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**CAREERS & the disabled**  
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APRIL 24, 2012  
Boston, MA

**FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**



# GREAT POTENTIAL FOR TODAY'S TECHNOLOGIES

INNOVATION WILL COME WITH THE NEXT GENERATION  
IN THE COMPUTER SCIENCE INDUSTRY.

IF THE OLD JOKE IS TRUE—THAT IT TAKES ONLY A FRACTION OF SOMEONE WITH A DISABILITY TO SCREW IN A LIGHT BULB—THEN THE OVER-ACHIEVERS PROFILED BELOW ARE NO EXCEPTION TO THAT RULE. THREE COMPANY LEADERS WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES, AND ONE IS A NON-AMBULATORY INTERN, WHO'S ACTIVE ON THE ICE. ALL BECAME HIGH PERFORMERS, WHILE ADHERING TO THE SAME STANDARDS AS EVERYONE ELSE.

CISCO—  
A DISABILITY-CONFIDENT COMPANY

LISA LAWLEY, SENIOR GLOBAL EVENTS PROGRAM MANAGER, JOINED CISCO IN 1997 AS ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT IN THE BROADBAND NETWORKS GROUP. "AS I EVOLVED AT MY JOB CISCO, I'VE HAD TO LEARN A LITTLE ABOUT A LOT OF DIFFERENT TECHNOLOGIES," SAYS THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA GRADUATE, WHO EARNED A BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN COMMERCE AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION.

"I'm happy in my current position doing trade shows and events," she states. Currently Lawley helps to launch a new approach to exhibits. "We combine about six booths into one larger campus area for one of our proprietary events," she explains. Individual vendors will be integrated visually within the larger footprint, through marketing, media, and social messaging. "We do that by physically co-locating," she adds. "By having a single color carpet throughout the space and overarching graphics, everything will flow from one area into the other."

In 2008, Cisco supported Lawley to become a Certified Trade Show Marketer (CTSM), now at the bronze level. She is also a certified manager of exhibits through the Trade Show Exhibitors Association.

Lawley, who was not hired with a disability, was diagnosed several years ago, with macular dystrophy, which affects her central vision responsible for reading,

recognizing faces, and depth perception. While not totally blind, she must enlarge text or pictures, so that the other portion of her vision can help her see.

The period after her diagnosis was her most challenging, professionally because it coincided with company reorganization. "I was editing a magazine for Cisco customers in that broadband space, more specific to cable at the time," she recalls. When Cisco decided to not publish the magazine, Lawley was given her choice of two different positions. "I said, 'give me trade show, that sounds fun.'"

Cisco provides Lawley with ZoomText Screen Magnifier software for her laptop and a desktop CCTV for reading printed materials. "I wouldn't be able to do my job without ZoomText for sure, because it allows me to see whatever I need to see in as large a text as I need. I can't see the whole page at once, but I can move around the screen to see different parts of it."

Lawley has enjoyed the evolution of her career, but adds, "what has kept me here is the way Cisco has dealt with my disability. Not only did the company accommodate my needs so that I could stay productive, it has evolved company-wide programs, such as the employee resource group (ERG), Cisco Disabilities Network, to allow employees to network with other employees sharing common interests or challenges. The network wasn't in existence at the time, so I had a difficult time finding people. It required a lot of Internet searches—

finding organizations. Once we had that ERG I felt like I could jump in and help other people."

She continues, "It's not even really about finding other vision impaired co-workers," adds Lawley of the ERG, "but about having a safe environment to discuss challenges and develop solutions. We even have a sub-network for employees who have children with special needs so all of us are kind of interconnected and we definitely do quite a bit of collaboration in that area as well."

Another way Cisco tries to be "a disability confident company," says Lawley, is by, "bringing disability into our products. Some people in our group don't have disabilities, but it's part of their job at Cisco to make our products more accessible. And others have both—they work in accessibility and also have disabilities, so they bring that to the table."

Lawley has these suggestions for ambitious students seeking an eclectic knowledge base, whether studying marketing or computer science. "Hone as many skills as you can, such as writing,

**"Push  
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related."**

speaking in front of small groups, working on small and large teams," she advises. "Depending on where your career journey leads, you may find yourself in product marketing or management, where these skills will come in handy. Push yourself to learn as much as you can, even if you don't think it will be related. All of that makes you a well-rounded employee and the more well-rounded you are, the more attractive you are to prospective employers."

