

Profile of Matina Zervos

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P R O F I L E :
MATINA ZERVOS, DISTRIBUTION & INDUSTRIAL
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FROM ENGINEER TO SAVING AMP MILLIONS, BEING INVOLVED IN QANTAS' AWARD-WINNING NEXT GENERATION CHECK-IN AND SETTING THE AGENDA IN RETAIL, IBM'S MATINA ZERVOS IS BLAZING A TRAIL. NIKI WALDEGRAVE REPORTS



Back in the day marketing was all about the gift of the gab, persistence, passion and relationship building.

Now it's all analytics and methodology so it's no wonder engineer-turned-consultant-turned-marketing extraordinaire Matina Zervos has it covered - she's got all of the above. In spades.

After getting her Engineering degree at the University of NSW in manufacturing management Zervos was running a team of 35 in the consumer goods division at Sydney-based pharmaceutical company Bristol Myer-Squibb by the time she was just 22.

Two years later she was solely responsible for the profitability and the operation of Cleanaway's materials recovery facility, then Australia's largest, based in Sydney's western suburbs, which processed 140 tonnes of recyclables rubbish a day.

The tenacious worker even did a stint on the production line sorting recyclables in order to glean what needed to be changed from the grass - or should that be glass? - roots level up to the top.

After slashing Cleanaway's weekly losses from around \$200k to \$33k Zervos joined Coopers and Lybrand as a consultant in 1997, a role which she admits was, "heaven on a stick?"

She says: "What I loved most about consulting was that I got to do different roles and worked for different companies without having to change my employers. I'm quite a curious person, I like to go into the new and really help solve the issues and the problems and see that come to fruition."

Zervos remained there for 12 years, during the company's merge with Pricewaterhouse and IBM's \$3.5billion acquisition in 2002, and key projects, included heading up strategic sourcing projects for the Australian Defence Force, specifically the Air Force, NRMA, Qantas and AMP - a 10 month project during the Sydney-held Olympics, which saw her team over achieve by 120 per cent.

She explains, "It was basically looking at all of their spend across all categories in the organisation and I help them redesign the relationships, if we needed to run competitions, request proposals,

those types of things for each of the categories.

"So we actually acted as AMP staff and worked with the AMP team and our purpose was to help AMP save money, create better value for their spend and then also design an organisation that was going to stay in place once we left.

"The project ran for about 10 months

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and was wonderful. It was 2000, so during the Olympics, and was probably the most successful project I worked on.

"We originally did a market analysis, looked at the segmentation, what was currently being spent and made estimates based on our experience based on what we had initially predicted.

"We identified a significant amount of savings and over achieved the project by about 120 per cent."

On the marketing side Zervos worked with media specialist, Pat Williams, who went through all of the invoices - from their chief agencies to the sub-contractors - which informed the sourcing strategy they developed.

Zervos' last IBM consulting role and first in marketing was supporting the Qantas account, where she helped the team formulate and start the conversation about revamping domestic self-service check in.

"The final result pretty much revolutionised everything," she says. "The project team changed all the kiosks, redesigned the user interface, installed the automated bag drop - it was a world first, with the podium check-in 'It id the chip in your Frequent Flyer card, checking in in five seconds.

"We were involved in key parts of the design but also in managing project delivery. It was a mammoth effort and there were about 200 different suppliers involved in the delivery of that!"

Zervos moved from the consulting practice to marketing in 2009 due to the success of the Qantas account-based marketing approach as she was, she says,

"someone who could work with the Qantas team, the IBM client team, help from a stakeholder analysis perspective and marrying that up with our key messages and value proposition.

"I could also build a consolidated view on what was happening in the IBM marketing world and how we could use and leverage the different programmes and events that were happening to strategically influence certain individuals within the client!

Due to its success, Zervos was asked to do that for another group of accounts, that were termed the Distribution and Industrial sector, and then officially moved into that marketing role.

Now IBM's Distribution & Industrial marketing leader for Asia Pacific, Zervos is also proud of her organisation's achievements in helping transform David Jones into an omni-channel retailer, with the genesis of the idea stemming from sponsoring a series of boardroom leaders' forums at the Australian National Retailers Association, starting in 2010.

She admits it took a "leap of faith" from her then-boss, John Twine, who is now Vice President and General Manager Enterprise and Mid-Market, IBM Australia and New Zealand and, coincidentally, Zervos' mentor.

"I backed it and the relationship with ANRA has been wonderful, and to be involved in the conversations with the leaders of the retail industry, it helps form our solutions and products and capabilities, to meet what they need and we hope can help them be competitive all around the world."

For the last five years Zevos has also been involved in thought leadership and conducts a global study of consumers every year, personally developing and writing the study's Australian findings.

"We really get to understand what consumers' expectations are of retailers," she adds, "of what they're thinking, what they would like to see, what's working and what's not working for them?"