Chapter XX

Kathleen Starkoff
Limited Brands

Building a family of the world's best fashion brands.

My name is **Kathleen Starkoff** and I am the chief technology officer and group vice president for Limited Brands Technology Services.

Personal History

I was born in Port Clinton, Ohio. I attended local Catholic elementary and high schools that were walking distance from home. I obtained a Bachelor of Science with a major in mathematics and minors in chemistry and business from Kent State University. I also have an MBA from Case Western Reserve with a major in policy.

Out of college, I went to work for Parker Hannifin in Cleveland, Ohio. They make fluid power components. I was an engineering administrator, which was a good combination for my technical undergraduate degree and the MBA. As part of the position, I became involved in the division's introduction to the Material Requirements Planning system. This involvement led to further responsibility and a new role of inventory control manager; in these roles, I worked closely with the technology organization.

I was with Parker Hannifin for about 5 years, when I got a call! It was from the placement office at my alma mater, Case Western Reserve University. They told me IBM was hiring and that my resume was a perfect fit for their requirements. My first response was to decline because I was happy with the challenge of my current

position. Fortunately, Case's placement office was persistent and convinced me that it was an unusual situation for IBM to be hiring and I was an unusually good fit. I agreed to meet them for lunch. IBM is, of course, great at sales and they convinced me to join the company.

So, in 1983, I moved to IBM. I enjoyed a very extensive training program in technology and subsequently worked marketing and account representative positions. My favorite and final position was in the financial services area as a financial consultant at domestic headquarters in White Plains, New York. My team creatively solved complex financial problems with large IBM customers.

I was with IBM for about 6 years, when I got a call! It was from a gentleman I had worked with in Cleveland, Ohio. He was the CIO of National City Corporation. He was frustrated that his management team would not take the proliferation of PCs in the organization seriously. There were solely focused on "big iron" (mainframes), despite his best attempts to convince them otherwise.

So, in 1989, I moved to National City Corporation in Cleveland, Ohio, reporting to the CIO, to manage personal computers and networks. From there, I was given great opportunities in systems development. This included managing the development organization responsible for business consulting and all critical projects, including ERP (e.g., PeopleSoft) implementations. I was at National City Corporation for about 5 years, when I got a call!

Next I moved to KeyCorp, which was a competitive bank in Cleveland. They were most interested in my PeopleSoft experience because they were anticipating a similar but larger installation. I joined as senior vice president, development and support. The bank was aggressively consolidating administrative functions like purchasing, human resources, and financial functions as part of a bank consolidation effort. My team was established to deliver large scale client server initiatives, like PeopleSoft, HR, and Oracle. I also designed and established an organization to manage the relationships between the services organization and bank. This team did strategic planning with the business units to establish a 3-year plan for systems and operational processes, as well as to deal with day to day matters.

Then, right around Christmas I got a call! This time it was Bank One Corporation in Columbus, Ohio. This opportunity was a difficult one to consider because relocating would impact my husband's position as managing partner of a law firm in Cleveland. After many long conversations, he decided he was ready for a change and joined a large law firm in Columbus. I was appointed senior vice-president of integration and conversion for Bank One, which was rapidly acquiring and consolidating banks. I managed the technology integration team for these consolidations. Later, I was promoted to chief technology officer for one of the bank's groups. The group did high risk financial lending; at the time it was focused on establishing multiple Web businesses. The technology group needed to be reenergized to keep the pace of the organization. This was done and the Web businesses were quite successful. Unfortunately for me, Bank One sold the profitable group, and this time there was no call.

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