

# PAR *at Work*

## The PAR Initiative Newsletter

*Best Practices and Tips for the Workplace and Your Career*

Presented by

The  
Weather  
Channel

## Bringing the Business Perspective to Technology

It's a paradox. WICT's 2007 PAR Initiative finds that the number of cable women in technology positions continues to fall, declining to 15 percent of all cable employees. Yet technology-related jobs offer women great opportunities. Salaries are good; advancement prospects are rich; and projects are rewarding, often giving women the chance to be innovators at their companies and in the forefront of their industry. Plus, the flexible nature of many technology jobs helps women integrate their careers and personal lives.

Women seeking to advance their careers might want to consider a technical position, even if they don't have a technical background. "We are trying to open the conversation and opportunities at Scripps to people who are interested in growing and learning, and not afraid of technology or not afraid of business or programming," said Deanna Brown, president, Interactive Group, for Scripps Networks. "If you are a technologist and you want to grow, the logical opportunity is to learn more about programming and business. If you are a business or programming executive, learning about technology is an opportunity."

Monisha Longacre, vice president of weather.com product strategy and development, with The Weather

Channel Interactive, concurs. "Even if you don't have the hard skills, there is a huge opportunity for bringing business thinking to the IT space to make it exponentially better," she said. "IT benefits from it, the business benefits, and our women learn more and gain confidence."

Sue Clark, Scripps Network's vice president and site director of FineLiving.com, encourages women thinking about technology jobs to talk to people in those departments. "You will be surprised to learn that a lot of people don't start with a computer science or math degree," she said. "For me, it was finding my strengths—organizational skills and understanding work flows. Those skill sets are needed everywhere." Clark added that bringing a business perspective to IT is essential. "Engineers tend to build what engineers want to build, and they need an outside view of what it is they are supposed to be building, who it is for, and how it will be used."

Scripps' Brown adds that a lot of technology jobs are about problem solving. Women with those skills may excel in technical roles. "Traditionally business imposes tight budgets and schedules on technology projects. If you ask the right questions and listen to the answers from your technology team, you will ultimately find a solution," Brown said. "It's really just problem solving. It's not just technology."

In this issue, we'll hear from women at The Weather Channel, Scripps Networks, and Discovery Communications about their jobs, technical contributions, and their strategies for integrating work and life.

## *At Work This Month...*

Tech Jobs Support Career Advancement (page 2)

Advice for Integrating Work and Life (page 5)

Career Tips from Cable Women (back cover)



To read past issues of PAR at Work, visit [www.wict.org](http://www.wict.org)

## Tech Jobs Support Career Advancement

Technology-related positions offer women in cable a wealth of career opportunities. Involvement in new product development gives women the chance to make significant contributions to their companies' bottom lines. Spearheading operations initiatives that improve workflows and make processes more efficient gives women valuable business experience. The best part is, you don't have to be a technology expert to take advantage of these opportunities. Women willing to work hard, take risks, and master new subjects in the fast-paced technical environment can reap the rewards of technology careers.

One of those rewards is the potential for career advancement. The fast-paced nature of technology jobs, combined with the chance to develop new products, yields advancement opportunities. **Monisha Longacre**, vice president of Weather.com product strategy and development for The Weather Channel Interactive, took advantage of those opportunities to rise from product manager to vice president during her eight years with the company.

Longacre's current position enables her to leverage both her forward-looking strategy-planning talents and her product development skills. "I look at the current site, identify opportunities for continued growth, and make sure we are getting things done in the most efficient manner," she said.

In Longacre's words, she "started at the bottom." After a year and a half as a product manager, she was tasked with developing a desktop application, which is now widely deployed as The Weather Channel Desktop.



**Monisha Longacre**  
Vice President of Weather.com  
Product Strategy and Development  
The Weather Channel Interactive



**Susan Clark**  
Vice President and  
Site Director of FineLiving.com  
Scripps Networks

"It was an amazing opportunity, which I didn't realize at the time, to start a product from scratch," she recalled.

The company spearheaded development of the application in response to a competitive threat, and Longacre seized the opportunity. The early years were tough. "We thought we couldn't do anything right," she said. "People who worked on the website thought it was a distraction from the mother ship, and that we were investing in this business that would never go anywhere."

"We built that product from the ground up. We went from losing money, to generating revenue, to becoming profitable. It was an amazing ride," Longacre said.

Lessons learned from that effort have shaped her career. "I've taken what we created in the small business and applied those learnings to the larger business," she explained. Longacre added that she demonstrated that she could "create an efficient product development process that is very focused on actionable data and results, and grow from losing millions of dollars to making millions of dollars."

Longacre seized another Weather Channel opportunity and became a patent holder. "The Weather Channel invested in developing a patent program. They did a good job of educating us as to what the patent process was, and reminding us that we were inventing new things all the time."

