

PrimeTime Member Spotlight

May 2008

Each month *Connections* talks to a PrimeTime member to find out more about who they are, what they do, and their association with PrimeTime.



This month we spotlight

Maria Buttler
APAC EPG Controller at Microsoft

Personal talk ...

Connections: Where are you from originally, and how long have you been in Singapore?

Maria: I'm from Melbourne, Australia and have been in Singapore since October 1996.

Connections: Have you lived in other foreign countries? If so where?

Maria: No, I haven't lived in any other countries but I'd love to. Singapore is so hard to leave when you're a working mother with young children.

Connections: What brought you to Singapore?

Maria: We came here with my husband's job (he was with Motorola at the time). We actually asked to come - we thought it would be fun to live somewhere different.

Connections: What do you enjoy most about living in Singapore?

Maria: The list is long: the food, the tax rate, the weather, the great friends we've made, the safety, the great job opportunities.

Connections: What are your interests and hobbies?

Maria: I love cooking, running, playing tennis, reading books, and spending time with my family.

Connections: Which are your favourite restaurants/shops/places to go?

Maria: For clothes, I like Zara and Esprit, and also get a lot of work clothes when I'm in the US and Australia. I also find some great things at the little shops around The Arcade and Change Alley in Raffles Place. For food, I love Absolutely New Zealand at Sunset Way – it has great chutneys, jams, sauces, biscuits, crackers, chips, wines, cheese, lamb and beef and all sorts of NZ products you can't get anywhere else in Singapore. It also has NZ Natural ice-cream by the scoop so the kids are always happy to come along. Restaurants wise we eat a lot at the American Club, and Caffè Beviamo and Don Noodle which are both at Tanglin Mall. We also love PS Cafe at Dempsey Road, Senso in Club Street, Valentino's at Rifle Range Road, and some old favourites are Akashi Japanese restaurant at Tanglin Shopping Centre and Crystal Jade at Great World City for dim sum.

Connections: What is the one thing you would like to accomplish in your lifetime?

Maria: Opening my own cafe selling lots of cakes and gourmet sandwiches and salads and pasta. My husband would be making the best coffee in town and there would be a play area for kids.

Professional talk ...

Connections: Could you tell us a little about the company you work for and your current role?

Maria: I work for Microsoft and am currently the APAC Controller for our Enterprise Partner Group. We focus on the larger Microsoft customers and the partners who serve them, and sell across our full range of products. We cover Australia, NZ, Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Brunei.

Connections: How long have you been working in your present role?

Maria: I've been with Microsoft since April 2005 and in my present role since April 2007.

Connections: Have you always worked in the same industry? If not what else have you done/ where else have you worked in the past?

Maria: I started in professional services and obtained my chartered accounting qualification in Australia where I worked for Coopers & Lybrand. I then worked in the financial services industry for about 6 years, both in Australia and Singapore. After an extended maternity leave I moved into the IT industry where I've been since 2002.

Connections: What do you enjoy most about your Job?

Maria: Apart from the fantastic people I work with, I love the autonomy and empowerment that most roles at Microsoft provide. It is very much an environment that suits self-starters and is big on accountability and responsibility. I have largely shaped my role based on what I thought it should look like.

Connections: What do you enjoy most about the company you work for?

Maria: I really appreciate the opportunities that Microsoft provides, whether it be relocation to another country, a change of function, or participation in special projects. I also enjoy the small company feel even though it's obviously quite big and I like the fact that senior executives are approachable.

Connections: Have any of the PrimeTime programs you've attended helped you in your job?

Maria: I really enjoyed the recent meeting at which Robert Herbold, the former Microsoft COO, presented. It's always interesting to hear the thoughts of an executive (even though former) from your own company. The opportunity to start up PrimeTime's Finance and Accounting sub-group will also be very valuable to my job, particularly the network that I hope to gain from it.

Connections: Do you have any advice for job hunters trying to move into your industry?

Maria: Do your research. Understand the dynamics that are most relevant to the particular company you are targeting, whether it be competition from a new entrant to the market, changes brought about by government regulations or impact on competitiveness from exchange rate movements. Also, if you can, talk to an existing employee of the company who can help you understand the corporate culture so you can assess if you really think you're a good fit.

PrimeTime talk ...

Connections: When did you join PrimeTime and how did you find out about it?

Maria: I first joined PrimeTime in October 1996, 2 weeks after I arrived in Singapore. I heard about it from a friend of a friend. It was pot-luck dinners at someone's house back then. My membership lapsed when I took an extended maternity leave and I recently rejoined.

Connections: Which PrimeTime subgroups do you belong to?

Maria: Finance and Accounting subgroup

Connections: What do you personally feel are the benefits of being a PrimeTime member?

Maria: The network of like-minded women is invaluable. I re-joined PrimeTime as I found it hard to meet senior women in Finance by attending local industry events. It has provided the opportunity to meet women from all industries and functions, not just Finance.

Connections: Do you volunteer at PrimeTime? If so, in what areas have you become involved?

Maria: I'm the chair of the Finance and Accounting subgroup.

Connections: Which was the most interesting PrimeTime event you've attended?

Maria: The 2nd Thursday meeting at which Claire Chiang, Managing Director of Retail Operations for Banyan Tree Holdings Ltd, spoke was inspiring (although I left feeling like an underachiever). She is an amazing woman with a drive to improve the lives of others and give back to the community and sets an example for all of us.

Thank you Maria!