At Cisco, there is an opportunity in almost every field of computer science and engineering, according to Hope Bryant, global program manager, university connection, staffing. The degrees sought, she says, include software engineering, computer science, hardware engineering, electrical engineering, and mechanical engineering. For non-engineering positions in these fields Cisco looks for students with finance, business supply chain, marketing, and communication backgrounds.

"Cisco University Connection coordinates a global program for all intern and co-op hires at Cisco across all business units," explains Bryant. "We look for well-rounded people to join the Cisco family. Being able to show leadership skills is a plus along with partnership with others."

PEPSICO, INC.—  
GROOMING WORLD-CLASS PROFESSIONALS

PEPSICO'S BOW TO DIVERSITY HAS SHOWN UP IN THE COMPANY'S HUMAN RESOURCES ADVANCEMENTS, THANKS LARGELY TO ENABLE, AN EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUP (ERG), WHICH HAD A ROLE IN THE AD AND BOASTS 800-PLUS MEMBERS, ACCORDING TO ENABLE HR EXECUTIVE SPONSOR, PAUL MARCHAND, PEPSICO'S SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, GLOBAL TALENT ACQUISITION AND DEPLOYMENT.

Started in 2006, EnAble's network has led to several support and sharing services, as well as the company's accessible technology policy (ATP), notes Marchand. "Because of these services and the success of the program in the United States," he offers, "PepsiCo plans to expand EnAble globally over the next few years."

Marchand credits PepsiCo's technical lead specialist, Jay Macarty, a founding member of EnAble, with authoring ATP, which made tools and technology that can enhance capability in the workplace, available to all employees. Macarty, who joined PepsiCo in 2000 as a systems analyst, earned a bachelor's degree from Northeastern State University, in Oklahoma, with a double major in computer science and business. The two avenues prepared him to pursue either scientific research or business.

"I felt the job opportunities would be more on the business side," Macarty explains. He wanted to understand the computer science side, but also have a background in understanding the various applications he would write. "In hindsight it turned out to be a good way to do that job."

The story of how Macarty prepared for his PepsiCo interview speaks volumes about his business savvy and suggests how applicants who use assistive technology can impress interviewers—not in spite of that—but because of it.

"One of the things that was extremely helpful to me when I applied, was that I knew when I went to the interview, people would have questions," remembers Macarty, referring to his disability. He figured managers interviewing him would wonder how a blind person would be able to deliver, but they might not know how to express that.

When he went to the interview, Macarty took his laptop. "And I just said, 'I understand you guys use such-and-such a programming tool. I know you're probably wondering—let me show you how I can use my Speech and Braille to navigate through that,' and I opened up a program and edited it.

"So without them having to ask, I provided a comfort level for us to move on past that, and have some meaningful dialogue because they were no longer worried about that.

BY EVONN GIBBS

You could almost feel the relaxation,” he declares.

Once he was hired, he came upon the same subdued anxiety among co-workers who worried they should treat him differently because he had a disability. As a result, for the first few months, it was too quiet around his desk. Bridging the gap happens faster. “If you cultivate the idea that people are going to wonder about things and be curious, not just in an interview, but in general,” he remarks.

Asked if there was any advantage to being blind in a work environment, Macarty said, “Yes there is.” He doesn’t have to struggle with the behaviors corporations try to train out of employees in what he calls, “the inclusion types of classes, where they say things like, ‘don’t make a judgment about people on first glance;’ and, ‘assume positive intent,’” says Macarty.

“I have found blindness to be actually beneficial to me over the years,” he comments. “I’ve been legally blind since birth and totally blind since age 12. It’s actually an advantage for me—I have people I work with every day and don’t know what they look like—I have no idea what they look like, I haven’t made any judgments about that person. I get the chance to get to know them first. So I think that’s actually an advantage.”

As a global consumer packaged goods company, PepsiCo seeks to groom world-class professionals. One way of doing that, says Lisa Ashworth, PepsiCo’s director of campus recruiting, is by offering computer science internships through its global business information solutions (BIS) team. BIS annually recruits about 40 interns and 35 full-time hires from computer science and information systems programs at various U.S. campuses.