Longacre received her first patent in May 2007, and has applied for several others. Her idea is a simple one. In 2002, she and her husband were debating over the best time to visit the beach. She quickly realized this was

something the Weather Channel could calculate. “We should be able to tell people the best time to do things. We have the climatology data, information on people’s sensitivities, when hurricanes come, all that data,” she recalled. When at the office the next day, she researched whether there was such a resource. Finding none, she wrote up the patent concept. “The Weather Channel patent program helped us define and refine the technology, write up the specification, and work through the legal aspect. We received a tremendous amount of support,” Longacre added. The process took 5 years.

## Moving from Marketing to Technology

You don’t have to have a technology degree to be a success in a technical field. **Susan Clark**, vice president and site director of FineLiving.com, started with Scripps Networks 12 years ago, working as a marketing services manager. When her marketing position was eliminated, she joined the company’s newly formed New Ventures/ Emerging Media division. There she helped define the company’s video on demand (VOD) and broadband strategy. Today, VOD accounts for a significant portion of Scripps Networks’ revenues.

Scripps was at the forefront of VOD when in 2001 it decided to pursue the technology. “The company knew that it wasn’t just about people coming to us for our content, but we needed to get our content out to them,” Clark recalled. “It was a very manual process to start with...I helped with developing the systems and workflows to make it a more automated business and repeatable business.”

That work bore fruit. When the VOD initiative first started, it took roughly 11 weeks to move programmed content to VOD distribution. Today that process takes about 2 weeks, Clark said.

Plunging into such a technology-heavy field as VOD was challenging. “I went home with a lot of headaches. I had to think harder than I ever had before,” Clark remembered. Mastering VOD’s terminology and acronyms was an effort, and she praised her engineering colleagues for their support.

“From my first foray, the engineer in our department was my biggest advocate,” she said. “They knew I was interested, wanted to learn it, and wanted to really understand what was going on in order to make the

best business decisions.”

Scripps also supported her transition to her new role. “Scripps allows you to grow in different areas. There is always a safety net for you,” she said. “It’s ok to fail, as long as you fail fast, get up and figure out what you did wrong, and move on.”

Today Clark is responsible for the programming and management of the cable website FineLiving.com. Some of her recent initiatives include implementing a new search engine and interface to improve the user experience.

## Leveraging Military Experience

There are many ways to gain technology experience that you can apply to your career, some less traditional for women. **Nicole Mitchell**, an on-camera meteorologist with The Weather Channel, gained her technical experience from the military. Mitchell joined the Air National Guard to help pay for college. While there, the military trained her as a weather observer and weather forecaster. She served for 11 years in the Guard before transferring to the Air Force Reserves in 2003.

“The military is a great place to gain technical experience. You get free schooling, and you get paid to go to school,” Mitchell said. “Obviously, you are still in the military, and you have to be aware of what that entails.”

During her military tenure, Mitchell has traveled all over the world. Working out of Italy, she forecasted weather for night-time special operations in Bosnia. While in France, she prepared weather information for air refuelers heading to Kosovo, and after 9/11 she headed to Saudi Arabia to brief pilots on the weather in Afghanistan and the no-fly zone in Iraq.

Mitchell’s military career gave her a broad experience base. “Working in so many different areas and experiencing weather in different climates and regions was very valuable,” she said. “Military forecasts are very technical. You have to be very specific and look at everything. It really honed my skills.”

Ironically, Mitchell became an on-air meteorologist



**Nicole Mitchell**  
On-Camera Meteorologist  
The Weather Channel

because of its slower pace. “The military was so different — long days and crazy hours. I wanted more consistency,” she recalled. In addition to her meteorology training, Mitchell achieved a B.A. in speech-communications from the University of Minnesota, and she took a job as an assignment editor for the local television station. She naturally gravitated to meteorology, because of her interest in weather.

Still, it isn’t all calm days and nights for Mitchell. With strong support from the Weather Channel, she continues to balance her military duties with her on-air job. She now serves as a weather officer for the Air Force Reserve’s Hurricane Hunters. “We fly inside hurricanes, and we take data measurements of what’s going on in the storm,” she explained. In 2005, one of the busiest hurricane seasons, Mitchell made more than a dozen

flights — averaging 10 hours each — into roughly eight storms.

“We do everything as safely as possible,” Mitchell said. “Once we get into the eye wall, that’s where we’re hit by thunderstorms. I’ve been in planes struck by lightning and hit with hail. I’ve seen tornadoes... We try and fly high enough so that if something happens, we have recovery room.”

When she’s not out chasing hurricanes, she’s busy helping the programmer transition to high definition (HD). Her show was The Weather Channel’s first to be broadcast in HD, and in preparation she and her colleagues did a month of dress rehearsals — producing their regular broadcast in the early morning, and then after a break doing the whole show again in HD.

