

# **The Future of Women in Industrial Distribution and Manufacturing by Lori Mata**

## **Introducing Lori Mata (00:00-01:35)**

Next, we would like to bring up Lori Mata. She's the director of industrial distribution of North America at Saint Gobain. She's been with this company for over 25 years and has held various positions with increasing responsibility and customer service sales, national accounts and industrial distribution building partnerships for growth.

She strives to mentor her employees to see business from a broader view and become great leaders. She has spread her influence in the Dallas Fort Worth area and her topic today will be the future of women in the industry for distribution on a fast rate. So Lori, Welcome to the stage. Thank You so much for coming in.

## **Getting into a male dominated business (01:35-02:13)**

Thank you, Tim. Today we're talking about the future of women and industrial distribution and manufacturing. We all know that the industrial supply channel has long been a male dominated business. I skipped changing slowly, and I'm gonna discuss how we can help the women in our industry.

There are still biases. We have women and management roles in marketing, accounting and HR, But women in more technical fields like engineering and antique and even manufacturing management roles for small businesses are definitely lesser. Hiring managers sometimes assume that women don't want to travel or women with small children wouldn't work the long hours that are needed.

We need to talk with the potential candidates and determine their interests level before we omit them from any list attributing it to their family duties. We need to notice that the acceptance of the female customer base world has changed in the last few years. Wait 10 years ago when I would walk into a customer's manufacturing plant in the South. All work would stop, people would stare. Women would be escorted back to your meeting, and that doesn't happen now.

## **A lot more commonplace now: Spot the evolution (02:14-02:55)**

Now, as we walk in, it's not even noticed which is just wonderful and I think one reason is because there are some operations managers and female engineers on the

floor, so it's more commonplace now.

Despite making up more than half of all workers, we're gonna count for less than one third of manufacturing roles, and there's even less on the management front. There's still about half a million jobs opening manufacturing right now in a study by Deloitte and then the manufacturing institute finds more than half of those jobs go into the field unless we attract educated individuals for them. Next thing is about retaining the workers.

### **Change the thinking (02:56-03:59)**

It is crucial to retain workers and to do this, we need to change the way that we think about women and manufacturing. Because definitely something that could help. We need to get them the qualifications and skills to help the least job. Put simply the manufacturing industries and the state of reinvention. Then you need to look at educating and empowering women. This will be crucial for the future of industry. For these reasons, I'm really encouraged to see the change which happens more wrapped up in the next few years, actually, and first, it's the rate of retirement, which is incredible.

In the U. S last year single bond. My company had 32 retirements and sales, engineering and product meant that's a ton of experience walking out the door. Luckily, we were prepared for it, but it's also an opportunity for the baby boomers. We've got great ideas and the industry will be leaving and philosophies will change with the management, you know.

There's also the talent pool. Now we're women who outnumber males as probable candidates, and this is from steadily for the last 15 years.

### **Advocacy is important (04:00-05:11)**

Advocacy is another important point. I believe that the industrial community needs to advocate for women more openly. I know many don't know where to start. They would like first for you to acknowledge that there is indeed a place for them. It is important for you to know what to say before you can speak up. You have to listen. Ask them what you know is stopping them from ghosting in their careers, and then you need to try to change and you break lots of thinking. If you're in a hiring position manager, bring in more women so as to add more diversity to your organization.

Outback favor when you see it because there is still some out there. You know, in the next few years, I think that there's a lot of distributors that have daughters that could be stepping into the owner or president's role. Um, we need to think differently. The best management candidates maybe women haven't always been considered.

We need to provide opportunities and offer new and intermediate level females. Some leadership training. Now there are many summits out there that have education sessions, their virtual or Harvard, and the cost was very low, so it's something that most distributor's studio Awareness.

### **Creating awareness (05:12-06:20)**

I believe the key to more women in the industrial business is creating awareness. There's career opportunities for women at all levels.

Universities such as Texas A & M Nebraska are examples of this. These are all schools that have programs and industrial distribution, and these are people who actually went to school to be in this distance.

I didn't think about going to college and thinking, Oh, I want to manage distributors is still grinding wheels when I grow up, and so I think that many assembled across this business on it's been massive stuff. Most distributors and manufacturers. I speak with her, having trouble finding a suitable absence of any gender. The best way to get better access to these top students is to volunteer to speak with glasses.

