

60 SECONDS

I thrive on change

Judi Hess has seen several industries transformed by technology. Now, as CEO of Copperleaf, she's helping asset management transform too.

Q: Can you describe your career path into asset management?

A: I started at MacDonald, Dettwiler and Associates (MDA), a defence and aerospace company in Vancouver, delivering systems to capture image data from polar orbiting spacecraft.

I've been focusing on business challenges from a technical perspective my entire career. It was a natural transition to apply that to the business of asset management.

Q: What does your current role involve?

A: As CEO of Copperleaf, I'm responsible to the board of directors. That means creating a vision for the company – and to sell that vision you have to understand the market, the people in it, your employees, everything. You might have a strategy, but how are you going to reach it? That's effectively a multi-constrained optimisation problem, and that's my background – my degree is in mathematics.

The most important thing that has to be led by the CEO is the culture. Everyone has to know how to operate, because you're not directing from a podium; you're working with people, giving them the tools they need to do the job.

Q: Can you point to any significant breakthroughs or achievements?

A: When you look at asset management today, that's where we're sitting: on a breakthrough, a transformation point where we're going to move to the next level of performance.

When I first started at Copperleaf, almost every client's response was "we don't have the data". Seven years later, it's "we have so much data we don't know what to do with it". We're now at a point where, even if a company doesn't yet have the right data in



“Creating a vision for the company ... that's effectively a multi-constrained optimisation problem”

the right form, they can see that they can work to make better use of it as time goes on – to start small and grow bigger.

A lot of humans don't like change, but I think I thrive on change. It's exciting to see what you can do: apply technology, use data, use people's expertise and get to the next level.

Q: What have been the highlights of your career so far?

A: At MDA, it was working with people all over the world, trying to solve technical problems. Working with satellite images back then, I couldn't have imagined that today we would have all these images from space available to everyone on our phones. The right technical solution can help solve problems the world is facing, and that excites me.

At Creo, the last company I worked for, we revolutionised the printing industry, transforming it from analogue to digital, removing tons of steps from the process and creating huge value for the client. It's really exciting seeing how technology can totally transform an industry.

Q: What have been your biggest challenges?

A: Things are moving very fast. It took some 40 years to get the radio to 50 million people; last year, Pokémon Go reached 50 million people in 19 days. Today you have to be very nimble, but working with big physical assets, that kind of transformation is difficult. It's been slower than I expected to adopt the idea of using data to make better decisions.

Q: What is the key to successful asset management?

A: Value is the key to everything. Whenever in my career I've looked at how we can create more value, that's been the key to success.

It's no different in asset management. The world understands now that asset management is not just about risk or reliability or condition, it's about the value that can be created.

So you start with value. Figure out how to realise the highest value from your assets, and you can propel your organisation towards its goals.