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## General Profiles

## MEET TOSHIBA AMERICA BUSINESS SOLUTIONS' KERSTIN WOODS

written by CJ Cannata & Scott Cullen | January 15, 2020

**TABS new vice president of product and solution marketing discusses her first impressions of our industry, the skills she brings to her new employer, and her focus since joining the company.**

Last June, Kerstin Woods joined Toshiba America Business Systems (TABS) as vice president of product and solutions marketing. Since then, she's been acclimating herself to TABS and the imaging technology industry.

Before the holidays, we sat down with Woods at TABS headquarters in Irvine, California, to learn more about her, her role at TABS, and her thoughts about working in this industry.

Originally from the Evergreen area of Colorado, about 45 minutes from Denver, Woods moved to California after graduating from high school to attend Stanford University as a mechanical

engineering undergrad, minoring in psychology, before working on a combined engineering management/business degree. After Stanford, she joined a startup in the data storage industry during the dot-com boom. Even though she didn't know much about data storage at the time, her technical background was an asset for working in that industry. She then moved to another data storage provider which she described as "cloud before cloud was cool."

She was employee #24 in a company that grew to over 300 employees. There she expanded her responsibilities in product management and product marketing. After a brief consulting stint, she was hired by Sun Microsystems where she held various roles responsible for product management, product marketing, and channel marketing as well as managing an ISV team for software partners. After Sun was acquired by Oracle in 2009, she remained there before joining TABS.

*CR: Sounds like all your previous positions set you up nicely for your new role at TABS?*

**Woods:** That's one of the reasons Toshiba is a great fit for me because the goal is all about taking technology–hardware specifically–and putting it into context for customers.

*CR: How challenging was it when you first started at Toshiba?*

**Woods:** When I first joined, one of the pieces of homework I was given was a stack of The Cannata Reports. Those helped me quickly get up to speed on the pulse of the industry.

*CR: Other than spending your first six months reading The Cannata Report, what else have you been doing?*

**Woods:** I've been learning the products, industry, and people on my team. I have multi-function printers (MFPs), document solutions, barcode and point-of-sale (POS) printers, as well as digital signage. I have a great team that is seasoned and passionate. And, now that I have my sea legs under me, I'm doing a bit of a "learning tour," visiting with our field teams in their marketplaces as well as looking to identify dealers to visit. From my perspective, it's all about our three customers: our end users, our dealers, and our Toshiba Business Solutions (TBS) direct sales team. I want to understand them, I want to know what makes them tick. I want to know what we're doing right. I want to know what we're doing wrong. Because at the end of the day, if my team isn't adding value for them, we should be figuring out how to shift and add value.

*CR: Has anything been instrumental in changing your perception about either TABS or the industry from when you first started?*

**Woods:** For me, it's been validating. When you interview and hear about a company and talk to the executives and hear about their culture, you don't know if it's true. When speaking with the executive team, they are genuinely focused on doing the right thing for the right reasons, to do the right thing for customers. It's been impressive. The culture here is part of TABS' DNA – empowering our employees, caring about the people, and making sure that those people are focused on driving success for our TBS team, for our dealer teams, and our customers.

*CR: What's it been like working for a Japanese company?*

**Woods:** I've worked with Japanese companies in the past. It's a fascinating and complex dynamic, where understanding how to interact and be effective across so many miles with language gaps is critical. Our leadership team here does a great job of that and has wonderful longevity with the executive team in Japan so that when we speak, we're listened to. I know other Japanese companies tend to not necessarily take the U.S. perspective into account as

much, but we're very much heard and able to participate and influence.

*CR: How visible will you be at Toshiba's LEAD conference in May?*

**Woods:** We're framing the agenda as we speak. I hope to be quite visible because I want to make sure our dealers, as well as end-user customers on our customer focus day, understand that I'm listening, I care, and I want to engage. That ecosystem is critical. I want them to see a face and put a face with the name and know they can reach out and be heard by my organization.

*CR: We know it's still early but is there anything new planned for LEAD?*

**Woods:** I've been talking to Bill (Bill Melo, TABS' chief marketing executive) about some of the agenda and what if we dedicate a track to growth, not specific to Toshiba, but to grow as a business owner? What does that look like: how do you market better? do you understand it takes ten touches before a customer makes a decision? what are your business objectives and how can we do to help you achieve those?

*CR: Based on what you've read in The Cannata Report and what you're seeing and hearing at TABS and the industry, what's happening that gets you excited?*

**Woods:** It's a great time in the industry. In many ways, there's a misconception about it being a stagnant industry. I see it very much as a dynamic one. This technology is critical to companies and their productivity. Our job is to convey this by placing these technologies in context to show how they help solve organizations' day-to-day problems. I have a track record in data management, and this is at the core of a company's data management and information strategy. There are so many ways to make data accessible with MFPs serving as the information hub.

*CR: If we were to talk a year from now, what do you hope to have accomplished there?*

**Woods:** In the near term, I want to understand the needs of my key audiences and ecosystem while perhaps refining how we increase efficiencies. There's a tremendous amount of value we can add to help our customers grow through this culture focused on doing the right thing, empowering positive change and being responsive.

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