



Bell steps up to new competitive reality

Bell Canada is on the move – in more ways than one.

The communications giant launched a powerful new brand platform in a massive advertising campaign during the Beijing Olympics. It revamped its commitment to customer service with a promise of same day or next day service.

And over the next few months, about 6,500 employees will move into state-of-the-art, LEED-certified campus facilities in Toronto, Calgary and the new corporate headquarters on Nuns' Island in Montreal.



Maarika Paul – SVP, Real Estate & Corporate Responsibility

The campus initiative is all about form meeting function, says Maarika Paul, the executive in charge of ensuring the company doesn't miss a beat in making the moves.

"We operate in an intensely competitive industry where new technologies and new participants change the rules of the game virtually every day," says Maarika, Bell's Senior Vice President, Real Estate & Corporate Responsibility. "To compete, we recognized that we had to work differently at Bell, more creatively."

"Our goal as a company is to be recognized by customers as Canada's leading communications company. To get there, we need to constantly generate new ideas to serve clients better. And we need the agility to execute those ideas quickly."

"We also saw that where we worked was important, that we needed an environment that made it easy to rub shoulders so we could generate a critical mass of energy and innovation."

She said what sealed the deal for Bell was the experience of other companies where campus-based employees were significantly more productive and had greater job satisfaction.

"Our new campuses are purpose-built to encourage collaboration and idea sharing, not only in meetings, but informally over coffee in the lounges or even while colleagues from different functions work out side by side on treadmills in the exercise facilities."

The campus initiative is only one of the responsibilities that keep Maarika busy all day – and many evenings. Today's priority might be dealing with the impact of skyrocketing fuel costs for Bell's 12,000-vehicle fleet. Tomorrow it may be brainstorming ways to reduce Bell's carbon footprint as part of her accountability for environmental issues.



“We’re very proud, for instance, that last year Bell Conferencing Solutions supported almost three million teleconferences,” says Maarika. “That reduced greenhouse gas emissions by about the same as taking more than 400,000 mid-size cars off the road for a year. But we believe there is an opportunity to do much more of that, up and down our customers’ supply chains, so we keep looking for more ideas.”

It’s a long way from where she started her career as a chartered accountant in the Finance department. But that’s fine with Maarika. “I never set a career path for myself, just remained open to new opportunities as they arose.”

That approach has taken her many interesting places. She took on the challenge of running the hectic office of the CEO of BCE and Bell for several years, then became a senior leader of the company’s Corporate Communications function before moving to her current position.

Along the way, she has established herself as a results-oriented role model for younger women leaders. As executive sponsor of the Women@Bell network of 2,500 women managers, Maarika has been a resource for numerous women across the company. She has mentored many women both formally—through Mentor Match—and informally, providing guidance on career development and sharing her own experiences.

Outside of Bell, Maarika has been honoured with numerous community service awards, including the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation’s Philanthropist of the Year Award in 2006. Today, she sits on the executive committee of the Foundation’s Ride for a Cure, is on the board of The Montreal Children’s Hospital Foundation and the Communications Executive Committee of the 2008 Centraide Campaign. She was named to the Board of Canadian Women in Communications in May 2008.

“Any success I have had is a result of the hard work and commitment of many people. I try to understand people, what engages them. If you can figure that out you can count on a motivated team. And a motivated team can do pretty much anything together.”

