

Molly Tschang's Story

A passion for Africa turned into passionate philanthropy for Cisco employee Molly Tschang, who served as executive director of NetHope.

Helen Jonsen

Molly, tell me a little bit about your history and your work with Cisco.

Molly Tschang

Well, I've been with the company 10 years and I started in our Corporate Mergers and Acquisitions group, integrating all those companies we bought, which was a fantastic role. Personally, I ended up going to Africa for the first time in 2000, which was a dream come true. So the safari was great, but what was even better was I came back with this sense of a country and a people that I had never had before. And, you know, ostensibly, not a lot of clothing, food, or shelter, and they seem so happy.

So, I got involved with Save the Children as a small way to give back, sponsoring two kids. And getting involved with them, they invited me some years later to join them on this Empowering Women and Girls Delegation. I call it kind of adventure philanthropy. So you have to raise a bunch of money and then you pay your way and you have a chance to look at a very inside view, some of these development programs.

And when you're at a truck stop and you see them trying to educate truck drivers on HIV prevention, and when you are with women who have to support a family of 10 or 12, it's a pretty sobering experience. So I've really come back with a sense of how the public sector, private sector, nonprofit sector need to come together.

Helen Jonsen

Tell me what the Fellowship Program is.

Molly Tschang

It's a great program for Cisco, and it gives employees a development opportunity to add their business skill sets into the nonprofit area. And what we bring to the table is our business acumen and our experiences. But the employees come back with so much richer a background and a context for how they, personally, and how a company like Cisco can really make the world a better place.

Helen Jonsen

What is NetHope? And how does that fit into the whole Cisco company?

Molly Tschang

NetHope itself is an international NGO, and it's an IT consortium of the top international agencies.

Helen Jonsen

You had a chance to run NetHope as the executive director.

Molly Tschang

I did, and it was kind of funny because two weeks, three weeks before I got the job, I was like, "What is an Executive Director?" And it literally fell into my lap. It's a consortium, so a lot of the bridge-building skills I used in my integration work really came into play. I think what I found was a lot of opportunity, but they needed focus.

Helen Jonsen

And now what are you doing?

Molly Tschang

I created a job for myself, in some ways. I'm part of a group called the Internet Business Solutions Group, or IBSG, at Cisco. It's the company's strategic consulting arm. We work with top companies, top governments all around the world, helping them innovate in their business process and their business operations, and how you apply technology to do so.

Helen Jonsen

And what are your goals for yourself? How do you keep this balance going?

Molly Tschang

I am a mission-driven person, and I'm all about impact. And my work now is very meaningful because I'm doing some partnership work with international agencies around poverty alleviation, and how technology can really help the poor to advance their lives. So, for me, the hours and the craziness, and the email 24 by 7, and the travel is really worth it. I feel really blessed. I have a fantastic job in a fantastic company, with a chance to make a difference, and I feel pretty good about that.

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