



## **TechLeaders: Realizing Your Vision Workshop Feb 6-7 2007 @ Intel**

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*A synthesis by Caroline Simard, PhD, Anita Borg Institute for Women and Technology*

“TechLeaders : Realizing Your Vision” at Intel Corporation was held on February 6-7 2007 and welcomed 64 technical women from 9 companies. The workshop featured several panelists and speakers on the theme of realizing your vision as a technical woman.

### Panel 1: Leading with Passion

- Linda Bernardi, Principal, StraTerra Partners, and Former CEO, ConnecTerra, Inc.
- Kathy Polizzi, Engineering Director, Google
- Genevieve Bell, Principal Engineer, Intel

### Framing the Challenge

- Steve Tolopka, Senior Principal Engineer and Director of Platform Architecture Research for Corporate Technology Group, Intel

### Panel 2: Moving Your Vision to Reality: Breaking through Barriers

- Rebecca Norlander, Technical Assistant to the Chief Software Architect, Microsoft Corporation
- Hang Nguyen, Principal Engineer, Intel Corporation
- Tricia Baker, Director of Software Operations, Cisco Systems

Speakers and panelists provided inspiration, pearls of wisdom, and specific advice on realizing one’s vision as a technical leader. Here, the Anita Borg Institute presents the applicable results and takeaways from the workshop.

**Do's and Don'ts for Realizing Your Vision**  
**By TechLeaders speakers and participants:**

**DO:**

**Allow Yourself to Believe in Yourself**

A belief in yourself is all you have in front of barriers. Confidence is critical. If you do not believe in yourself as a leader, no one will follow you. If you believe in what you do – you will find your circle believes in it and your managers will believe in it. Remember that you bring something to the table and no one can take that away from you. Act like you belong at the table! Be proud, be poised, and be arrogant if necessary. Act and speak with confidence. You have just as much right and ability to be there as anyone else in the room. Remember you have the experience, the knowledge and are a decision maker. When you decide to do something, decide at the beginning that you will be successful – decide what success is and decide that you will do it.

**Have a Vision, Own your agenda, and articulate it to anyone who will listen!** This needs to be a crisp statement that others can understand quickly. If it makes your heart sing, someone else will notice. Having a vision also helps you go back to it to guide your career decisions. Align your job with your vision and create milestones. Stick to your vision and be flexible, assess how you are doing against it frequently.

**Shift the context:**

A breakthrough is a shift in your thinking. Context manifests itself as a default way of thinking. A breakthrough in thinking causes a new reality for people. Different opportunities begin to arise and bring results. Context determines the limitations of your actions and the scope of results that your actions can produce. Once you are aware of it, you have the opportunity to create something else – there is no limitation they put on themselves. Context is history we bring to the situation.

Generate a new context – Vision Headline

<b>Breakthrough</b>	<b>Immediate Action</b>	<b>Support</b>
New opportunities	what are the actions to take next week	whose do I need to enroll

**Check your own “baggage” at the door:** identify your own self-limiting talk and leave it behind! Examples of self-limiting talk include:

- Fear of criticism and looking stupid
- fear of not being financially secure
- fear of being found out, impostor syndrome
- Uphill battle of being a technical woman
- Difficulty of Balance family and work
- Failure is bad
- Fear of Uncertainty
- Perception that Feminine qualities not appreciated
- Assumption that you need to lead a “balanced” life

**Build on your core**

Think about who you are, what your core is, and then build on that and add new skills. Do not try to change to be like others. Build your skills from your core. What you bring that is unique is that core. We need a broad set of skills and different styles. Develop your own model of leadership and success. Recognize that you have a unique set of skills you bring to the table.

**Know Yourself:** Know your strengths, your weaknesses, and surround yourself with complementors.

**Establish a great reputation:** Deliver what you say you will, with conviction, and with clear rules of engagement. Be the very best you can be. Be clear and concrete, and execute with confidence.

**Own your identity as a technical woman:** You can’t be invisible. You have to own to being the woman in the room and what comes with this – creating opportunities for other women, other ways of expressing authority, of leading. Learning the responsibility for leadership lies with each of us.

**Work across Boundaries:** work collaboratively, and put yourself in other’s shoes so you can understand their perspective and also achieve what I want to do.

**Build Trust and Respect** so that people on your team can relax and do what they think is right. Give the bigger picture for folks and setting the higher level of importance of what they were doing. Allows teams to be more productive given the time.

**Embrace Change:** Change is opportunity. Manage change and be proactive within it instead of waiting.

**Stay Current in technology and do your homework:** Dedicate time and energy to be an expert. Be your scientist self, study, have discussions about hard technical problems. Be prepared better than anyone else and hold yourself to an incredibly high bar.

