Software Engineering
Biography of an influential software engineer Julia Liuson

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1. Introduction

This essay is a biography about a software engineer which I found to be influential and inspiring. This essay is about Julia Liuson, a female software engineer at Microsoft. She is also the corporate vice president of visual studio.

Liuson oversees business and software development for Visual Studio and the .NET Framework, including the famous Visual Studio Code, all programming languages, used interfaces, team development/testing tools, and platform adoption tools.

Julia also played a central role in Microsoft's transition to supporting open source. She brought Microsoft back into the minds and hearts of developers across the industry.

Liuson has also been described as an inspiration for women in technology. She was the first woman promoted to Corporate Vice President of Development at Microsoft. She received the Asian American Executive of the Year award in 2013 and was inducted into the Women in Technology International Hall of Fame in 2019.

2. Julia Liuson

2.1 Early life

Julia, also known as Zhenglei, was born in Shanghai, China in 1970. She moved to Beijing to study elementary school and high school. She studied her undergraduate at the University of Washington and received a bachelor's degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering.

2.2 Work path

After graduated from university in 1992, she joined Microsoft directly. She started work as a software design engineer, working of Office clients, and various developer-oriented product during her tenure. Her initial roles were as a developer first on the Access team. Later she moved to Visual InterDev, the precursor to Visual Studio.

Although Julia has a variety of management position at Microsoft, she also held technical positions and described herself as a software developer in one of the interview.

In Microsoft, Julia served as development manager, and later as Partner Product Unit Manager for Visual Basic. She was then been called General Manager of Visual Studio Business Applications, which was responsible for enabling developers to easily build business applications on Microsoft server and service platforms.

Julia served as General Manager for Server and Tools business from Microsoft Shanghai office in China for over two years and running engineering teams in both China and the US.

Now, Julia as corporate vice president, developer division, she is still working in the frontline of Microsoft.

2.3 Effort on leading to open source

When Microsoft faces its fifth decade, it was time to make changes to compete with newer companies. Julia was at the forefront of its movements towards open source software. She led the effort to make the NET platform open source and cross platform. As she said, "… we wanted to empower every developer and every team to be successful, building whatever they want to build and running it anywhere they want to see it run".

To make it come true, Microsoft has made lots of big changes. In 2014, Microsoft launched mobile application finally allowing the free use of Office applications on mobile devices running on the operating systems of its archrivals Apple (iOS) and Google (Android). Previously, users had to subscribe to the apps for a fee.

At the end of 2014, Microsoft also decided to make its developer platform .NET core open source by publishing its entire source code on Github. Now, all the software engineers around the globe can develop new apps on the Microsoft platform without having to pay a fee. They only need to write the source code once before being able to use it across different platforms such as PC, Internet and mobile apps, cutting costs for the migration of software across platforms and devices.

2.4 Technical and business strategy

Julia leads the technical and business strategy, product development and engineering teams for Visual Studio, Visual Studio Code, and .NET Framework - including all programming languages, user interface, tools for building Azure, AI, mobile and Windows oriented applications.

Under her leadership, Visual Studio has grown to over seven million people using it every month, according to the data in 2019.

2.5 Role model for female engineers

Julia is a champion of women in STEM disciplines. She was the first woman that been promoted to corporate vice president of development at Microsoft. She also received the American Executive of the Year award and was inducted into the Women in Technology International Hall of Fame. She is one of the most successful technical women that we look up to. She mentioned her mom had an engineering degree. While she was going up, there was never the notion that girls cannot go into the STEM field. Her mom was a great role model for her and she wants to be the role model for others. Her colleague John Montgomery, the CVP, program management developer divisional Microsoft gave compliment like this, "She has advocated for women and inclusion in the industry, again, again and again. "

3 Opinion

Although Julia Liuson may not be known by everyone. Even I don't know her before doing research on her. I believe she is a truly influential engineer. Her efforts on leading open source in Microsoft to the community was great. And she has inspired lots of women in the field. Even she is vice president now, she still works in the team and sees herself as a software engineer.

I think it's great to have someone like Julia in the community, to be the model for everyone. Especially for myself, I found our early life was pretty similar and would like to do my best to follow her path.

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