

# Early 2,000s | From Grassroots to Global

*How I grew from a kid staring at airplanes into a leader flying across continents*

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I launched my career at Ingersoll Rand (IR), traveling the world, working late nights, saying yes before I knew how, then figuring it out. I devoured books such as Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Training to Ulrich's HR Champions, and slowly started putting my own spin on things.

I was lucky to learn from giants early on. Lisa Esparza, my first boss, showed me what leadership really looked like. Marcey Uday-Riley, a trusted external consultant, taught me how to translate theory into impact. A few months into my tenure at IR, I proudly told someone, "I work for Lisa." Ingrid Joris, our Division VP of HR, overheard me. She pulled me aside and said, "You don't work for Lisa. You work with Lisa." That moment flipped a switch, and I realized I was a partner, not just a junior learner. My voice mattered. That shift gave me the courage to lead bold projects with senior leadership, like working with the VP of sales to integrate sales teams and build a custom sales training program that won the President's Award for business impact. That's when I got hooked on connecting HR to results. I not only designed the program to lead in a global matrix organization and delivered it all over the world, but I also learned how to lead as well.

IR was full of sharp executive partners who didn't just let me fail; they made space for me to grow. I grew into the vision others had for me, and eventually, the one I had for myself. At the time, this was the biggest growth spurt I had in my life.

I grew up in rural Illinois, lying in the grass, watching planes and wondering where they were headed. Wanting to know more about the world, in college I studied abroad in Costa Rica, but Ingersoll Rand gave me the answer. That Global Training & Development Manager role took me to 10+ countries: China, the Czech Republic, Spain, Belgium, and I built friendships in each one.

Those flights weren't just business trips; they were proof the kid who watched planes was now charting flight paths for companies, leaders, and careers.

Recently, at THE BIG CHRO Event, where I was a roundtable mentor, I learned IR was known as an "academy company." Looking back, I see why. I'm proud to be one of its graduates.