



Sloan Career Cornerstone Center

Profiles of Computer Scientists



Sandee Jeffers

**Group Leader
Southwest Research Institute
San Antonio, TX**

Education:

B.S. - Computer Science/Math, Trinity University
M.S. - Computer Science, University of Texas- San Antonio (UTSA)

Job Description:

Group leader for the software section, coordinating software development efforts and focusing on supporting space scientists in their studies.

Video Transcript 1:

"In my job now, I probably say it's probably around 50 percent management, 50 percent still I do technical work. I still sit at the terminal. I still write computer programs. I still design and develop software, but 50 percent of the time is personnel issues, managing, reviewing other people's work, reviewing documents, writing documents, whatever may be necessary to get the job done."

Video Transcript 2:

"It takes a routine. Getting the kids and the whole family in a routine and balancing out. When I'm at work I try to forget about home issues and concentrate on work. And there's a time to concentrate on home issues when I'm at home or on my lunch hour or whatever the case may be. And it really, I think, requires both parties - the husband and the wife - to work together as a team."

Interview:

Sandee Jeffers of the Southwest Research Institute faces two main challenges and they both involve people. As Group Leader for a section that develops software principally for space scientists, she spends fifty percent of her time managing, "taking care of personnel issues, reviewing other people's work, reviewing documents, writing documents, whatever may be necessary to get the job done."

At work she not only handles the concerns of her group members but also those of her clients. Jeffers explains, "One of the first phases of a project is preparing the requirements analysis." The problem she encounters is that "space scientists don't always know what they want." But

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until those requirements are established, "you really don't know how to direct efforts, how to split things up, how to start on the job and get the job done." So the biggest challenge at work has turned out not to be technical but human. She has had to develop the interpersonal skills to get "the requirements written down so that everybody understands them and everybody agrees that that really is what is needed." In the process, she has discovered some new things about herself: "I like dealing with people."

The second challenge Jeffers faces is balancing work and family life. With three children at home, including an infant, it is difficult to maintain a routine. Jeffers preserves her sanity by keeping the two sides of her life separate. "When I'm at work, I try to forget about home issues and concentrate on work. There's a time to concentrate on home issues when I'm at home or on my lunch hour." She feels fortunate that her employer allows people to have flexible hours whenever possible. As long as the work gets done, supervisors do not watch the clock. But sometimes it is not possible to be flexible, such as when "there's a meeting at eight o'clock that I need to be here for." For family life to succeed, Jeffers concludes, "it requires both parties, the husband and the wife, to work together as a team."

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