For the summer of 2012, Dan Hefley, a junior at the University of Pittsburgh, will intern at PepsiCo’s office in Plano, TX. He was selected from among many applicants identified through the not-for-profit Lime Connect Fellowship Program, of which PepsiCo is a founding partner. “As a finalist, I had to go through rigorous in-person interviews with representatives from the corporate partners,” recalls Hefley. “I developed a great con-



DAN HEFLEY,  
UPCOMING INTERN,  
PEPSICO

nection with multiple people throughout PepsiCo during these interviews, and also later at the Lime Connect Fellowship Program Symposium. I was inspired to apply to PepsiCo for an internship because of the great interactions I had thus far with the company.”

Hefley, who competes in Paralympic Ice Hockey, and was named starting goalie for the USA National Team B 2008-2011, will intern in the Plano office for the PepsiCo business and information solutions division. While Hefley would like to study software development and engineering in graduate school, he likes the idea of working first in order to learn tangible skills and have great experiences at a company such as PepsiCo.

AT&T, INC.—  
EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND  
ADVANCED COMMUNICATION

SUSAN MAZRUI, DIRECTOR, GLOBAL PUBLIC POLICY, AT&T SERVICES, INC., IN ADDITION TO BEING A LEADER IN A DEMANDING JOB, HAS CONTRIBUTED HER EXPERTISE IN DEVICE ACCESSIBILITY, TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE POLICYMAKERS, INCLUDING THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION.

Mazrui works on cross-disability issues throughout AT&T. “Everything from policy that makes products more accessible, like our universal design policy,” she explains, “to specific requirements around the next generation of hearing aid compatibility and access to 911 emergency information access—things along those lines.”

One such line, she notes, is working to implement a communications and video accessibility act, so that it best serves all AT&T customers. It has to do with emerging technologies and advanced communication, such as captioning on IT, over the Internet. “It’s a very exciting time,” Mazrui exclaims. “There is so much potential in today’s technologies and we can harness it well if we work with our customers to understand their needs.”

She ought to know. That’s what she’s been doing throughout her career. From 1996 to 2007, Mazrui helped write the Section 255 and 508 SBC Wireless and Cingular product requirements used in making cell phone technologies accessible to people with disabilities. The often-overlooked benefit of that technology, she explains, is that those features became standard, offering enhancements for all users.

Mazrui admits that she was groomed, in a way, to



SUSAN MAZRUI,  
DIRECTOR,  
GLOBAL PUBLIC  
POLICY, AT&T

achieve professional success. “I was raised with the understanding that I better be able to support myself. But I had a very supportive family. My mother grew up in Japan during WWII,” Mazrui recalls. “She was a child at that time, during the bombings, and the waiting for the invasion—a tough time. And my father grew up during the depression and in WWII and their goal for having children was that they would raise survivors because that was critical.”

She continues, “You were not taught to think, ‘I can’t do this.’ You were taught to think, ‘how do I do this?’ I acquired blindness in my teens, but when that occurred it was, ‘okay that’s very tough, very hard, now what are you going to do?’ I never thought, ‘I’ll stay home and my parents will take care of me.’ None of my siblings did either.”

One of Mazrui’s many contributions to AT&T has been her role as a presenter in industry conferences, but sometimes the biggest takeaway is what she learns about herself in the context of technology.

“It’s just amazing,” she states.

While watching a 15-year-old autistic student present the software, Proloquo2Go, at the California State University of North Ridge Conference on Technology for People with Disabilities, she had the following insight. “If I had met her

## CSCP PREPARES YOUTH FOR COLLEGE

Sometimes the goal to become a computer scientist begins with a dream in high school, but some advocates say that for youth with disabilities, getting to college may take more preparation and an earlier engagement in the idea that dreams can come true. One organization working to engage those students is Computer Science Collaboration Project (CSCP), which is funded by a second round grant from the National Science Foundation.

CSCP’s main goal is to build new collaborations with higher education, community-based organizations, K-12 schools, as well as industries and corporations, according to Mylene Padolina, CSCP project manager. CSCP comprises several projects designed to encourage youth with disabilities in pursuing STEM careers. Engaging Youth With Disability is one of those.

Project specialist Padolina, says its purpose, along with its partner, the University of Washington’s Access Computing Program, is to make sure students with disabilities who want to major in computer science, can do so, and that college programs are accessible and available to them.

