

Influential Women 2026 Honors Ria Rodriguez Richardson: Executive Advocate Bringing Discipline & Humanity To SaaS

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- After 31 years across enterprise technology, Richardson is challenging CEOs, CFOs, and business leaders to rethink a deceptively simple question: Who is sitting on your side of the table before you sign your Software-as-a-Service or SAAS License Contracts?

OCEAN SHORES, Wash. — Long before Ria Rodriguez Richardson learned the language of enterprise software, commercial governance, or contract negotiation, she learned something much simpler:

Someone I love needs me here.

Growing up in the Philippines as an only child, Richardson watched her mother navigate serious health challenges. The experience left her with an instinct that quietly followed her through more than three decades in business: when someone is carrying something difficult, don't just stand across from them. Sit beside them.

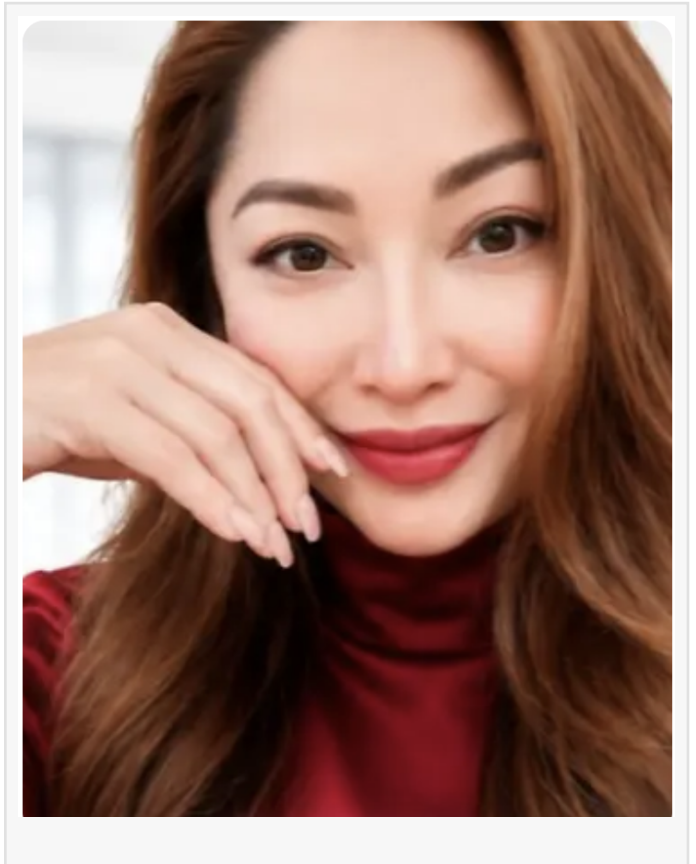
Today, the people sitting beside Richardson are often CEOs, CFOs, CIOs, founders, business owners, and finance leaders facing consequential enterprise technology decisions.

And the questions have changed considerably.

What are we actually buying?

What are we actually using?

What happens at renewal?



Which contractual protections will matter two years from now?

And are we still funding yesterday's software decisions simply because nobody stopped to challenge them?

Richardson has built a career around asking those questions before organizations sign.

An Influential Women 2026 honoree, Richardson is a seasoned enterprise technology sales and commercial leader whose 31-year career has included experience across IBM, EMC, Microsoft, Oracle, and Oracle NetSuite. Her work today centers on independent customer-side commercial advocacy, with particular depth in Oracle NetSuite licensing, procurement, contract optimization, and renewal strategy.

Her philosophy is straightforward:

"Your software vendor has people protecting its economics. Business leaders deserve someone protecting the quality of their decision."

From Selling Technology to Challenging the Decision Behind It

Richardson's perspective is unusual because she has spent significant portions of her career on the technology vendor and sales side.

She understands how enterprise software is positioned, sold, and commercially negotiated because she has lived inside that world herself.

Today, she brings that experience to the opposite side of the table.

Working with executive and finance teams, Richardson examines software licensing structures, users, modules, pricing, contractual protections, renewal exposure, and commercial assumptions to help organizations determine whether what they are purchasing—or continuing to renew—still reflects what the business actually needs.

One of her favorite reminders to executives is equally simple:

"You inherited the contract. You don't have to inherit the decision."

That distinction can be particularly relevant to CFOs joining new organizations, private-equity-backed companies navigating leadership or ownership changes, and businesses that have accumulated software decisions through years of growth.

Richardson encourages executives to treat renewal not as an administrative event, but as a new investment decision.

Her framework asks leaders to examine the journey from:

BOUGHT → ADOPTED → VALUE → RENEW?

Because, as Richardson frequently reminds executives, a compelling discount does not automatically make something a good investment.

“A beautiful discount on something the business doesn’t need is still waste.”

