Gerry Ward BSc MBCS

‘Being a BCS Organisational Membership Champion has been a very enjoyable experience and has given me a whole new set of skills beyond the responsibilities of my role’

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As Test Group Lead for Waitrose IT, Gerry Ward faced challenges involving uniting a new test group and establishing processes, procedures and metrics. Gerry’s newfound responsibilities made her the perfect choice as BCS Organisational Membership Champion at Waitrose.

Waitrose’s BCS Organisational Membership and Gerry’s appointment are helping establish best practice, raise the profile of her team, and enhance IT across the company. However, the advantages don’t end there. Gerry’s experiences in the position have also secured skills that will serve her well in her current role and forthcoming career.
THE MOTIVATION

In 1996, Gerry commenced a degree in commercial software development at the Waterford Institute of Technology in Ireland. For Gerry, there was no better time to pursue an education in this field. 'Computing was becoming increasingly fundamental to everyday life,' she explains. 'I was very interested in how it would shape our world.'

After successfully completing the degree, Gerry’s career embraced rewarding spells at Ericsson, Vodafone, O2 and her present role in Waitrose IT. ‘As a Test Group Lead, I enjoy the many challenges and changes we face,’ she says. ‘My responsibilities include developing test strategy, resourcing testing; and preparing, executing and reporting best practice.’

‘Since then, my role has evolved to include setting up a test group in our supply chain area. I had to bring testers together in one group, and establish testing processes and procedures that enable metrics. These metrics allow us to demonstrate a clear benefit for testing.’

Gerry’s new responsibilities enabled her to become a BCS Organisational Membership Champion at Waitrose, and gain from the many advantages membership provides.

THE JOURNEY

Gerry’s relationship with BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT began in 2013. ‘I completed an ISTQB (International Software Testing Qualifications Board) testing foundation course, and was given a year’s membership of BCS.’

According to Gerry, her appointment as a BCS Organisational Membership Champion made perfect sense: ‘Becoming a Champion was a great move. It’s provided opportunities I wouldn’t normally encounter in my daily role, such as addressing the Waitrose IT directorate, running ‘show and tell’ stands, and rolling out our membership across the company.’

Personal development aside, Gerry feels Waitrose’s partnership with BCS speaks volumes about the company’s commitment to IT. ‘For me, the membership means I’m affiliated with a globally recognised organisation and can make use of the institute’s many benefits.

‘However, just as importantly, Waitrose launching BCS Organisational Membership has revealed that the company truly values and recognises the skills of its IT partners. It also shows that Waitrose’s IT partners are willing to embrace new ideas and ways of learning, and share their experiences.’

THE BENEFITS

Gerry’s work promoting Waitrose’s partnership with BCS paid off straightaway, with almost half of their partners joining in just a few weeks. ‘It’s been a very enjoyable experience and given me a whole new set of skills beyond the responsibilities of my role.’

‘Working with BCS has given me an insight into how schemes work, allowed me to meet new people, and provided invaluable experience in communicating to a wider audience.’

These are all skill-broadening experiences Gerry feels will help in her current role and future career. Most of all, Gerry appreciates the opportunity to unite everyone under a common banner: ‘I’m enjoying everything about being a BCS Membership Champion at Waitrose. However, the best aspect has been gaining the chance to work with a great team of people within Waitrose and BCS.’

For anyone considering becoming a BCS Champion for an Organisational Membership scheme, Gerry has some final words of encouragement. ‘I believe BCS has so much to offer in terms of knowledge, education and skills, there are plenty of reasons to join. So, go for it and enjoy it. It’s a great experience and can only be beneficial to you in your role and career.’