Not your business.

### **Bring in early career employees and experts too (06:21-08:01)**

I speak twice a year at a local university to do international business, and in turn, a Professor comes and speaks at some women's groups where I need them to talk. My company has 10 career fairs around the country each semester, and there's always someone from HR there, But we began bringing someone from sales or engineering as well to prompt questions and see if there's any answers. Is there anything you're curious about?

I suggest you bring some early career employees to the fair with you because I think it's important for the students to see that there's people who look like them. That worked for your company, not helped them. Give a lot of time to consideration. You know the business.

I have a friend. That's the next pan and she mentioned to me that things are different now. But she looks for before she goes to an interview or when she's asked to interview anywhere she considers in the interview, and she looks at their website, she reads their value statement and goes to see the antiquated, she says. If it is you think you're talking to would be the first turn off.

She looks like the leadership team's images, and she sees it. The representative of diversity

And she looks at the online presence, which we talked about. She looks at length on Facebook and she likes the soup. It's a current drought right? If they're a publicly traded company, she looks at their finances to see if they're growing. This surprised

me when she told me this is not anything I would have considered. It's so hard. The interests of new employees is also important. It changed a lot to train. Once we have these women in our business, we recruit them if they're new to the industry or a 30 cent talent. Make sure they have resources and connections at many levels, including male allies. That's great for our business.

### **Company's culture (08:02-08:43)**

Your company's culture is also important for new employees and for their experience. Once we've been lucky enough to find some experienced sales and engineers and analysts from companies like Bird Look last year.

Both experienced and the new house employees are there and they need mentors. Mentors are essential. I believe it doesn't matter if the mentor is a male or female, they just need to have some value to offer.

Women seek out colleagues they can check in with. I've had a few mentors in my career. Some formal and some that I just admired and inspired me.

My best mentor was a male and I learned from him. It was not gender related. What I learned from him was the strategy of the business. I was lucky enough to find strong women in my career too.

### **How to retain women employees (08:44-09:47)**

Retaining is essential with any employee but especially with next gen, you really need to understand your company's career promotion time. This was discussed earlier. For instance, sometimes it takes as long as 3 to 5 years before they are promoted. This is what really hampers retaining. We lose a lot of employees around the three year mark. So, to think that what you have to do to keep them challenged today is to let them know that there's opportunities out there where we can help them sign up for a project or ask them to train some of the more mature employees on systems and other things that are recently helped.

And when they handle these projects, you would know whether they can handle a long term project or not. And this way, you can figure out about their potential to? And these are the ones you convince with money, time and other priorities.

It's critical to retain them and have a bunch of exceptional talent to build many positions for the future.

### **Moving forward in distribution channel (09:48-11:33)**

We know that people will leave because they had a bad man or a bad experience. Just that happens a lot, And sometimes now if they don't feel connected, or if they think they don't have growth opportunities there, it was mentioned earlier that the

tenure at any company is much shorter than it used to be.

Yes, we have worked long term too, You know, lifers and now 34 years is kind of you know how often they turn over, so it's an interesting change in the industrial distribution channel. It's moving forward, and I think women are a big part of it.

We all know that diversity breeds innovation and statistics show that businesses with more women managers on boards and see more possible research suggests that pursuing policies that help women in their mid term careers.

Not even more effective than addressing board memberships or syndicates, the result of policies that facilitate women rising, too dependent on the company ranks they help. You know if you could educate girls better be more supported of child care policies and more rigorous application of anti discrimination would also help.

We need to reach out and find female job candidates. We need to make them aware of an interest in our businesses. We want to train them and provide them a strong network of experience.

Someone can learn from a network with many industry groups. Now. Women are a part of industrial supply swimming, electrical industry and even manufacturing. There are plenty of resources out there to help support the women in your business. I'm really excited about the future of women in our business.

### **Wrap up (11:34-12:54)**

Thank you for your time. And thanks to DCKAP.

Tim Diep- Thankyou Laurie for the great presentation. It's really good to see the rise of women in the district producer space and then fast rate.

We can't wait to even meet you at the next event, once COVID kind of winds up. We are excited to be a part of these outside events again. But for now, just thank you so much for joining us and having a great presentation.Thank you.

So that's all we have for now, and hopefully we get to stay tuned for next week's e-summit in November. We do have these sessions on a monthly basis.