## 2007 PAR Results: Women in Technology

|                                                                                    | <b>All Companies</b> | <b>Operators</b> | <b>Programmers</b> | <b>Others</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Total Companies Participating                                                      | 38**                 | 11               | 22                 | 5             |
| % of Total Respondents                                                             | 100.00%              | 28.95%           | 57.89%             | 13.16%        |
| <b>WOMEN EMPLOYEES AND MANAGERS as a proportion of ALL employees and managers*</b> |                      |                  |                    |               |
| % Women Employees                                                                  | 35.82%               | 34.77%           | 44.23%             | 24.96%        |
| % Entry Level Employees (2004 forward)                                             | 37.63%               | 36.45%           | 57.24%             | 39.67%        |
| % Call Center Employees (Operators only)                                           | 61.34%               | 61.34%           |                    |               |
| % All Technology Employees (2007 forward)                                          | 14.97%               | 14.14%           | 24.21%             | 9.91%         |
| % Corporate/HQ Technology Employees                                                | 24.37%               | 24.81%           | 24.31%             | 18.69%        |
| % Field/Installer Employees (Operators only)                                       | 8.90%                | 8.90%            |                    |               |
| % New Media Employees (2007 forward)                                               | 37.93%               | 39.42%           | 38.73%             | 9.52%         |
| % Call Center Women Managers (Operators only)                                      | 56.94%               | 56.94%           |                    |               |
| % IT Women Managers/Project Directors (2005 forward)                               | 11.52%               | 11.31%           | 15.37%             | 6.80%         |

\* The percents are calculated by summing across all companies and then calculating the percent.

\*\*40 participants in 2006, 33 participants in 2005, 32 participants in 2004, and 28 participants in 2003

# Advice for Integrating Work and Life

Integrating busy careers with the demands of personal priorities can be challenging. Making the best use of your time, being comfortable in your surroundings, and taking advantage of the support programs offered by your company can help.

**Deanna Brown**, president of the interactive group at Scripps Networks, has mastered time management. Brown travels constantly, spending 40 percent of her time in New York, 40 percent in Knoxville, and 20 percent traveling to speaking engagements or visiting Scripps companies.

She says her biggest challenge is "having the right shoe in the right city, when you get up in the morning." Joking aside, Brown stresses the importance of surrounding yourself with the things that make you comfortable, whether that's the latest technology so you can work from the road, or a good book so you can relax. "I have a surprising amount of time on airplanes or by myself where I can catch up with friends, e-mails, or have down time."

That personal comfort extends to the home front. When working in Knoxville, Brown satisfies her love of nature by living on a houseboat, or as she describes it "an RV on pontoons." "I'm a big fan of and feel at home with nature," Brown said. "Because I spend 40 percent of my time in Knoxville, why not be close to the water and close to the office."

**Cathi Breza**, vice president of marketing and sales



**Deanna Brown**  
President, Interactive Group  
Scripps Networks



**Cathi Breza**  
Vice President, Marketing  
and Sales Operations  
Discovery Enterprises International

operations for Discovery Enterprises International, uses the programmers' impressive array of work/life benefits to better integrate her career and family life. Breza, a single mother, will send her 4-year-old son to Discovery's onsite childcare center, which opens this August and accommodates 102 children. She also uses Discovery's emergency backup childcare benefit, which provides 5 days of emergency care a year.

Her number one piece of advice to women is to "look at your company's benefits and take advantage of them. It's amazing what you can find when you look at the programs that Discovery offers," Breza said.

Discovery's support for telecommuting and its acceptance of flexible schedules are other essential ingredients to her success. "I have a life and can deal with those things that come up, and not have too much extra stress about it," she said.

This commitment to integrating work and life engenders great employee loyalty. "When you are given the flexibility to be a mom, be a parent, and be an employee, it makes you want to be a better employee," Breza said. "I take advantage of the benefits, but I also have a heart and make sure I give back equal to what I take."

## *Congratulations to the Best Companies for Women in Cable 2007*

### Best Operators for Women in Cable



### Best Programmers for Women in Cable



# Career Tips from Cable Women

## Tech Tips

1. Ask a lot of questions.
2. Listen carefully to technical experts.
3. Don't be intimidated by technology.
4. Embrace the opportunities that technology presents.
5. Tell managers what you want.
6. Be organized and work hard.
7. Talk to people in technical jobs.
8. Find a mentor/create a support network.
9. Cultivate a technology partner and work closely with that person.

## Work/Life Tips

1. Do something you love.
2. Find good people that live and work the values that inspire you.
3. Stay true to who you are as a person.
4. Support cross training so that others can help.
5. Define your priorities regarding personal time and work time.
6. Work hard to maintain those priorities.
7. Take advantage of company benefits.
8. Find a mentor/create a support network.
9. Reward yourself.

## Best Companies for Women in Pay Equity



SCRIPPS  
NETWORKS



## Best Companies for Women in Advancement Opportunities



## Best Companies for Women in Resources for Work/Life Support



Women in Cable  
Telecommunications™

Women in Cable Telecommunications  
14555 Avion Parkway, Suite 250  
Chantilly, VA 20151

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*Questions about the PAR Initiative?*

Phone: 703.234.9803

Email: [pdas@wict.org](mailto:pdas@wict.org)

Visit: [www.wict.org](http://www.wict.org)