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## Alumni Profile

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## Alumna wins recognition at Intel

# Tenacity key to success



Michelle Johnston-Holthaus '95

Just reading the resumé of Michelle Johnston-Holthaus '95 is intimidating. All those abbreviations and technical terms: CPSD, channel strategy, OEM, RPG... It is clear even to the uninitiated, however: she has had great success and responsibility at Intel Corp., the world's largest computer-chip maker.

Johnston-Holthaus joined Intel in 1996 as a program manager in Hillsboro. Since then, she has held a number of other positions, including product marketing engineer in the Outsource Equipment Manufacture platform solutions division and product line manager for desktop boards. As general manager of the Reseller Product Group, she led the boxed desktop and server business to record sales in 2004.

Since January, Johnston-Holthaus has been general manager of the Channel Platforms and Strategy Division. "My group takes Intel hardware, boxes it in a retail package and distributes it globally," she explained. The "channel" refers to computer builders that sell to smaller retailers.

"We talk with power supply

vendors, motherboard vendors and others to make sure the right products are available when a new Intel product is launched," Johnston-Holthaus said. "My job is to make sure products are ready and relevant for customers."

Modestly brushing aside comments about her meteoric rise, she said, "I've been lucky" and, "At Intel our titles change a lot and don't necessarily mean promotions."

But seriously. "I work really hard," she said. "I'm willing to dig in, maybe take the extra step. I've spent a lot of time trying to understand my business partners and their needs, and customer satisfaction is one of the highest rated items for me. I hold myself totally accountable: If I commit, I deliver."

Among her proudest accomplishments was receiving an Intel Achievement Award for managing a program to take back or replace a faulty chip. "It's the best award at Intel. Less than 1 percent of employees win it each year; it's based on getting something extraordinary done, so it's a big deal."

Last year, *VARBusiness* magazine named Johnston-Holthaus one of the 50 most powerful women in the channel. "I would have preferred 'influential' or something," she said. "The client I represent is huge in the channel, so I can see why they might use the word 'powerful.'"

The Dundee native had planned to attend college farther from home. She changed her mind a few days before school started. "Maybe it just felt like home," she said, insisting she got no pressure from her parents, Ron Johnston '68 and Kathryn (DeVore) Johnston '69. Twins followed their sister to Linfield: Marquilyn Shields '98 and Nicole Johnston '98.

Johnston-Holthaus said her

career in technical marketing is unrelated to her finance major. Still, Linfield prepared her for this role, she said. Johnston-Holthaus, who serves on Linfield's Business Advisory Council, noted there are many successful Linfield alumni at Intel.

"We have good problem-solving skills," she said. "Maybe better social skills. Linfield's interactive classes and group projects teach you how to work with peers. At Intel you can't achieve anything by yourself. It's a collective effort. By recognizing that teamwork environment, you can achieve what feels like the impossible."

Linfield's international opportunities also set her apart, she added: "The thing that probably jumped out the most on my resumé was the fact I had done a January Term business strategies course in Europe, and had studied in Thailand and Malaysia. Many more students have that today, but my potential boss was really surprised by that at the time."

Tom Rampone, vice president of Intel's Digital Enterprise Group, has known Johnston-Holthaus since she joined the company and has worked with her on projects. Her tenacity has impressed him: "Once she's signed up to a goal, she will move mountains to achieve it," he said. "She's grown into an excellent leader and manager. She spends tremendous energy mentoring others, providing coaching to her employees and supporting other women at Intel."

Outside of work, Johnston-Holthaus said she once was an avid horseback rider but has no time for it now. She devotes her scarce free time to a close-knit group of friends and her family: husband Bob and sons, Cole, 6, and Jack, 3.

—Beth Rogers Thompson