

Innovation is about learning to dream

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The President Of Xerox Innovation Group Discusses Her Methods And Workplace Diversity

Sophie Vandebroek has been with **Xerox** for 25 years, and in that time has seen tremendous change. The one-time elite **brand** went through a period in the woods, so to speak, and now **Vandebroek** (among others) have helped the company return to its innovative roots. As company's chief technology officer, and as the **President of Xerox Innovation Group**, she has put a lot of thought both into what has made the company special at its core and from its founding, while incorporating in new methods such as developing "dreaming sessions" in which **Xerox** employees and customers dream up new ideas without the constraints of what is possible today. She also indicates that innovators must have fun at work, as well as leading balanced lives.

Vandebroek is also one of several examples of female executives. It continues to be rare in technology companies to have CTOs and **innovation** heads who are women. **Vandebroek** has spearheaded diversity programs at the company, and she has employed a variety of creative methods to ensure that female technical leaders continue to be found and groomed for leadership. She discusses all the above and more herein.

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Peter High: You are the Chief Technology Officer of **Xerox**, as well as the President of the **Xerox Innovation Group**. Please provide a breakdown between the two sets of responsibilities you have.

Sophie Vandebroek: They are very complementary. As you might know, **Xerox** is a global corporation with 140,000 employees across the world. We are the largest corporation in business process services and document management services. About 60 percent of our revenue comes from business process outsourcing services in areas like healthcare, transportation, financial services, education, etc. 40 percent comes from our traditional printing, imaging, and publishing business, which continues to do very well.

In my role as Chief Technology Officer, I partner with the business group presidents, and with our CEO and senior team to constantly predict disruptive changes that will impact our clients. I help make sure that, as a business, we are positioned to provide the services to our clients that they need to successfully provide services to end users. As part of that, we look at the trends and define the investment portfolio together with our joint venture partner, Fuji **Xerox**, which is now more than fifty years old. We invest over a billion dollars in research, development, and engineering. We determine the right investment portfolio, what the right strategy is, and how to execute.

As the head of the **Xerox Innovation** Group, we have people that not only know what disruptive changes are coming, but they also create those new waves, whether that is in computing, machine learning, or the Internet of Everything. Within the labs around the globe, we envision the future together with our clients. We do a lot of co-**innovation** and co-creation to envision the future and make it a reality for our clients, the world, and our business. Those are the two roles.

High: You talked a bit about the creation of the strategy, as well as the interaction with customers, which are essential to developing the insights as to where **innovation** will be focused. Can you talk about some of those strategies and some of the things you briefly touched on – computing, the Internet of everything, and machine learning?

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