



Jacqueline Serviss

Industrial Development Lead,
RMS Canada

Lockheed Martin

When transitioning, culture alignment is key

Jacqueline “Jackie” Serviss loved her job at the University of Waterloo. But in 2019, she wanted nothing more than to change jobs so she could move to Ottawa. Her husband had taken a position and moved there, and she was tired of managing a long-distance marriage.

Serviss had a history of working in the defense industry and in partnership development, so she kept her job search broad by

“THEY’RE AN INNOVATIVE COMPANY AND PARTNERSHIP IS A BIG PART OF THE CORPORATE CULTURE. I KNEW THAT FROM PARTNERING WITH THEM.”

considering defense-related or university-industry partnership positions in higher education. She is a networker by nature, and let colleagues know she wanted to relocate. Soon she started getting tips on open positions.

When her main industry contact at Lockheed Martin was retiring and sent her the description for his job, it opened the perfect door. Right away, she knew it was for her. “When you partner with an organization, you can get a feel for what it’s really like to work there by talking to the people. Lockheed Martin was the

best company I worked with,” she says. And the culture was right. “They’re an innovative company and partnership is a big part of the corporate culture. I knew that from partnering with them.”

Still, Serviss had some concerns about taking the plunge into industry. “There’s always a concern that you’re not going to be able to keep up with the pace,” she says. “The university lives at a slower pace with a shorter workday.” At Lockheed, she went from working 35 hours a week to working nine intense hours a day. “But,” she says, “I’ve stepped into it pretty well.”

Serviss discovered another big difference in industry: researchers work in teams, whereas university researchers are each “like their own little company.” University research support teams must tailor their services to each researcher’s needs. In contrast, industry research teams members are all working toward the same company goal. There is also more continuity in the industry setting because there’s no allegiance to an academic calendar.

Teams may thrive in industry, but innovation benefits from collegial conflict, too. “Naturally, people who live in different places and have different inputs are going to think a little differently, and that’s going to drive a little bit of conflict. It surprised me a bit, but it’s for the good of the company. The company and the culture of the company are such that they accept conflict as something that brings greater ideas to a program.”

It was also surprising to learn about the high level of research conducted in industry and the advanced technology available within the industry setting to conduct both fundamental and applied research. University-based research is not the only place where leading-edge discovery happens.

Serviss enjoys the global nature of Lockheed Martin. Her 13 team members working in Australia, Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East brief her every day. “Somebody knows something that’s going on in parts of the world all the time,” says Serviss. “We didn’t have that world view at the university. We knew the research across Canada, but you wouldn’t know the news in the rest of the world if you weren’t reading the news. Here I get it in my job regularly. And unlike at a university, this information is shared throughout the company for everybody to apply to the company’s shared goals.”

She is still learning something new every day in her industry job, but at a high level, the work is not very different from what it was in higher education. In UIDP terms, her primary transferable skill

You’re going to have a more successful move if you get along with the people and culture in the company when you get there.”

is engineering serendipity. She is a connector, and connectors often have to reconcile the differences between university and industry partners to help unlock the potential they have to work together. She predicts that any mid-career professional at a university can transfer skills to an industry setting.

When Serviss moved from higher education to industry, she gained a significant increase in salary. But there were tradeoffs. The university offered easy educational opportunities that are not readily available in industry. “Lockheed has a training culture, and they’ll support you in any training you want,” explains Serviss, “but it’s not the same as being able to ask an engineering researcher if I can sit in on a class.” She also lost the university’s generous defined benefit pension, although Lockheed Martin matches retirement contributions to a registered retirement savings plan (RRSP).

Job security is not an issue at Lockheed Martin, says Serviss. She acknowledges that it might be easier to terminate people

in industry, but says Lockheed Martin works to keep its people, even when closing offices.

Her only caveat regarding job security is that people earlier in their career might need to be more cautious about changing sectors than those closer to retirement. “If you have a young family and you’re worried about losing your job, staying at the university for a little while could give you security that you might not feel if you’re getting in industry.”

Serviss’s advice for a move from higher education to industry:

- **Leverage your network.** The people you work with regularly know your strengths. When a geographic move is imminent, tap into the widest reach by communicating your plans.
- **Learn about the industries you target before making a move.** “You’re going to have a more successful move if you get along with the people and culture in the company when you get there,” she says. “And I think that applies whether you’re young or old.”
- **Nurture your connection skills.** No matter where connectors work, “we’re still listening to potential partners,” says Serviss. “We’re still making decisions on which partners are going to be the best for the corporation. We’re still writing a lot about these partnerships, but in different formats.” [↔](#)

