Alyana Versolatto

Good afternoon Susan, thank you so much for joining us. We’ve been looking forward to catching up with you as part of our Alumni Stories Series. So, our objective for this initiative is to showcase how our alumni are showing leadership in current roles and how they are being innovative throughout the pandemic. With the pandemic, it has created new opportunities and challenges, both in business and in our personal lives. At [the] School of Accounting and Finance (SAF), we want to capture stories that celebrate the leadership of our alumni during this time. In your role, you have the unique position of being a leader in sustainability, we’re really hoping to learn more about the industry and the future of it. So, thank you again.

Susan Uthayakumar

My pleasure to be here and thank you for the invite. It’s really great to connect with the Waterloo community again.

Alyana Versolatto

To begin, can you give an overview of your longstanding career with Schneider Electric, how you advanced in the company, led change, and focused on what you’re most passionate about?

Susan Uthayakumar

Absolutely, I joined Schneider about sixteen years ago in the U.S. At that time, I was really passionate about acquisition, which was my forte I would say, and Schneider was a really acquisitive company. So, I joined them in Chicago, which was, then, their head office to lead acquisition for North America. As I started to work on different Mergers & Acquisitions (M&A) files, I started to really understand the strategy of the company, which was then, moving from being an electric distribution company to a solution provider and I really liked the strategy that the company had. I decided that this is the company that I wanted to stay in for a long time. Therefore, from acquisition, I moved to the core of finance for the division, which is Mexico, Canada and US, and there I drove a lot of operational initiatives as well as the performance of the region itself and I got to really know the nuts and bolts of the business and with that I decided that I really needed to get my hands really into the business so I moved from the U.S. to Canada, which I had lived in before to become the CFO of Schneider Canada, I did that role for three years, really loved the operational sides of it, I got very involved with the partners. From there, I decided that I was at a point in my career where I was going to decide to either stay in finance, where I’ve only really been operating at that time for the past four years, or go back into the business because I come from an acquisition and strategy background. I decided to go into a business role, so I lead the energy management business for Schneider in Canada, which is all of the low voltage equipment and solution, though it had the engineering department, it had the marketing department, it had the sales department, it was the largest business unit for the country. So, it gave me the accountability to really drive revenue. So, the customer interaction, the technology challenge, I just loved it and decided to stay in the core business. From then, I went into - to run all of sales for Canada, then I became the CEO for Schneider Electric Canada. In January of this year, I took over the leadership of the global sustainability business unit, which is newly created in Schneider, bringing all the aspects of sustainability technology, to decarbonize our clients and for a long time, for me, sustainability has been a passion, so to be able to do that in my day-to-day job is really an incredible opportunity from my perspective.

Alyana Versolatto

That’s awesome to see your growth within the company.

Susan Uthayakumar

Thank you.