**Take Risks:** The worst thing that can happen when you ask for something is that they will give it to you. If you have a goal, be deliberate toward that goal and take risks. Do not be afraid of those risks. It is not insurmountable. We get through it and move on. Give yourself space to say yes. Build a career path of where you want to be and what are your goals. That will allow you to take the necessary risks. You don't know what risks to take if you don't know where you are going. Take leaps of faith!

**Focus and Prioritize:** identify the important elements of what you are trying to achieve and focus on that. Say no to the rest. If you try to do everything you don't have to show anything to show for it at the end.

**Celebrate your accomplishments:** Celebrate what you have accomplished. Anything that gives you permission to look at what you have done is a very useful exercise. Be proud of them.

**Update your resume:** you will be surprised at how much you have accomplished in your career already. Put your bio and expertise on the web, on career network sites.

**When all else fails, be ready to move on:** this may mean changing groups or changing companies.

**Keep your Network up to date**

- Have Fun
- The most important communication that happen in locker rooms, golf, drinks. I do a lot of progress through networking. Just because we are accomplishing doesn't mean to be uptight.
- enlist the support of higher ups and keep them engaged
- be open to unlikely partnerships

**Think of work and life as unified spheres:** work is part of life, and so is family.

**Choose your battles:** Not all arguments are worth having. It is best to settle disagreements in 1/1 rather than in a group setting.

**Think about your role in "changing the system":** we don't have enough women at the senior technical level and every time we think we cannot change the system we fail

**Find mentors:** Have mentors, whether they are men or women. Learn from others. When you are the point when you are retire, you don't want to have any regrets

## DON'T

### **Don't take anything personally, but listen to the feedback and be self-aware**

- Embrace Rejection – it is just another way of expressing an opinion
- Embrace effective and respectful confrontation
- If you do not personalize criticism, you are able to see it for what it is: a comment, something you can learn from.
- Not taking it personally does not mean however that you shouldn't listen and learn from the feedback.
- Critical self-awareness is key

### **Don't see the answer as “changing yourself”**

- This goes back to building on your core and your vision.

### **Don't make assumptions**

- Find out what is really behind someone's behavior or talk

**Don't be Afraid and Put yourself out there!** You cannot lead with fear and cannot articulate a vision if you are afraid. Don't be afraid or intimidated by those in positions of authority, they are no more and no less than what they are.

**Don't take no for an answer:** You can never take no for an answer, and the solution is often not routine and not obvious.

**Don't be intimidated:** If others are trying to intimidate you, answer in a non-emotional way. Put the ownership of convincing you on them. Say: “Joe, I understand you don't agree with me, show me what you are thinking”. If they are right, acknowledge it. Or, ask them to go back and try to convince you again with more data. Be persistent and methodical, use data, and consult own experience and intuition to win over nay-Sayers.

**Don't fear failure:** sometimes it is necessary to fail in order to succeed in the long run.

## **Break out Sessions: Knowledge Sharing on Breaking through Barriers**

### **Increasing Visibility**

- Communicate up and out rather than assuming people know. You may have one on one with your managers but go over your manager to let them know
- get a mentor
- Project confidence in facing difficult situations
- know what you want and less boss
- Don't let people fill in the blanks for you
- Be less modest in promoting yourself
- Articulate your impact, answer 'so what'?
- It's up to you, be proactive!
- Take all the opportunities that are there to be visible
- Always speak even if someone just said what you were thinking
- Demos are great to be visible – see something tangible and go up and show it
- Be deliberate with who you choose to communicate to.
- Learn presentation skills, get over it!
- Introduce yourself, even if you don't have anything to say
- Volunteering to take own some jobs

### **Influencing without authority**

#### **4 major challenges**

- managing up, sideways and outside without authority
- influence challenges 2 types – strategic and tactical
- changing a negative situation to a positive situation
- influencing with confidence

#### **Solutions**

##### **Homework**

- Collect data
- Simple message
- Documentation
- Don't underestimate sales
- effort and time needed to do the sell
- Get coaching, mentoring, practice
- Come with solutions
- Track – history – present data to management
- Create a backup plan and let people know how you have one

##### **People**

- Build credibility based on a track record (positive)
- Face time is key
- Make friends

- Understand politics; Find out who the influencers are, build relationships
- Don't let yourself get intimidated
- Get coaching, mentoring, practice
- Understand perspective of people who you need to influence and what is important to them
- Have data and take it to the influencer
- Build collaborative relationships with people who can help you influence
- Leave your ego at the door and don't have too many solutions

