

DIVERSITY IN THOUGHT, LEADERSHIP HELPS HERSHEY MAKE IMPACT

At Hershey, we look at our differences as a source of energy and innovation for our company. Up, down and across the organization, you can see a diversity of age, gender, religion, race, and more.

Our CEO, Michele Buck, understands the power of such diversity. In a recent [interview with Fortune](#), she noted, “One of the things I most value in a team is diverse thinking. The more that a team is representative of the actual population, the more you get that diverse thinking, and we see that every day.”

More companies could benefit from that diversity at all levels, but particularly in leadership. Hershey is one of only 32 Fortune 500 organizations with a woman at the helm—a strikingly low number.

Reflecting on what it will take to get more women in the C-suite, Michele hearkened back to her experiences as she climbed the corporate ladder.

“I’m fortunate that I had a number of great opportunities throughout my career,” she recalls. “The times I learned the most and developed the most are when I took those opportunities that were outside my wheelhouse. I grew so much as an individual and learned that I had something in me that I didn’t realize before.”

Women do indeed need great experiences to rise to higher levels in any organization. The experiences of our women leaders span across multiple organizations and functional areas of expertise. They seized growth opportunities at every step of their careers.

However, most women shy away from new experiences because they do not feel they “check all the boxes.” So often,



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we stifle our own growth by convincing ourselves we are not ready for or worthy of a given opportunity.

Michele sees it as a crisis of confidence. “I think women just don’t have as much inherent confidence in themselves,” she says. “They tend to be harsher critics of themselves than I think they need to be.”

How do we combat that tendency? We must learn to control and ultimately “retune” our inner voices to echo confidence, stop talking ourselves out of trying and go for it.

But we also need to help other women achieve, to extend a hand to help pull another up and help her reach her own goals. Our founder, Milton Hershey, once said, “The Help-the-Other-Fellow principle is the only one that will succeed in modern business.”

To that end, our company established its Women’s Business Resource Group, to help all members get connected and feel empowered. The group assists employees with finding likeminded peers, mentors and support groups to help us excel at what we do, providing us with connections with other individuals facing the same issues and opportunities.

We strengthen the impact we have as individuals when we help others succeed, and feed the diversity of thought and leadership that are the true markers of greatness in a company.