Commercial Discipline Meets Operational Reality

Richardson’s work also reflects a broader conviction: negotiating an attractive contract is only part of the equation.

Organizations must ultimately convert the technology they purchase into operating value.

Through her leadership work with Etter+Ramli as Vice-President – License Management for SAAS Procurement & CFO Support and Client-Side Advocacy, Richardson works within an ecosystem of Oracle NetSuite specialists supporting organizations beyond the commercial decision itself. This allows conversations about licensing and contract structure to connect with larger questions around how organizations operate and derive value from their NetSuite environments.

For Richardson, these disciplines belong together.

Commercial discipline asks whether the organization bought wisely.

Operational discipline asks whether the organization is turning that investment into value.

The objective is not simply to negotiate harder.

It is to decide better.

The Woman Behind the Contracts

Yet Richardson’s professional identity is not built solely around spreadsheets, software, or negotiation.

Clients and colleagues frequently encounter another side of her: the relationship builder.

She believes that complex business decisions improve when people feel safe enough to say what they actually do not know.

That might happen across a boardroom table.

It might happen over coffee.

And occasionally, it might happen over a Filipino meal Richardson has personally helped prepare for clients, colleagues and friends.

Richardson has spent years cultivating relationships with executives around the world, but she resists the idea that professionalism requires removing humanity from business.

Quite the opposite.

“The higher people rise, the more everyone assumes they already have the answer. Sometimes the most valuable thing you can give an executive is a place where they can safely say, ‘I’m not sure. Let’s examine this.’”

That belief has begun to take on a symbolic meaning in Richardson’s work:

the chair beside.

Everybody sees the executive expected to make the decision.

Richardson is interested in who sits beside that executive when the decision becomes difficult.

“Before I knew the word advocacy, I knew what it meant to sit beside someone,” Richardson says. “Her name was Mama.”

A Career That Began With Responsibility

Richardson began her corporate career in the Philippines at 19.

Her education in Economics and Media Journalism gave her an unusual combination of analytical and communication skills, while early mentors gave ambitious young professionals opportunities to lead.

She would go on to build a career spanning telecommunications and some of the world’s most recognized enterprise technology organizations, working across sales, leadership, channels and commercial strategy.

But Richardson says that what may have looked like relentless ambition from the outside was often motivated by something more personal.

She wanted to build a life that allowed her to care for her parents—and particularly to give her mother experiences while there was still time to share them.

That perspective continues to influence the way Richardson thinks about achievement today.

Professional success matters.

So does remembering to live inside the life that success creates.

Advice to the Next Generation: Build the Career, But Protect the Person

For young professionals—and particularly young women—Richardson's message is not simply to climb faster.

It is to become excellent without surrendering the qualities that made them worth trusting in the first place.

Learn your craft.

Know your numbers.

Ask difficult questions.

Keep your word.

Protect your reputation.

And remember the humans sitting around the table.

Richardson believes careers are built not only through promotions and accomplishments, but through thousands of small moments in which people decide whether they can trust someone's judgment, intentions, and character.

"Eventually people may forget the presentation," Richardson says. "But they tend to remember how safe they felt telling you the truth."

Looking Ahead

As enterprise technology becomes increasingly complex—with SaaS portfolios, AI investments, cloud platforms and rapidly evolving commercial models competing for corporate budgets—Richardson believes executive advocacy and disciplined technology decision-making will become increasingly important.

Her interests extend beyond any single software platform toward a broader question:

How can business leaders make consequential technology decisions with greater clarity, commercial discipline and confidence?

It is a question Richardson expects to explore through executive advisory work, education,

thought leadership and future projects connecting business leadership with the human stories behind it.

But underneath the technology, titles and contracts, her philosophy remains remarkably close to the lesson she learned as a daughter.

When the decision matters, somebody should be sitting on your side of the table.

And sometimes leadership begins with the simplest thought of all:

Someone I care about needs me here.

About Ria Rodriguez Richardson

Ria Rodriguez Richardson is an enterprise technology commercial leader and Influential Women 2026 honoree with more than 31 years of experience across global sales, SaaS, enterprise software, licensing, and executive commercial strategy. Her career has included experience across IBM, EMC, Microsoft, Oracle, and Oracle NetSuite. Today, her work focuses on helping executives examine consequential software purchasing and renewal decisions through independent customer-side commercial advocacy, contract strategy, and commercial governance.

Originally from the Philippines and now based in Washington State and with another residence in Las Vegas, Nevada, Richardson combines analytical rigor with a deeply relationship-driven approach to leadership. Her work and thought leadership explore the intersection of technology investment, executive decision-making, advocacy, trust, and the human relationships behind business.

Learn More about Ria Rodriguez Richardson:

Through her Influential Women profile: <https://influentialwomen.com/connect/ria-richardson>

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