Several universities participate in CSCP projects. “They are involved in mentorship, providing hands-on opportunities for programming learning, and also in giving kids a head start by showing them what an education in computer science would be like, through tours, or even access to the facilities, and to professors. We partner with them to ensure we have that link to universities as we try to get kids in K-12 interested. We want to make sure they see the linkage between what they do now, to higher education, and eventually the work place.”

on the street, I would have thought she didn’t have a lot going on,” Mazrui says of her first impression of the presenter. “It’s a terrible thing to admit but I have to overcome the same prejudices that other people have. With the tablet device she was able to communicate in a way that showed she was clearly at college-ready level. So that device helped me get over my prejudice, and helped her address her communication needs. It not only helped her; it helped me. And the best part is now, as a society, we can all benefit from what she has to offer.”

She speaks of the industry’s future from the perspective of an educator, saying innovation will come with the next generation. “Students now are used to social networking and new technologies. They are digital natives,” she comments, “Digital natives have a way of looking at devices that are different than someone who is older. They have creativity and skills that they can apply to developing things that could be positive for society.”

Mazrui, who is blind, accesses the Internet using Job Access With Speech (JAWS) screen reader. “I use a variety of different productivity tools based on the task at hand,” she reports. “Sometimes I use Braille Note Taker. Sometimes I use a technology that’s built into mainstream devices i.e. the screen reader built into iPhones or the iPad.”

While technology facilitates communication, notes Mazrui, it is interpersonal skills, not devices, which bridge gaps. “The biggest challenge is getting people to under-

## Christopher Burke: Supporting The Customer Experience At CA Technologies



CHRISTOPHER  
BURKE,  
SENIOR  
CUSTOMER  
EXPERIENCE  
REPRESENTATIVE,  
CA  
TECHNOLOGIES

After a good, long insider's look at the company, Christopher Burke is now a senior customer experience representative at CA Technologies. Before joining CA Technologies, he spent 12 years working at the company's headquarters in Islandia, NY, as an account associate and technical specialist with Xerox.

During this time, CA Technologies was his primary account and he interacted with the company's employees on a daily basis. "I intermingled with CA Technologies employees so much so that I often felt like I was an official employee of the company," recalls Burke, who is now based in Tampa, FL. From working inside the company as a vendor, Burke learned, firsthand, that CA was a great place to work. He also learned that he had a keen interest in the IT management software business.

"From talking with friends with whom I had developed at CA Technologies during my time with Xerox, I also knew that CA Technologies was the type of company that would work with me and my disability," he adds. As a result of Stargardt Macular Degeneration, Burke has completely lost sight in one eye; his other eye is classified as legally blind.

As a representative in the company's Global Service Center, Burke fields and takes ownership of nontechnical internal and external requests, which includes online troubleshooting, education support, licensing, general customer service inquiries, and more "In this role, I have to continuously collaborate with my internal team, management, and other organizations within CA Technologies to enhance the level of service our customers receive on a daily basis," states Burke. "I also look for more ways that we can improve processes that can further help drive timely customer issue resolution."

While online support continues to be popular, says Burke, there will always be a need for live phone support. "Customers still want to be able to talk to humans," he declares, and today's companies, including CA Technologies recognize that fact.

Because of his limited eyesight, Burke takes longer to read screens and learn new procedures when programs and systems are changed. "But my management and co-workers are a great support system and are always patient and up for taking a little extra time with me when it comes to training me on a new process," he adds.

Due to the progression of his condition, he can no longer drive and works from home most days thanks to the company's flexible workplace program. In addition, colleagues who live near him offer to drive him to the office when his attendance is required. He believes that this support from co-workers and management, combined with the company's desire to keep employees happy and engaged, make CA Technologies a great place to work.

"CA Technologies truly believes that the company's success depends on satisfied and engaged people, people who not only enjoy their work but also have the opportunity to grow personally and professionally every working day," says Burke.

Regardless of the industry, Burke believe that when you find an area or subject that you enjoy and want to pursue, stay on top of industry trends. "Don't be afraid to ask questions and expand your knowledge," he concludes. "Just go for it!"

Also, follow the organizations that you are interested in such on their social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn), and look for opportunities for internships and certifications within the industry or field. —Amanda N. Wegner

stand each others needs," she remarks, "whether it's the limitations businesses have, the limitations technology has, or the usability issues faced by people who have a hearing loss or other disability."

As a team leader, she works to get people to understand each other so they can work together on a solution. "Because when you work together on a solution rather

than fighting each other, you come up with something that's better for everyone," she says.

There are many careers in telecommunications students with disabilities can aspire to, according to Mazrui. "It has to do with finding what you're passionate about because that will carry you anywhere if you work hard. And you don't take, 'no' for an answer." CAD