who is your role model?**

**A.** Tiger Woods. I love how he sees the big picture. He is willing to adjust his game, even if it has a short-term impact, in order to position himself for the long-term success.

**Q. What makes you laugh?**

**A.** Quick-thinking, witty comments and the silly things my kids do.

football and basketball cheerleading squads all four years, which kept me immersed in the University organizations and events. I also worked for both the law school admissions office and the alumni association."

After graduating, Goodyear spent the first phase of her career in a variety of positions, working with companies whose primary business was furthering the limits of available technologies. Her experiences throughout have helped shape her pursuit of innovation and have charged her with the desire to constantly outdo herself.

"My career was shaped at a number of computer software companies in a variety of roles. I have worked as a project manager, [in] technical and field support, software engineer, manager, continuing to forge my way up the ranks. I've built software for education, hospitality, financial services, point of sales, shipping companies, investment companies, chip companies, and various Internet ASP products.

"In addition to managing operations, I am one of two co-founders of Brickfish, a savvy start-up that is completely enhancing the world of online marketing with a completely unique model. V1.0 products tend to be a passion of mine; taking blank paper and creating mature software version products that work with disruptive or bleeding edge technologies is the ultimate challenge.



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"I love the rush of developing something out of the unknown, forming a team, working through the trials and tribulations, and standing at the top of the mountain together. Then you have to get on with the climb to make it to the next summit!"

Among her most memorable career accomplishments has been delivering full-motion video over a network for Jostens Learning in the early 1990s, an experience which taught her not only the value of success, but of setbacks and failure as well.

"This included custom hardware and software making it about five V1.0 projects in one that all had to work together symbiotically. There were literally five engineering teams around the country and world working on beta code that had to work together.

"Building each V1.0 has been very notable in different ways. In general, you learn as much or more from the 'losses' as you do from the 'wins.' It is the delicate balance of being willing to try new things and foresee problems at the same time. You should always look three steps ahead."

Of course, being a breakthrough pioneer in any industry is no small task, but for women

like Goodyear, the professional obstacles have been substantial due to industry bias against women in technology. Though the field has substantially leveled in recent years, with a growing influx of female technology experts and entrepreneurs, the early years were difficult for women striving to be taken seriously, a sentiment echoed by Goodyear.

"In my early days, I was not confident. That combined with being a woman made it hard to be taken seriously on first impressions. I often encountered this at Jostens Learning Corporation at Apple product evangelist meetings, where [we] learned about new product features and had the ability to request features for our market place. As a customer of Apple, we would have...input into a product's features prior to it hitting the market. I was often mistaken for the *admin. assistant!*"

There were, however, others who took her talent and vision seriously, enabling her to both build self-confidence and make her dreams for the industry a reality.

"Experienced CEO and corporate director John Kernan was an important mentor who taught me to quickly earn the respect of my colleagues by being confident in my abilities.

He also taught me to trust my instincts and be willing to try new things knowing that they may not all work. He showed me the key is to determine what will stick, then evolve and move forward. His words of encouragement inspired me to partner with him to create Brickfish."

With so much successful experience behind her and more undoubtedly waiting for her in the future, Goodyear knows a thing or two about getting things done the right way. Her advice to aspiring techies is to dream big, but to be patient at the same time.

"Be bold, but take time to earn your stripes. To establish yourself as a leader, it's important to be confident enough to ask questions and seek the answers to questions you don't know. Understand that you will learn as much or more from the trials and failures as you do from the successes. Embrace each of these situations and use them as tools in your next venture. You are in charge of your own destiny, so make the most of every situation. Especially in the world of technology, you will need to continually prove yourself and earn the respect of your colleagues amidst a sea of rapid change."

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