



# A First Lady of STEM

An interview with Kathy Chen, Former Managing Director of Twitter, China.

– By Jennifer Tattersall

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In March, the Chamber was delighted to welcome Kathy Chen to speak at the Inspirational Women Series, organised by the Women in Business committee.

Chen's career spans more than 23 years in IT strategy in China, during which time she has built a reputation of excellence in the Chinese technology industry. Establishing new businesses and implementing growth plans for leading companies such as Twitter, Microsoft and Cisco across Greater China, Chen has had a bird's eye view of the changing nature of China's relationship with technology and the country's impact on the global economy.

**Q: You have held senior positions with some of the world's biggest tech companies. How did you get where you are today?**

**A:** I was born in Shanghai, but I grew up in Beijing. I completed school within 10 years (it's normally a 12-year timeframe) and got accepted by a top engineering school majoring in Computer Science more than 20 years ago. I wanted to make an impact,

and I chose to study Computer Science at a time when it was unusual to do so. I was also fortunate to ride off China's economic reform. In Chinese thinking, it is like a monkey on the tree, growing with the tree.

**Q: What was drives you to succeed?**

**A:** In my 20 years working for multi-national IT companies like Microsoft and CISCO, my dream was to help these IT giants understand the Chinese business environment and succeed in China. Dreams evolve as times change, and during my last role at Twitter, I noticed the fast-growing desire for Chinese companies to develop business globally. My dream was to help them become more successful in the digital world.

**Q: Are there any inspirational people or mentors that helped you along the way?**

**A:** I feel blessed to have worked with some of the smartest people in the world. I can always learn from them, and was inspired by their great ideas.

**Q: What advice would you give to young professionals wanting a career in tech?**

**A:** Lifelong learning is important. Being in this ever-evolving industry forces me to continuously

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learn more, and better understand the latest tech trends. We need to be ready to receive new technologies. Fast learning and quick adaptability to new technologies is just vital. I also think it is important to have a dream, and to leverage your own strengths.

**Q: What digital trends do you foresee taking off in the region over the next few years?**

**A:** Twitter is a great platform, as it allows people from different cultures to communicate to one

another, and this helps bridge cultural gaps. Communication through story telling is powerful for brands, and with the rapid expansion in Internet bandwidth technologies, it is estimated that by the end of 2018, over 80% of Internet traffic will be video. How about we share our stories via video, like Instagram did with pictures?

*The Chamber would like to thank Barclays for their continued support and sponsorship of the series.* 

