

Ijeoma Pelecanos: Building Relationships Through Lifelong Learning

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By Ronald Gordon

From research to corporate strategy to hardware development to marketing, Ijeoma Pelecanos has covered lots of ground in her 16 years with IBM.

Pelecanos holds a Ph.D. in chemical engineering from Carnegie Mellon University, and credits her diverse professional career to being a lifelong learner who puts care into establishing authentic relationships. “It’s important to bring a degree of value to your relationships that goes beyond merely touching base or growing your contact list,” she says. “Every relationship must be a two-way street.”





Pelecanos joined IBM Research out of graduate school where she worked on uncovering the failure mechanisms of microelectronic packaging materials used to cool microprocessors. After 6 years with IBM Research, she accepted an assignment in corporate strategy in what were emerging areas of the business at the time, including cloud and data analytics.

Next stop was IBM Systems Group, where Pelecanos led a team developing the IBM Z system and, after that, competitive assessments on storage products. Pelecanos is currently a program director in the Data & AI marketing organization where she is works on the Watson portfolio and cloud and cognitive solutions.

Now, with a baby at home, Pelecanos has been able to modify her work schedule to spend more quality time with her son. "I saw our son roll over for the first time the other day," she says. "I was so grateful to be able to be there, instead of hearing about it from someone at daycare."



Pelecanos at home with her infant son

How has Pelecanos managed to capitalize on so many different opportunities? “Ultimately, you must own your own career,” she says. “Of course, you need to do great work. But you also need to be curious, be a lifetime learner and a great communicator.”

That involves developing the emotional intelligence needed to listen and observe and communicate effectively. “That’s a core component of forging the types of authentic relationships that deliver mutual value, motivate teams, and ultimately lead to a successful career,” she says.

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