A Conversation with Dan Rosica
Executive Staff and Global Support Program Manager
Facilitated by Luke Auburn

Luke Auburn: You're listening to the RIT Professional Development Podcast Series. I'm your host, Luke Auburn. Today I'm jointed by RIT's executive staff and global support program manager, Dan Rosica. Dan joined RIT's Information and Technology Services organization in 2000 as manager of college support. In addition to his day job, he's an active member of several charitable organizations, serving as director for the William G. McGowan Charitable Fund and former director of the McGowan Gin Rosica Family Foundation. He's also a self-purported gadget guy and has made several appearances in local media talking about the latest in technology. Dan, thank you for joining us.

Dan Rosica: Great. Happy to be here.

Luke Auburn: They say that to be happy and in your career, you should pursue your passions. It seems like you've been able to do that. You've been able to find work that allows you to channel your fascination with technology. Have you always had technical jobs? How are you able to pinpoint what makes you happy and then pursue it?

Dan Rosica: I was never really a technology guy. I've had three careers in my life. The first one was working very much in restaurants and food service. And my second career was in construction and sales. But I always made a connection to the technology in those fields. I remember when I opened Chi Chi's here in Rochester. And the thing I love doing the most was programming the NCR cash registers. And we were using cassette tapes to store information, and I became the whiz on that. And I was a business major in college, so I never really had a technology background. I just enjoyed that technology side to it. I was the first in the restaurants to buy a word processor typewriter and getting information and storing it on disks. So you're absolutely right, I did enjoy the technology side to it. How I ended up here was actually my love for construction and in sales. And we would do jobs, heavy constructions jobs, and I was the guy with the camera taking instamatic shots of the jobs that we did. And instead of carrying around a book of photos, I learned how to take a photo and go down to Kinko's and get it set into type. And I would turn it into a promotional sheet, and I would go to the next customer and I would explain what I'm proposing. But I would show them the actual job I did actually at RIT or U of R or Strong Hospital, and I would show them things. And so Mackintosh computers started coming out and they had things called Thunder Scanners, where you'd take the ink cartridge off your printer and you would put a scanner in its replacement and you would roll the photo into the wheel of the printer and then it would scan it. And I could start doing my own scanning of images. So even in construction I fell in love with computers and scanning. And then with computers I started getting modems so I could connect other computers to other businesses. And from that, all of a sudden I had 25 modems where people were logging into my service. And someone had approached me and wanted to buy the construction business, and I ended up selling the business without having any other work to do but to play on my computers. And my 25 modems became 64 modems. And a buddy I was with said let's start an ISP, which I didn't even know what an ISP stood for at that time. And then all of a sudden, Easynet become a service and

Mac's Last Stand, or MLS online because a service and I found myself at the Sibley Tower building figuring out how to become an ISP and connecting computers. And we were the first signing people up and competing with America Online and Prodigy services. And from that, it was the right place at the right time and someone offered to buy the business from me. And at the same time, there was an opening at RIT. And so it was the right place at the right time with the love for technology.

Luke Auburn: So it sounds like you were trying to find new ways to do the same old business and that sort of passion for technology and curiosity sort of served you well.

Dan Rosica: And matter of fact, I do that today. I mean everything I do is "what's a better way to do it," but to use technology and use something interesting.

Luke Auburn: Fascinating. Earlier I mentioned some of the charitable organizations you're involved with. How do you think volunteering in charity work plays a role in professional development? How has it guided you and helped you along your path?

Dan Rosica: I think it does two things. One is what should you be doing as a person when it comes to giving back. And I think everybody needs to give back and participate in whatever community they're in. And the other thing is everybody needs to grow and get a little bit better. I think you have to be able to be involved in the community and you have to expose yourself to new situations. That allows you to grow. When you expose yourself to new situations, not only are you learning but all of a sudden new opportunities come in front of you. I wouldn't be here today if I wasn't volunteering or meeting or doing something with somebody. And that right place at the right time developed into an idea which developed into an application. So one's learning, one's giving back, and I think you've got to do both.

Luke Auburn: So would you say that's like the key to your networking? You seem to talk a lot about networking and the strength that that has. Do you have any secrets to share with people, or what's your general approach to networking?

Dan Rosica: I think it's don't be shy and care about the other person first. You know, don't be the one to talk the entire time. Ask questions and just listen. Just find out what that person's about, and then see if there's a way you've got something in common or you can help.

Luke Auburn: With so much changing in your field, how do you stay current with the latest in technology or the latest in business practices?

