

## Julia Liuson

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Julia Liuson joined Microsoft as a developer straight out of college in 1992, now she is the Corporate Vice President of Visual Studio. As a female student of computer science and business, she is an inspirational software engineer for me. She has created a career that merges her education in computer engineering and career in software development with a future in software development management (En.wikipedia.org, 2018). Liuson shows that even for careers in the management of development, a grounding in software engineering is a vital part of her skill set.



This biography will focus both on her contributions to software engineering, and on the future of Microsoft's approach to software development that Liuson is leading. She is one of the many leaders in the technology world, that got their start as software engineers. Others include Steve Jobs, Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg. Their success and training as software engineers has been a key part in their continued growth and success in software development.

Liuson moved from China to the United States to attend the University of Washington. Growing up in China, her mother was an engineer while her father was a maths professor (Women in Tech Podcast, hosted by Espree Devora, 2018). Liuson began her software development career in 1992 a year after graduating from the University of Washington with a bachelor's degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering. Her first role at Microsoft was as a software developer, joining Microsoft's team for Access she started her software engineering career on database applications.

When Microsoft began to focus on creating a development environment to combine their various developer tool, Liuson joined the InterDev team. She was a software engineer on the original development team from the very beginning of its creation. Originally called 'Visual Basic for the Web', it was a tool of Visual Studio for web development and Microsoft's Java

environment. From her start as a developer, she became development lead for the project (Thurrott, 2018).

Liuson served as General Manager for Server and Tools business from Microsoft Shanghai office in China for two years while running engineering teams on both sides of the Pacific Ocean (En.wikipedia.org, 2018). She was then named General Manager of Visual Studio Business Applications, where she was responsible for enabling developers to easily build business applications on Microsoft server and service platforms

Now, Liuson is the corporate vice president for Visual Studio at Microsoft, effectively she is responsible for the firm's software. Managing the developer tools and services, including their programming languages and runtimes (Kohnstamm, 2018).

While this is essentially a management role, it is a role that Liuson has grown into from her early days as a developer, building projects that became core to Microsoft platform for developers. Now she continues the development of the same software from her new role. Some of the key changes she points out during her career include the changes in the development process from long term rigid planning to short term 18 months, broken down into 3 week sprint and re-evaluated on a 6 monthly basis. Planning is a key part of the process, but it's approached as a cycle (Liuson, 2018).

A key example of the changes in Microsoft's approach is their launch of Visual Studio Team System in 2005. Liuson was also a core member of the leadership team that led the successful development and launch of Visual Studio Team System. Liuson is responsible for bringing Microsoft into the realm of open source, launching the very first open source product.

"We talk now about how Microsoft is 'open by design' now. In fact the very first product that Microsoft open sourced came from my team and this was WiX [a Windows setup and installation engine] and this happened back in 2004. We were probably immature in terms of how to open source at that stage, but we wanted to try something out with that product," said Liuson.

Liuson has led Microsoft software away from the time when it was a closed environment. Developing only for the Windows platform, with Microsoft only applications and tools. They have adopted a much larger tolerance for allowing open source and outside development

compatibility. A key example of this, is the integration of their developer IDE Visual Studio Team System, with Github. A cross company collaboration that shows a focus on developers and improving software engineering.

“So what do I mean when I say ‘open by design’ you ask? If you think about Java, if you think about Chrome, if you think about Android... these are all supposed to be open source projects, but they tend to present huge chunks of code update [much in the same way that a proprietary project would]. You as a developer can submit bug fixes and various nuances, but the design process happens behind the corporate wall even though the final source code is out in the open. This is one definite approach that we decided NOT to do with .NET and Visual Studio Code as we moved to open source them. We want inclusive design meetings to be able to build the future of this technology stack with our developer community,” said Liuson.

In the constantly changing world of technology Microsoft is aiming to adapt to the open source world. Liuson is moving the projects that she started on as a developer to open source. Liuson was once a part of development teams that built projects, now she leads a developer community. Liuson and Microsoft are moving their software engineering approach into a new age, expanding the capabilities of Microsoft and its user beyond just the windows exclusive environment that it once was.

From Liuson’s start as a software engineer, to now leading the open source development of Microsoft she is an inspirational figure in the software development world. Beginning as a coder, and now working to enable Microsoft to cater to the new style of software engineering. She has also shown the success of developers when they move into management of developing. Management and measurement are things that the software development world has struggled with especially in large corporations. This can partially be attributed to management that does not understand the development process, and the work that engineers are doing.

Liuson is inspirational, in her career she has undertaken a variety of roles, all with the underpinning of a grounding in software engineering. She led the way for developers and software engineers in management. Liuson continues to have a huge impact on the world of software engineering, despite, in her own words, now only ‘dabbling’ in code. Leading Microsoft into a form of software engineering that reflects the best practise approaches to

engineering, all while providing software that is suited to software developers. From her unique position as a software engineer and manager, she can lead teams, understanding their operations as a developer, and understanding the need for versatile development software for developers. Julia Liuson is an inspiration to me, as a software engineer and now as a leading figure in Microsoft.

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