

By [Kelly Franznick](#)

Last week Microsoft announced a major company-wide reorganization. Through this restructuring, Microsoft is hoping to streamline operations and break down the organizational silos that hamper innovation. To bring this vision to fruition, Microsoft named a number of individuals to key leadership roles, including the promotion of [Julie Larson-Green](#) to head up all of Microsoft's hardware devices, games, music and entertainment.

The ascendance of Green to this prominent role is notable for many reasons. But the one thing that stood out to me is that like [Marisa Mayer](#), the UX-oriented engineer and designer who oversaw some of Google's most successful products, Larson-Green views the world of technology products and services principally through a lens of the end-user.

A 20-year Microsoft veteran, Larson-Green was initially rejected by the software giant when she first applied for a job and instead began her career responding to angry customer tech calls on behalf of Aldus. This legacy of putting usability at the forefront has been a constant throughout her career – whether as a software developer, group program manager, and particularly now as a high-ranking corporate executive.

Mayer\_and\_Green2

As Ryan Tate noted in a recent [WIRED profile of Larson-Green](#):

Larson-Green was finally inside the borg, where she found she had a penchant for developing the **more humane side of computing, the user interfaces that bridge low-level computer code to actual people trying to complete real-world tasks.**

While Mayer has only been at the helm of Yahoo! for a year now, her immediate priorities were focused squarely on improving the user experience of key Yahoo properties, including the Yahoo! homepage, Flickr, and Mail. Though it's still early, these efforts appear to be helping Yahoo! trend in the right direction in terms of site traffic and the length of time people are spending on the site (not to mention Yahoo's stock price!).

As for Microsoft, the decision to elevate Green to head of all products demonstrates a commitment to emphasizing user experience over feature deployment. This is perhaps best articulated in the WIRED profile where Larson-Green talks about the value of *empathy* and how her experience of really listening and responding to frustrated users continues to inform her perspective on product development.

This idea that good user experiences embrace natural human behavior is something all of us here at Blink think about on a daily basis. It's not just about creating products that work well, but also about building an enduring emotional connection between users and their environment. With UX-minded visionaries like Larson-Green and Mayer at the helm guiding the next generation of products, users of both companies should have a lot to look forward to.