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WOMEN IN TECH

Christina Stefanski

Stats:

Name: Christina Stefanski

Company: Sony of Canada Ltd.

Title: Public Relations Specialist

Location: Toronto, ON

Years in the Industry: Six years in PR, two at Sony Canada

Hobbies: Music, writing, biking, swimming, and spending time with my dog

Q&A:

They say that consumer technology is a man's world. Agree or disagree?

Both women and men use technology to stay connected and improve their lives. In my role, I work with men and women who engineer, market, and report on technology products to benefit and inform Canadians. I believe that consumer technology appeals to tech-savvy people, regardless of gender.

What brought you into the industry?

My professional background and area of expertise is public relations. I grew up watching my favourite TV shows and movies on my family's Sony TV and listening to the latest cassettes on my Sony Walkman. When the opportunity presented itself to work with Sony in public relations, I was thrilled.

Have gadgets and technology always been a passion for you, or has that feeling grown over the years?

My father is an engineer so I was aware of the latest technologies throughout my childhood. My father introduced me to everything from TVs, to video cameras, to music players, to computer software. He has excellent taste in music as well, so it was really something to listen to artists like Jimi Hendrix on the best surround sound system at the time. Furthermore, over the years I have learned to embrace my dependence on mobile devices and the Internet. This is important because I am a part of the generation that regularly uses tech gadgets for entertainment and staying connected with friends and family.

What kinds of opportunities and relationships have you experienced in the technology industry that you wouldn't have otherwise?

I have become more aware of technological innovations thanks to media and global partners who continually inform me about new developments and trends in the industry. Working with Sony, I have met prominent journalists and producers who have taught me a lot about technology and industry trends. During an event at the Japanese Canadian Culture Centre, I had the pleasure of meeting award-winning scientist, environmentalist, and broadcaster David Suzuki, who is an inspiration as a world leader in sustainable ecology.

Christina (at the microphone) during Summer Woofstock 2011 with CityTV's Weather Specialist Sangita Patel.

How do you find that balance between your home and professional life?

I set expectations on my availability with my contacts, partners, colleagues, friends, and family. I have many interests outside of work and do my best to divide my time accordingly.

Career-wise, what are you most proud of? What has been your greatest achievement?

In 2010, I received the Canadian Public Relations Society Ottawa/Gatineau President's Award for my achievements in the industry. I was honoured to receive this recognition from esteemed PR practitioners.

If we asked your co-workers, what would they say are your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?

I have been told that my greatest strengths are my enthusiasm and creativity. However, I need to learn how to delegate tasks more frequently.

Have you had a mentor? What was the greatest lesson you learned from him/her?

My mentor is a fellow public relations practitioner also working in PR for the technology industry. The greatest lesson she taught me is that you must stay on top of industry news and technology launches, in order to provide the best direction for your company's communications activities. While in transit, I listen to CBC Radio One every morning and afternoon. Throughout the day I consume online industry news and follow updates on tech trends through Twitter and RSS feeds.

What do you do to unwind after a long day at the office?

I like to enjoy the dog park with my puggle, Jimmy. I also enjoy biking and swimming.

What does the future hold for you within this industry?

As a communicator, I will continue to find new and creative ways to engage Canadians and inform them about how technology improves lives. The pace at which technology is currently advancing fascinates me. I aspire to grow within the industry and raise awareness and excitement among Canadians about life-changing innovations, through public relations.

Do you find that friends and family come to you with questions regarding tech products? Even products you don't handle, or have ever worked with?

Media and consumers regularly ask me questions about Sony products. Fortunately, those I work with on the support and retail staff levels are very knowledgeable and very helpful with providing tech-related information when needed.

What is your favourite technology device?

The Sony Walkman because it miraculously evolved from the world's first low-cost portable stereo in 1979 to the first Android powered Walkman mobile entertainment player, the Z Series Mobile Media Player, in 2012.

If you were able to have dinner with any three influential women, living or deceased, who would they be?

Arlene Dickinson, CEO, Venture Communications: Since Ms. Dickinson joined Venture Communications in 1988,

she took the company from a local marketing firm to one of Canada's largest independent marketing firms with offices in Toronto, Calgary, and Ottawa. Known to Canadians from her role as one of the venture capitalists on CBC Television's *Dragons' Den*, Ms. Dickson continues to inspire women to be successful business developers and entrepreneurs. Having read her 2011 book, *Persuasion: A New Approach to Changing Minds*, I would like to learn more about Ms. Dickinson's journey and inspiration.

Carolyn Leighton, Founder, Women in Technology

International: In 1989, Ms. Leighton launched Women in Technology International (WITI), an e-mail network coordinating events for women in technology. Ms. Leighton built up membership woman by woman through the most credible PR channel: word-of-mouth (popular social media channels did not exist yet). In 2001, WITI transitioned from a support network into an official trade organization, contributing to its legitimacy. WITI currently reaches over two million women (and men) worldwide, boasting subsidiaries in the U.S., Hong Kong, Great Britain, Australia and Mexico, providing connections, resources, and opportunities to a supportive network. It would be fascinating to learn about the experiences that inspired Ms. Leighton to initiate the WITI movement, which has become an international empire for women in technology.

Marissa Mayer, Vice President of Consumer Products,

Google: Ms. Mayer helped launch over 100 products and features on Google, including Gmail, which has improved my daily interactions both on a personal and professional level. I rely on Google in my day-to-day activities and appreciate Ms. Mayer's contributions to the excellent user experience that Google offers. It would be interesting to discuss how the Google brand became a verb ("Google it") and learn how Google represents and recognizes women in technology, on an international level.

How would you say that you've evolved since first stepping foot in the industry?

I have had the opportunity to work on interesting campaigns and projects with knowledgeable Canadian technology journalists who continually inspire me to become more tech savvy and informed on products and trends in the industry. I continually learn about technological features and benefits in my role, because I must stay on top of ongoing releases of new gadgets in the Canadian market.

What is one thing about you that many people may not know?

I record and perform live music in my free time. While completing my undergrad studies in Halifax, I became an active member of the hip-hop community. I contributed to Dalhousie University's radio and newspaper, taught hip-hop dance to youth, and performed my own music at local events. I continue to make music now to empower audiences, and I involve myself in events contributing to various community initiatives. **mn**

Left to right, Christina Stefanski, Robin Powell (VP of Retail, Sony of Canada), Kira Isabella (Sony Music Recording Artist) and Tony Smith (VP of Marketing and Communications, Sony of Canada) at Upper Canada Mall new-concept Sony Store opening in 2011.

