



Michelle Dombrowski-Sullivan, Managing Partner

PMP, MS, International Business & Leadership

People have described me as a “Swiss Army Knife” – a global business & technology executive, consultant, educator, entrepreneur, and professional coach, offering over 25 years of experience working with organizations ranging from fast-growing start-ups to international Fortune 10 companies. As an internal employee and consultant, these companies included Intel, Dow Corning, Dow Chemical, Chevron, Nike, DIRECTV, Xperi, First DataBank, Kaiser Permanente, Blue Shield, Providence Health, Curology, and The Honest Company. What I’d like to share below is my personal story; the journey of how I came to do this work; my “why.”

As an only child of teenage parents, I was primarily raised by my paternal Polish grandparents on a farm in Michigan. Since they were raised during the Great Depression, what I learned from them was determination, perseverance, self-reliance, resilience, and an appreciation for authentic relationships. We knew our neighbors. I started driving a tractor at the age of 10, and I wouldn’t change where or how I grew up, but I always had a curiosity for “what else was out there in the world.” I began dreaming of far-off lands and made it a goal to make that dream a reality. I have achieved that goal.

By the time I graduated from the University of Michigan where I studied Environmental, Earth, and Computer Science, I owned my first house and had four years of professional work experience with two Fortune 500 companies. The economy was strong, so I was well-positioned to choose my work and living destination. I chose Portland, Oregon. After taking final exams, I left Michigan by car that Thursday night and began my new job as a Sr. Software QA Engineer on Monday with a healthcare and pharmaceutical software company. I bought my second house shortly after. Was I becoming too responsible at such an early age? No. I knew only I could be the maker of my future. Although I was extremely committed to my career, I never sacrificed adventure and health. I’d pack my gym clothes, mountain bike, snowboard, surfboard, or skateboard in my car, and off with the corporate clothes at the end of the day.

Fast forward almost three decades later, I’ve been able to work and live and study in Mexico, Argentina, France, and Ireland. I completed my Master’s in International Business and Leadership, was able to work with several Fortune 500 companies and exciting start-ups, teams from dozens of countries, manage hundreds of employees, run entire companies, and even had a short stint as a professional downhill mountain biker.

A turning point for me was when I was working for Intel in 2004, and my husband accepted a position in Mexico. Without hesitation, I was given the green light to work remotely. Why not? My team was globally dispersed, and I was the manager. Not only did this prove to be quite a humbling and positive experience, this was when I realized how important flexibility and corporate culture was to me. I worked non-standard hours to accommodate multiple time zones, and the ability to have flexibility allowed me to have work-life alignment, and in turn, be self-

motivated and feeling valued. Flexibility did ≠ guilt, and the culture of Intel supported my situation.

Since my early life experiences, I had positive male role models – a father who had custody of me (in the 70s), a grandfather who got me up for school every morning and made breakfast for me until I went to college, and uncles who were like my big brothers. Since I did not have many female role models growing up, I've had to reach from within to find my voice.

Everything I experienced from my career in technology as an engineer, project manager, and later as an executive (GM, COO, CIO) – to competitive, extreme sports, and living abroad for 10 years - I was a minority. I didn't really think about it at the time; it was the only reality I knew. I wouldn't change my experiences; those experiences and reflections have brought me to the work I do today. I am confident that more organizations will authentically invest in hiring and, more importantly, retain a diverse workplace, including diversity of thought. A healthy culture is where people have the support and confidence to have a voice at the table. This requires believing in oneself to rise to their potential, the confidence to see the possible in the impossible, and involvement by everyone at all levels to foster a psychologically safe environment.

I founded Sullivan Global Consulting to help organizations implement high-performing, healthy cultures where employees truly have a voice and feel empowered and supported to take ownership of their potential. Where employees can bring their true and best selves to work.

To learn more about my professional background, visit my profile on [LinkedIn](#)