

SAN DIEGO'S TOP INFLUENTIALS



Navrina Singh

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What makes an idea good? Ask Navrina Singh, the head of Qualcomm's global innovation program ImpaQt.

"For me, it's not so much about a good idea. It's about the vision and the person behind it," said Singh, who is also director of product management for Qualcomm Labs. "You might have something in your head, but if you don't act on it and take it to the next level it's worth nothing.

"For us at Qualcomm, an idea literally has the power to change the world. What I get to do every day is something I love: work with our employee base all over the world, hear their ideas and give them tools and creative environments to turn these ideas into real products."

Singh, who joined Qualcomm in 2004, is also closely involved with the company's development of emerging technologies and their applications across a wide spectrum, such as health care.

"Health care is going to be a completely different environment because of the technology that we are bringing into play," Singh said. "With technology we have the ability to connect any person to hospitals, insurance companies, health-care providers, painlessly."

Health care could be revolutionized by what she believes is the next major emerging area: robotics. "Robotics is at a breakthrough point," she said, alluding to its advancement in, among other

areas, surgical procedures.

Then there's education, where Singh said technological environments can facilitate learning, help students manage content and become more productive and successful. Of course, making the technologies available to students around the globe in drastically different socioeconomic conditions is a challenge.

But Singh is enthusiastic about Qualcomm's Wireless Reach initiative, which is bringing mobile technologies to underserved places worldwide. "There are communities in this world who barely have money to do anything. You can make their lives better by providing technology," Singh said.

Through an in-house organization she founded nine years ago, Qualcomm Women in Science and Engineering, or QWISE, Singh is also enriching the lives and careers of women in technology at the company. The group began with 17 women. "Now we are 1,800 members strong all over the world, with 12

chapters," Singh said with pride. "It's become an important aspect of the future workforce for Qualcomm, because we are realizing more and more the diversity that is needed to really march confidently into the 21st century. We have a lot of commitment from the company to really pay more attention to diversity and inclusion."

Through outreach programs, Singh is bringing the message to middle-school girls and young women in universities that they should not be "scared" by engineering and technology, that they, too, can be innovators and difference makers. She believes in and makes time for mentoring. "I talk to all these girls in San Diego and I realize that there's a fear that technology and engineering are beyond their reach." Singh, a role model, shows them that it is not.

The lesson is even working at home, where Singh's 7-month-old daughter, Ziya, has her own lab and already knows how to use a smartphone.