



Hard Work Pays Off for the First Woman to Win the Cisco Networking Academy NetRiders Competition in Venezuela

A college degree wasn't enough for Susana Contreras. In addition to a full course load in telecommunications engineering at the Universidad Católica Andrés Bello in Caracas, Venezuela, she also took intensive Cisco® Networking Academy® courses from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. every Saturday for 12 months.

“The know-how that I acquired at the Networking Academy and my work experience has made me an important asset to my team at Atento.

Susana Contreras,
Academy graduate

“It wasn't easy,” she admits. “It required dedication and effort for an entire year, practicing, reading, wondering, looking for the right answers. But all that effort was rewarded when I was recognized as the first woman to win the NetRiders competition in my country. Without hesitation, I can say it was worth it.”

As part of her degree program, Contreras was required to participate in an internship program. “I applied at Atento Venezuela, a leading provider of customer-relations management services delivered through multichannel contact centers,” she explains. “They hired me the same day. I found out later that one of the main reasons they chose me was because I was in the Cisco CCNA® program.” At the end of the internship, Atento offered Contreras a job as a networking analyst. After receiving her CCNA certification, she was promoted to a new role as a senior networking analyst. In her current position, Contreras leads a team of five people who design, maintain, and troubleshoot LAN and WAN connectivity and server platforms.

Contreras believes that the knowledge and abilities she gained through her Networking Academy training have enabled her to advance her career much more rapidly than people who haven't participated in the program.

NetRiders

The Venezuelan NetRiders competition is held in conjunction with an annual Academy Conference in Venezuela, which brings Networking Academy instructors, students, and administrators together for presentations, workshops, and other ICT-related events. The NetRiders contestants are chosen from networking academies throughout the country. During the demanding two-day competition, students are asked to solve a complex network design problem and a difficult troubleshooting problem. Their solutions are evaluated by a panel of judges consisting of Cisco sales engineers, instructors, and guest experts. The top three NetRiders contestants



Susana standing with Cisco VP Amy Christen outside the Cisco Store in San Jose

receive prizes, and the champion also wins a trip to Cisco's headquarters in San Jose, California.

"The most interesting aspect of the competition is the troubleshooting test," according to Contreras. "You find out how good you really are under pressure. I think I won because I studied and practiced extensively before I competed."

Contreras credits her Networking Academy instructors and the course materials delivered over the school network as factors that have contributed to her success. "I think the instructors are the most important part of the program," she says. "I was lucky to have two of the best, José Leitaó and Eduardo Munoz, who themselves won NetRiders awards in 2004 and 2005. They helped me a lot in preparing for the competition. In addition, all the resources that Cisco makes available on the Internet have been a huge advantage in helping me understand the material."

After winning the contest, Contreras spent several days at Cisco's headquarters as a guest of the Networking Academy. She was joined on the trip by Patricio Samaniego, the NetRiders champion from Ecuador. "I had heard a lot about this place, but nothing compares to being there to see all the work that's behind Cisco's quality equipment," Samaniego says. "If I could summarize my Networking Academy experience in one word, it would be 'motivation' because I benefited from every second of my study there and I know it will continue to help me succeed professionally." Since winning the competition, Samaniego has become a Networking Academy instructor.

When asked what advice she would give other woman about pursuing a career in ICT, Contreras replies, "I would say don't be afraid to choose a career that is most often thought of as something for men. It's actually very interesting work. You can see how the technology evolves and how it directly impacts the way we live. Don't be reluctant to learn and always try to do better."

As a concluding thought, Contreras considers the impact Cisco has had on her life. "My Networking Academy education not only furthered my career and increased my earnings," she states, "it gave me the opportunity to discover something I very much enjoy doing: networking."



Americas Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
San Jose, CA

Asia Pacific Headquarters
Cisco Systems (USA) Pte. Ltd.
Singapore

Europe Headquarters
Cisco Systems International BV
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Cisco has more than 200 offices worldwide. Addresses, phone numbers, and fax numbers are listed on the Cisco Website at www.cisco.com/go/offices.

©2008 Cisco Systems, Inc. All rights reserved. CCDE, CCVP, Cisco Eos, Cisco StadiumVision, the Cisco logo, DCE, and Welcome to the Human Network are trademarks; Changing the Way We Work, Live, Play, and Learn is a service mark; and Access Registrar, Aironet, AsyncOS, Bringing the Meeting To You, Catalyst, CCDA, CCDP, CCIE, CCIP, CCNA, CCNP, CCSP, Cisco, the Cisco Certified Internetwork Expert logo, Cisco IOS, Cisco Press, Cisco Systems, Cisco Systems Capital, the Cisco Systems logo, Cisco Unity, Collaboration Without Limitation, Enterprise/Solver, EtherChannel, EtherFast, EtherSwitch, Event Center, Fast Step, Follow Me Browsing, FormShare, GigaDrive, HomeLink, Internet Quotient, IOS, iPhone, IP/TV, iQ Expertise, the iQ logo, iQ Net Readiness Scorecard, iQuick Study, IronPort, the IronPort logo, LightStream, Linksys, MediaTone, MeetingPlace, MGX, Networkers, Networking Academy, Network Registrar, PCNow, PIX, PowerPanels, ProConnect, ScriptShare, SenderBase, SMARTnet, Spectrum Expert, StackWise, The Fastest Way to Increase Your Internet Quotient, TransPath, WebEx, and the WebEx logo are registered trademarks of Cisco Systems, Inc. and/or its affiliates in the United States and certain other countries.

All other trademarks mentioned in this document or Website are the property of their respective owners. The use of the word partner does not imply a partnership relationship between Cisco and any other company. (0801R)