### **Strategic risk taking**

- It can be harder to take risks at certain points of life – risk doesn't mean you will do something stupid
- Risk is a grey space between success and failure: How do you identify a risk? By definition risk means there is a chance that will not going to work. Ask yourself: What is the worse thing that can happen if I fail? It is OK to fail! You will learn for the next risk and be successful
- People can learn from failure and sometimes you have to fail to move to the next level
- Venture beyond your comfort zone
- Do your homework
- Do it and move on!
- Scenario planning – tool for assessing risk. Taking risk beyond informed chance and assess the decision to take the risk.
- People have different risk perceptions; be aware of that
- Create a different space in which to do decision making
- Change the context to get buy in
- Listen to your intuition
- Informed risk but understand there will never be perfect data
- Data isn't everything – look at organizational, social, personal angles. Reaching out and making it successful
- Evaluate your energy level as to take the risk
- Make sure you communicate and keep people informed of the risk – keep coming back to that so that people are not surprised when things happen.

### **Articulating a vision on the technical track**

- Finding a vision in a dynamic technological environment
- Must be executable and adaptable
- Know your audience (e.g. “making more money isn't a vision to the manager)
- Difference between a career goal and a vision
- Not a 2 hour exercise. Takes homework - make sure you get your elevator pitch, concise.
- Relate to company goals
- Focus on what you are good at.
- Use the right words – the vision is not with the formulas – vision is vivid and abstract and you can tailor it to the audience
- Credibility in the vision, technical and strategic

- How will it make money
- Forging your own path – get a discussion on how to champion the vision
- Concise and short vision
- Also needs to show impact and so what
- Long term and big picture, but also executable step and articulate the path to get there
- The passion element creates the vision
- No matter what you do you have to have your core values and guiding principles

## **Working with Difficult People**

### Main Challenges:

- When I disagree with the majority of their directions
- I see them as difficult, and they see me as difficult
- They don't do the work assigned to them because they don't report to me
- Forceful personalities
- Arrogant but useful as technical expertise, "prima donna"
- Passive aggressive people

### Ideas of what to do about it:

- Look at the landscape to determine what it is, not safe to just speak your mind freely
- If you disagree strongly with the majority it may be a time to leave
- Have them trying to convince you of their point of view
- Find a career coach or mentor or both (could be outside the company)
- For person not performing work on instituting new procedure, such as monthly code review or check point discussions to monitor progress
- Managing up
- Build relationships with a difficult person – find out what you have in common
- Ask more open ended questions
- Tell him "don't act that way"
- Don't take it personally
- Find out where other person is coming from. Solicit their input, what is their position?
- Bring others into the conversation
- 360 feedback or provide unsolicited feedback to their manager with suggestions for possible solutions
- They may have a different style or personality type. Bring that up explicitly and discuss ways of working that works. E.g. impulsive versus thinker.

## **Networking**

### Challenges

- hard to get into a network without doing activities you don't like
- networking up
- don't have time/too tired to network

- feeling shy
- help others network better

Being the person to other different networks is important to career advancement.  
For women, they also need to connect up.

### Solutions

- aim to be a bridge or connector
- listen for opportunity to help someone and offer help
- participate in online networks
- Recruiting or in-company events within company which broaden your reach across organizations
- schedule it, e.g. one networking activity every month
- If you are on a trip, contact and catch up
- Attend conferences, belong to professional groups, nonprofit, alumni associations
- View every outing as a networking opportunity. Wear company logo around town!
- Ask more senior person to tell you about their career
- Write a few details on the back of the business card so you remember how to reach them again
- Network in marketing, finance, other parts of the business

### Communicating effectively

#### Challenges

- Influencing and articulating
- Intimidation factor
- Responding to challenges in a group
- Maintaining credit for ideas
- Keeping managers in the loop

#### Solutions

- Pre-staffing for meetings and presentations (allies ahead of time to back you up)
- Go over strategy ahead of meeting
- Thank you for supporting idea – articulating idea enlist them as support
- Keep your managers aware of what is going on
- Sitting location – be a focal point
- Don't lean back – physically put yourself in there.

### Mentoring

#### Challenges:

- finding a mentor
- how to make time for it
- how to develop trust
- how to set it up and structure it

## Solutions

- Articulate the benefits to the mentor
  - Learn new things
  - Remember their own advice
  - Helping retain technical talent
  - Giving back
  - Learning about new groups, diversity, networking
  
- Benefits for the mentee
  - Raise your visibility
  - Open up opportunities
  - An advocate for you
  
- Structure what you want to get out of the relationship
  - Write down what your goals are, what you want to get out of it
  - Ask mentor, what do you wish you had known?
  
- You can have multiple mentors, within and outside organizations