

Following a father's footsteps to chart a new path



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As a child, Skye Colbert dreamed of being a journalist. She loved the idea of interacting with people and inspiring others with her prose. In high school, Skye shadowed her father, John, on his job as a Senior Network Applications Engineer for Lumen.

“My father taught me the fundamentals of tech and we would also do projects like building our own computers, setting up our own home internet, and even designing network topologies,” Skye said. “As a result, I began taking classes to further develop this passion.”

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After high school, Skye altered her career path and majored in computer systems networking and telecommunications. With graduation looming, John told his daughter about Lumen's College Connect program, which focuses on building future tech leaders.

“I've always wanted Skye to know what other career options are out there,” John said. “I feel it's my job to open doors to new opportunities for younger people. My advice to Skye has always been to be the steward of her career.”

Skye walked through the College Connect door her father opened, and it changed the course of her career. “I joined College Connect as a Solutions Support Associate after in-depth research on Lumen Technologies and its vision for the future,” Skye said. “The company also was looking to increase its diversity hires, which made me more eager to work there.”

Same company, different paths

Like her father, Skye always saw herself as an engineer. John, a Solution Architect in Strategic Sales, joined the company via the Level 3 acquisition in 2006. Through College Connect, the pair followed the same path. Then, Skye shifted to an Activation Channel Manager position in Channel Sales.

“I never thought I would be working in technical sales. I always saw myself as an engineer, then eventually working my way to becoming a director then CEO of a technology company,” Skye said. “In my current role as an Activation Channel Manager, I speak directly to our partners/customers more and also use my technical side when needed.”

Though their paths seldom cross now – both work in the Indirect Sector on different teams – John and Skye still stay closely connected at work. Skye found it challenging to be a young professional in a global company because many colleagues came in with years of experience. She has sought out mentors to help bridge that gap – and John is her first go-to.

“My father is my role model and I’m constantly impressed by his intelligence, courage and strength,” Skye said. “He continues to inspire me to be the best version of myself and reach my zenith.”

Legacy of giving back

John welcomes any chance to provide and receive career advice whenever he can. He mentors several Lumen employees and has a mentor of his own. “We never stop learning and it’s important to pass on knowledge whenever possible,” he said. “I’m a big believer in mentoring as a key educational component to anyone’s career growth.”

It’s another path Skye is walking along with her father. She sometimes struggles with learning the “tribal knowledge” of a big company. The solution, she says, is to find a great mentor and join communities such as employee resource groups (ERGs).

“My advice to Black graduates looking at a technology career is to find a mentor from different parts of the company. Learn from them and then pay it forward,” Skye said. “I want to inspire

more individuals who look like me. I want them to know that if I can do it, they can do it!

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