Dan Rosica: You know, people ask me that all the time. And they're like what's your secret, and there really isn't. There really isn't a secret. I love some constant sites that I go to. And Gadget I'm very much into reading at least every day. They seem to catch the new technology that's coming out. So if it's important, then Gadget will know that. And they've grown as a corporation. I think they're owned by AOL now. And so I follow that on a regular basis. Computer World I follow on a daily basis. And also NPR

Radio, especially the TED Radio Hour. I'm just a lover of that Monday morning drive in at 7 a.m. to catch the TED Radio Hour that played over the weekend. Or listening to NPR. There's something I'm going to learn. It's something that's going to come up in a conversation later in the day that I heard on NPR. So those are probably the three things I always make a point of keeping track of.

Luke Auburn: So I'm curious. You've made several local media appearances over the years. How did you establish those connections?

Dan Rosica: It was the right place at the right time. I joined a computer user group, a MUG, a Mac User Group and the Club Mac, I think it was called, and Apple Cider which is still around. And some of the Windows groups. And as I got involved, then I became an officer with the position. And then one guy was stepping down, a little shy guy named Nick Francesca. Nick and I became buddies, and then Nick had a spot open with Sound Bites. And one of his partners, Dave Ziebarth who works here on our campus now, has helped with the radio program. So be in the right place and the right time makes all the difference. Whenever we would get a call from the D&C or Steve Orr, it was because of some luncheon that I went to where I ran into him and introduced myself and he introduced and we just developed a friendship. So it really is the right place at the right time, but you've got to get out there and get involved.

Luke Auburn: So as a gadget guy, what's the latest piece of technology that has your attention?

Dan Rosica: Video. This is the era of video. Right now we're at a point where everybody's commanded by email, and that's how you communicate. And now we're starting to realize it's becoming such a major part of our life. Is there a better way to get things done? And I think using video conferencing, which has been around slowly for the last couple years. But Skype for business and the Blue Jeans service that we have on campus, and Cisco's WebEx service. All of these are just starting to be able to jump up. In order to look at an email and click on Luke's name, and then click on it and then I'm talking to Luke from a video standpoint. It's amazing how much more you can get done when you see a person and talk to him. But instead of people running around on campus or getting in their cars to go to meetings, now everybody's connected instantly. I talked to Dubai and our Croatia and Kosovo campuses almost on a daily basis. And it requires absolutely no effort to click on a button and we're there talking to each other, yet I've never been to any of those campuses. But we are very close friends and counterparts, and we work well together. And what normally gets done in an hour's time frame, we're able to do it in that half hour because you're seeing and looking at each other. You have each other's attention instead of being in a conference room where people may not be necessarily engaged in the meeting and they're checking their email on the side. When that camera's on you, you know that you've got to pay attention and all of a sudden work gets done. So I'm really fascinated with how video's going to work into the everyday life. Not the big conference rooms, but right in front of your iPad or iPhone, or your webcam, or a laptop and how to get things done instantly through video. I'm just fascinated with it.

Luke Auburn: That's really interesting. It seems like it just pulls in that extra level of interpersonal communication to make people more accountable or more engaged.

Dan Rosica: The question is what's going to happen to the camera that's going to be a tie tack? And then everything is going to be on video. So at what point is too much or just enough? I think from a quick conversation standpoint, video phone is where all of our communication will be as a constant. Not necessarily all of our email, but video communications will replace telephone communications.

Luke Auburn: My last question is how do you perceive technology impacting career development?

Dan Rosica: I think when I mentioned giving back to the community is something we all need to do. And we also need to be able to reach out and learn and expose ourselves. When it comes to career development, I think we all want to learn new things and we want to get better at it. And what was available ten years ago, where you had to take a class or get a book or spend time reaching for that kind of technology, that technology is available on our computer. So it's just a question of discipline and scheduling time and setting your goals. If you need to learn something technical, it's available. We have our Lynda service on campus and all the content that's available through CPD. And when it comes to books, we've got everything is available just a click away through Amazon services. I think the leadership here on campus is very keen when it comes to education and development, whether it's professional or personal development, crucial conversations or learning personalities. That's something that we can easily all share and learn and grow, and that's information's available instantly. You don't have to go way for a weekend or an off-site. Those are nice to do once in a while, but that information's all available to us instantly.

Luke Auburn: Dan, thank you. It's been a pleasure. That concludes another edition of the RIT Professional Development Podcast Series. For more insight on how you can develop your career, visit rit.edu/cpd.