

Hearing the Customer

An Interview with Adaire Fox-Martin, Member of the Executive Board, SAP

EDITORS' NOTE Adaire Fox-Martin is a member of the Executive Board of SAP SE, leading Global Customer Operations (GCO) in 71 countries. She is responsible for SAP's business across the globe with a resolute focus on the success of over 437,000 customers and over 14,000 GCO employees worldwide. Fox-Martin works closely with development, support, industry go-to-market and field execution leaders to ensure that SAP's customers benefit from an end-to-end, frictionless SAP experience.



Adaire Fox-Martin

Before serving on the Executive Board of SAP, she was President of SAP's business in Asia Pacific Japan (APJ), where she ran the company's multifunctional sales and operations organizations. Fox-Martin is a respected thought leader and a frequent speaker at seminars and conferences as well as being regularly featured and quoted in publications across multiple geographies as a passionate advocate of social entrepreneurship and workplace inclusivity and fulfillment. She founded SAP's One Billion Lives Intrapreneurship Program (1blives.com), an initiative to improve the lives of one billion people around the world by creating sustainable, income-generating ventures with social missions at the core of their businesses. She is a winner of the SAP Asia Pacific Japan (APJ) Distinguished Leader Award. In 2017 and 2018, she was named to Fortune magazine's Top 50 Most Powerful Women International list. Fox-Martin is a graduate of Ireland's prestigious Trinity College.

COMPANY BRIEF As the market leader in enterprise application software, SAP (sap.com) helps companies of all sizes and industries run better. From back office to boardroom, warehouse to storefront, and desktop to mobile device, SAP empowers people and organizations to work together more efficiently and use business insight more effectively to stay ahead of the competition. SAP applications and services enable more than 437,000 customers to operate profitably, adapt continuously, and grow sustainably. SAP is listed on several exchanges, including the Frankfurt Stock Exchange and NYSE.

SAP is consistently recognized for its industry leadership. What makes SAP so special and how do you define the SAP advantage?

We listen to our customers. Ever since our five founders started SAP, customers and their outcomes live at the center of everything we do. Being a software company with decades of experience does not happen by accident. We identify opportunity and as part of 70 percent of the world's transactions, we have a responsibility to be thoughtful and creative. Customers also want us to recognize their individual and unique challenges and experiences and we do. Our every effort is in service to our customers' building robust and complete solutions.

SAP is a purpose-driven company with a clear mission of "helping the world run better and improving people's lives." Will you highlight how SAP is delivering on its mission?

We spend a great deal of time at SAP talking about the experience and experience management. No matter if it is a simple transaction or major life event, how people feel at every point in time must be considered. A great outcome can be eclipsed by a terrible experience. This is certainly true for our customers, but also for our partners and for our team.

We need to account for the entire interaction. That is at the heart of experience management. It is the proof of caring and caring matters.

Will you discuss your role leading Global Customer Operations (GCO) for SAP and your key areas of focus?

My job gives me a truly global view and grants a rich and wide context for me personally. That context – seeing how challenges are approached in different markets and economic environments – enables me to be much more helpful and creative with my sales team and our customers.

The market and the customer will never stop changing. That fact stays perpetually front of mind. We have spent more than 45 years staying on our toes and anticipating for our customers. As the rate of change and the pace of business quickens, specific and macro awareness provides distinct advantages. Hedging and guessing are vestiges of another time. We provide the very best solutions. Since 2010, our revenue, profit, number of employees, and number of customers has more than doubled. While it took SAP 40 years to reach 20 million users, we are currently adding nearly 15 million new users every year.

What are the keys to SAP's strength in supporting its customers around the world and having its customers benefit from an end-to-end, frictionless SAP experience?

Customers don't come to SAP to buy tech. They come to buy outcomes and value. If the customer engagement is not sound, if there is any complexity or any confusion, it is unacceptable. Today, SAP maintains a very diverse portfolio of solutions.

Making strategic acquisitions also means we acquired existing policies and protocols. With any kind of sustained growth, you need

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to be conscious of how the evolving face of the company presents to the world and, of course, to the customers.

The outcome is a major determination of value, but so is the path that leads to the outcome. For example, there can be no one moment or point of demarcation when the sales piece ends, and the services and implementation begin. The entire experience must be one fluid motion and the “sale” is not complete until our customer derives meaningful business value.

SAP places a major focus on building a diverse and inclusive workforce. How critical is it for SAP to have diverse thoughts and experiences at the table when making business decisions?

Very. SAP is committed to diversity and inclusion as a strategic component of our ability to innovate, understand our customers, and maximize employee engagement and retention.

Diversity of experience, backgrounds and thought is the bedrock of all innovation. To that

is to help the world run better and improve people’s lives. Our work with social enterprises inside and outside SAP is the physical embodiment of that purpose.

I believe that doing well while doing good will remain an option only a little longer. It is quickly becoming a requirement because customers have started to demand it.

Consumer activism is drastically shifting buying patterns. In 2018, sustainable product sales reached more than \$128 billion and is expected to reach \$150 billion in 2021. Nielsen found that 90 percent of millennials are willing to pay more for eco-friendly and sustainable products.

Moreover, industry top talent demands that their employers support socially impactful endeavors and want to apply their skills to more than just the top and bottom lines of the company’s balance sheet.

In addition, investors are starting to measure it. According to BlackRock, within the next five years, all investors will measure a company’s impact on society, governance, and the environment to determine its worth. Today, investment that takes into account environmental and social issues already represents one in every four dollars invested in the U.S. and has risen to nearly \$23 trillion globally.

One Billion Lives has better protected over 23 million people from natural disasters, improved the results of cancer treatments for over 60 percent of the cancer population in India and now are gearing to eliminate child labor in cobalt mines, giving these kids the right to a normal childhood while providing viable alternatives for their families to make a living.

What advice do you offer to young people beginning their careers that are interested in being a part of the industry?

Stay curious. Read. Investigate things. Invest in continuous learning. I spent the early part of my career as a teacher, but I have remained a lifelong student. It makes life, and maybe me, a little more interesting.

Don’t be afraid to make a bet on yourself. If someone gives you a chance, take it. Chances are, from their vantage point, they see something in you that you may not see in yourself.

Whenever you feel hesitant to speak up or dive in, remember that you are not acting for your ego, but for your ideas and the impact they could have. ●

The One Billion Lives Intrapreneurship Program gives employees the permission, time-off, funding and mentorship to create sustainable businesses that have social impact at their core. An amazing aim with amazing engagement.

We can now listen digitally and get instantly smarter about the customers’ needs and use our worldwide reach to drive the desired outcome.

How is SAP helping customers realize greater business value through technology within their own unique environments?

First and foremost, the DNA of the entire company is gathered around customer success. We think about that specifically in the form of two simple questions: why and how. WHY would this customer move from where they are today to SAP and HOW do I get from where I am today, from my unique starting point, to where I need to be?

The customer needs value. SAP has a unique strength to define value through the data that the customers already possess. With SAP systems and our industry expertise, we have the ability to deliver innovation in end-to-end business processes. Experience Management drives that value even further.

end, SAP leads our industry in the practice of hiring without bias. We apply technology to eliminate bias in the hiring process.

Aside from the ethical need to include and represent all strata of our society in our organization equally, D&I is great for business. This is clear if you look at McKinsey’s reporting that companies with gender diverse management teams generate 40 percent higher operating margins.

You founded SAP’s One Billion Lives initiative. What was your vision for this effort and how has it progressed?

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It started in Asia, when I was President of SAP’s business for the region. SAP’s purpose