

**Mary Laird Duchi**  
**Vice President, Operations and Systems Services**  
**Battelle**

*Mary Laird Duchi is responsible for a team of more than 450 professionals, in six interdependent groups, who support the mission and strategy of Battelle. Duchi manages a \$50 million annual operating budget, including Battelle's facilities, security, emergency management, information/knowledge management and environment, safety, health, and quality.*

*Duchi joined Battelle as a researcher in the technology and resource economics department, then moved on to the section manager of the systems and strategic planning section, and took the role of manager in the NASA sector before becoming vice president of operations and system services.*

*Battelle is an international science and technology enterprise that explores emerging areas of science; develops and commercializes technology and manages laboratories for customers.*

**You oversee more than 400 professionals at Battelle. How do you manage to “hear” everyone? It’s important to me that everyone is valued at Battelle.** I’m one of the original members of the Battelle Diversity Leadership Council: a working group that collaborates to implement strategies and tactics to develop and support a diverse, inclusive workforce. I’m passionate about respecting and valuing individual differences. Being a part of this council has allowed me to grow in understanding people and their gifts. **You’ve been at Battelle for more than 32 years. How did it all begin and how have your roles evolved?** I went to The Ohio State University for my MBA. One day, I asked a professor about Battelle. He introduced me to the facility, and I started out working on socioeconomic impact studies for the organization. Over the years, I’ve taken on many roles. I moved into publicly funded technology transfer and received the opportunity to work with NASA and the EPA. I continued to grow into managerial positions, allowing me to build perspective on the different styles of leadership. **Explain your current role.** It was about five years ago when I was asked if I would like to change direction at Battelle. When I transitioned into overseeing operations and systems services, I instantly realized, “This is what I want to do.” Prior to this role, I was primarily involved in research and managing research staff. This job is really about ensuring that we provide an environment for Battelle’s cutting-edge research. I love what I do because I have the opportunity to problem-solve, network across the organization, and help make our staff feel engaged rather than behind the scenes. I help to build forums and conversations where staff members can feel valued and respected. It’s very important to me that my staff is respected. **What have you learned about yourself along the way?** I’ve learned that when I can help someone succeed or come to a revelation in their career, that is what makes me feel good. It’s not about me, it’s about helping others. **What are you passionate about and how do you incorporate that passion into being an effective leader?** I’m passionate about problem-solving. I thrive on being able to bring people together as a team to come to a solution together. Generating new ideas and concepts in a team meeting gives me a lot of energy. I love being able to leverage thinking within a group setting. **What’s next for you?** New projects would be one thing. Secondly, technologies and solutions we’re involved in continue to change; that’s always “what’s next” for me and the world that I operate in. Lastly, it’s always exciting to see what’s next for my team. I enjoy growing with them. **What advice do you give to your staff as they grow?** I encourage them to constantly network. I think that is the main reason I got this job. You need to know how to network within the company as well as within the community. I also encourage them to be brave enough to take on a challenge. And most importantly, I encourage them to ask for help. Look for mentors and surround yourself with people who believe in you and challenge you every day. It’s advice for them, but it’s also advice that I keep in mind for myself, too. You’re never so engrained in your career that you can’t continue to evolve and learn new ways of doing things. **Taking care of people is a passion of yours.** I’m a breast cancer survivor and I’ve been in remission for 12 years. Honestly, it was a positive experience because it changed my perspective on life. While I was struggling with the disease, so many people showed me the capacity to care for another human being. It made me realize how important people are and will always be to me.

