

View from the C-Suite

IAOP Leadership Hall of Fame Q&A

Interview with Suzanne Leopoldi-Nichols, President, Global Business Services at UPS

In your 20 plus years working in shared services, what changes have you seen? What are your predictions looking ahead for GBS?

Over the past twenty plus years, I've seen shared services and GBS organizations go from being viewed as an organization which churns out transactional processes to much more of a business solutions organization. It's also been amazing to see the caliber of employees, especially at UPS, bringing unique, diverse skillsets with a passion for problem solving.

As I think about the road ahead for GBS, I see more cohesion between artificial intelligence, machine learning and people. Our people are very skilled so I see much of the basic transactions being automated so they can focus on solving much bigger issues with help from new technologies like quantum computing. I also think continuous improvement and predictive modeling will be on the forefront of what GBS does.

Tell me more about your work at UPS and the value you get through your relationships with service providers?

UPS a global leader in logistics, offering a broad range of solutions including transporting packages and freight; facilitating international trade, and deploying advanced technology to more efficiently manage the world of business. We work across 220 countries and territories to solve their logistics and package delivery needs. The UPS GBS organization helps support Finance, HR, IT, Sales and Marketing in the back, middle and front office through a network of 17,000 FTEs, half of which are outsourced in 80 global locations.

Our services providers are strategic partners to us. They are forward-thinkers in the space and help us provide best-in-class services in their respective areas. They don't just process transactions, but consult with our teams on the best opportunities, locations and solutions to deliver excellence. They continuously improve the processes they deliver which ultimately helps our end customers.

Who are your role models?

I've been very lucky in my career to look up to numerous role models. In my work, I've been fortunate to have had several, outstanding supervisors. Each of whom helped me stretch beyond what I thought was possible. To this day, as I work alongside my talented UPS colleagues, I continue to learn and grow each day. I'm eternally grateful for their support, leadership and brilliant minds.

I also look up to excellent global leaders who bring good into the world. People like Cheryl Sandburg, Michelle Obama, Nelson Mandela, Bill Gates and Indra Nooyi. I admire how they see things bigger than themselves, and have developed their passions in a positive way, embracing diversity and inclusion around the globe.

Is there a piece of advice that you always follow or perhaps advice that you give to others?

The best piece of advice I've ever received was from my Dad when I was a young girl. He said, "Do what you love, everything else will follow." I whole heartily believe in this statement, and have encouraged the people in my life to follow their passions.

Have you seen more women in leadership roles like your own over time and why is this important?

I am excited to see more women leaders over the years, but we must continue to enable women to advance as far as their desires and abilities will take them. It's about finding a balance in equality and embracing differences. The more diverse teams you can build, and the more inclusive your organization is of diverse backgrounds and viewpoints, the more success your organization can realize.

Lastly, what does this honor mean to you?

I'm truly at a loss of words. To be the first woman GBS leader to receive this award is the greatest honor of my professional life. To be listed alongside so many brilliant and gifted leaders, I'm filled with gratitude and excitement. But I wouldn't be here without all of the people who helped me throughout my career, including my own teams over the years. This honor really goes out to all of them.