

## Go Beyond the Network with Cisco IT

*Everyone – what is Beyond the Network?*

**SABRINA SALEHA:** “Our purpose is to tell stories that are not only relevant to Cisco but relevant to the IT industry, and with hopes of leading or starting important conversations that people aren’t talking about yet. We’ve been mindful of including diverse sets of perspective to insure we are giving a rounded story.”

**DOUGLAS ALGER:** “This is us taking a look behind the scenes at a major technology company. A lot of the stories we’re telling focus on the IT organization. There’s this fascinating intersection of technological innovation, thought leadership and people trying to address the needs of the business. We were very deliberate in the naming of the podcast – *Beyond the Network*. These aren’t supposed to be technical discussions aimed at a technical guru audience. These are really meant to be stories for a broad audience.”

**SARAH KHOKHAR:** “And I think we do capture that with the types of people we actually interviewed. They’re not all from IT. They’re from all walks of life, really. And I think that enables our stories to come to life, because we’re telling it from multiple viewpoints and not just our viewpoint.”

**SABRINA:** “Maybe we should talk about a little bit about ourselves – who are we?”

**DOUGLAS:** “My name is Doug Alger. I have a rather eclectic background, I suppose. I’ve been in the IT industry for more than 20 years. I actually initially started as a newspaper reporter, where I worked for several years at different papers. I’ve written a few books over the years on Data Center design and operations. I’ve done some video blogging, and now podcasting.”

**SARAH:** “And I’m Sarah J. Khokhar, also with a few non-IT related books out in the creative, non-fiction and fiction realms. I started out as a copy editor for an HR company, free-lanced for a couple of years, taught GCSE and A-level English in the U.K. for a while, and then found myself at Cisco as a technical writer for the Cisco on Cisco team. And now, like Doug, the latest is podcasting.”

**SABRINA:** “As for me, my name is Sabrina. I’m a storyteller. Storytelling has always been a pivotal part of my life and upbringing in different aspects. My mission in life just in general is to provide a voice for unheard voices. So I’ve explored different platforms so far in my career to do that. I currently create content for podcasts, blogs and social media. And I like to share my fun fact – I’m a digital nomad traveling in my jeep, so I’m constantly seeking adventure and inspiration and learning about new cultures and people. That’s something that I think I’ve been able to do also in the interviews for the podcasting and I’m so excited to share.”

**SARAH:** “I think between the three of us we have a lot of fun. We don’t have creative differences per se but we have a lot of creative perspective. And I like that, that we can just kind of go into each others minds a little bit, because they’re very, very different.”

**DOUGLAS:** “There haven’t been creative disagreements but there’ve been creative discussions, and I think for a lot of that it’s been fun figuring out how do we want to tell a story, what do we think that story is, what do we think is the best way to communicate it.”

**SARAH:** “But it works. I think the stories that we’ve crafted, they really tell the story. And while we’re all part of those stories, it’s not just about us telling the story it’s about the story coming to life with our help.”

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**DOUGLAS:** “Ok, so to that end, let me ask each of you, what have been some of the most memorable or interesting interviews that you’ve been able to work on so far?”

**SABRINA:** “I’ll say the interview that has stuck with me the most so far... When I was working on the promotion of women into leadership positions in the tech industry, I asked the question ‘How do we measure the success of insuring gender parity during promotion?’ And one of the people I interviewed brought up the quote by Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, ‘There will be enough women on the Supreme Court when they’re all nine.’ And I’ve heard this quote before, but I haven’t applied it to other leadership roles. I’ll let the interview and the podcast delve a little bit deeper into the theme, but it’s been so interesting that in a lot of leadership positions it’s been men without question. So when will we be in a time where it’s women filling an executive board or leadership positions without question? Anyway, I’ll pause there, have listeners to ponder, and we’ll explore it more in the Women in It podcast.”

**DOUGLAS:** “Sarah, how about you?”

**SARAH:** “There were two areas that I really enjoyed. For the Future of IT piece, though I wasn’t the person that did all the interviews, actually hearing what others had done – Doug, you recorded Ricardo (Bartra, CIO of DHL) – listening to that interview afterwards and hearing his articulation and how he thinks about the industry around the future of IT and where it’s going right now and the challenges of the CIO, I think that was really eye-opening for me because I hadn’t really been exposed to individuals with that level of visibility across the industry. And just getting that perspective was just super interesting. And the stories that he came with, like each of us having a cell phone in our hands that is 150,000 times more than the computers that sent men to the moon, it was one of those things where it just hit me like, wow, this is so much bigger than any one of us.

The other one was to our Innovation Challenge team. It’s very strange when you come from a certain background and you come to Cisco and it’s a corporate company, but they’re very concerned about the culture and the workplace and the individuals responsible for keeping the company afloat basically. Keeping it going and the people that power the company, and how they really care about it. I always thought it’s not necessarily something that companies do because they care, it’s something they have to do because it’s a way of retaining their employee base, but honestly after talking to the people that do work in the innovation space, it really does matter and they’re very passionate about helping individuals learn about their strengths and their weaknesses, learning how to be collaborative across the industry, across the company with people they don’t know. It’s about challenging their intellect and it’s about making us better people as a whole. And I think that was something that was really enlightening for me. How about you, Doug?”

**DOUGLAS:** “What I think has been the most memorable so far has been when we had a chance to go into a computer lab that was going to be entirely powered down. So, Cisco has this annual shutdown. The last week and a half, two weeks of a given calendar, closes hundreds of buildings around the world, and specifically you have these very sophisticated computer labs that – assuming the lab managers want to sign up for this – they will power down all of those systems. And having myself worked in computer environments, the idea of shutting down these spaces and that equipment and putting things at risk because they might not come back up again... there’s nothing quite like that sound of killing the power to a piece of equipment or to a room, and we got to go right into the middle

**SARAH:** “Definitely, and one of the fun things about what we’re doing is we’re actually learning about the implications of all of these different topics are going to be – on the workforce, on the individual, on the company, and on the industries.”

“What do listeners have to look forward to?”

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**DOUGLAS:** “Conversations with people who are working in this enterprise IT organization in this major technology company, finding out what are the interesting tasks that they’re working on, what are the challenges that they’re coming up against, what do they love about their job, what do they think people should be aware of in terms of the innovative things that are being done. I think there are some great stories being told.”

**SABRINA:** “For podcasting what I think I’ve learned is it’s a very different way of telling a story, and what you see on paper is not always the same as when you get to hear people say it. And I’ve always enjoyed the spoken word. And I really enjoy audio books and plays and things that have an audio element to them because I think it just adds to the experience. When you’re just reading something you know you have your internal voice kind of narrating in your head, but when you actually get to hear it come to life and let your imagination just fill in the blank space, that’s a very powerful tool for any storyteller. And I think that’s one of the things that podcasting is really about is that element of having that rich experience – that rich audio experience – that you can’t really have anywhere else. You don’t really get it from any other kind of medium.”

**DOUGLAS:** “So, I think the key think that I’ve learned is, or really re-learned, is the value of the candid. And I knew this from the perspective of photography, that things are happening because they’re happening spontaneously always makes a more interesting picture than a posed photograph. The conversations that I’ve had for some of the episodes, times where I’ve just tried to capture ambient audio, to me have led to some of the most interesting ‘we are now right in the middle of it’ moments. I may go in thinking I really want to make sure I capture audio of this thing that’s happening so people understand what we’re in the middle of, but it has been some unexpected things that have happened or sounds that have been captured that to me have been the pleasant surprises and actually end up being the most powerful.”

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