
Latinas: Opening Doors to New Opportunities

Best Practices from the
Network of Executive Women
Consumer Products and Retail Industry

SIXTH IN A SERIES



Latinas in management: A growing resource and rising opportunity

Latinas are “one of the fastest growing groups of women in the U.S. labor force, but remain one of the least represented in top positions at Fortune 500 companies.”¹

While Latinas represent 3.3 percent of all people employed in management, professional, and related occupations,² they hold only 0.3 percent of corporate officer positions in the Fortune 500.³

This gap is slowly closing as Latinas advance in the workplace and grow in population. But speeding the process is an urgent issue for the consumer products and retail industry.

There are more than 20.5 million Latinas in the United States.⁴ By 2050 that number is projected to grow to nearly 51 million.⁵

“Any company that doesn’t focus on this is missing where the growth is,” says Helayne Angelus, vice president of Global Customer Diversity for Procter & Gamble and president of the Network of Executive Women. “The challenge is how to create the right attraction vehicle” to bring Latinas into the industry and how to retain and grow senior Latinas once they’re here.⁶

“Women of Hispanic origin are one of the fastest-growing groups of women in the U.S. labor force,” Catalyst says, “and despite their small numbers at the top, Latinas represent an important and growing source of talent.” Latinas are growing in education as well as number. The number of Hispanic women earning Bachelor’s degrees increased 150 percent from 1990 to 2000; the number earning master’s degrees increased 164 percent.⁷ Latinas not only represent a huge and growing market, but a rich and underutilized management resource for the industry.

DISCRIMINATION AND INVISIBILITY

Discrimination is a fact for Latinos in the United States, according to the landmark Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation National Survey of Latinos. Seventy-eight percent of Latinos feel discrimination in the workplace is a problem for Latinos (64 percent of African Americans and 57 percent of whites agree that Latino are discriminated against in the workplace). Almost half (45 percent) of Latinos report that they are treated with less respect than other people “at least once in a while.” The discrimination can be severe: About one in seven (14 percent) of Latinos report that they have not been hired or promoted because of their race or ethnic background. Beyond the workplace, 41 percent Latinos report that they have received poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores because of their ethnicity.⁸

The CPG/retail industry has yet to “break the code” on Latina women, says Teresa Miller-Elliott, director of team sales for the Kellogg Company.⁹

Participants in a Network of Executive Women workshop for Latina executives said “invisibility, stereotypes and [forced] assimilation” were three of the most common challenges that Latinas faced in the workforce. The two-day workshop included 35 Latina senior managers and emerging leaders and was led by NEW Board Member Trudy Bourgeois, founder and CEO of the Center for Workforce Excellence, and entrepreneur Cileia Miranda Yeun, owner and president of Belas Artes, a multicultural center in St. Louis. Attendees came from leading industry companies, including 7-Eleven, The Kellogg Company, Procter & Gamble, PepsiCo, Stop & Shop Supermarkets, Wal-Mart Stores and The Hershey Company.¹⁰

“Many of the women spoke of not being seen, not being acknowledged, and facing stereotypes,” Bourgeois said.¹¹ Some spoke of “having to deny their heritage to experience success,” and others addressed having to be “the voice of Latinas” at their companies. Many Latinas in the consumer products industry are pigeonholed in ethnic marketing, something Miller-Elliott finds offensive. “That’s like saying you have to be a woman to move a women’s product.” Lack of role models, mentors and networking opportunities were frequently cited issues.

Such isolation is the number one barrier to success for Latinas, agrees Catalyst. “In addition to lacking access to mentors, role models and sponsors, some Latinas also report the lack of access to networks as a difficulty, resulting in significant disadvantages such as being passed over for key assignments.”⁷

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

Angelus says the consumer products and retail industry needs to aggressively recruit Latinas. “It’s not going to be easy because they are not necessarily going to be thinking of our industry. We have to go and recruit Latinas where they are.” Once on board, companies need to provide “first-assignment mentors, high-visibility assignments, candid discussions on career-pathing, flexibility, and family-friendly policies,” she said.

Family-friendly policies are especially important. The Pew survey says the attachment to family is strong among Latinos, and not just among those who are foreign-born: “A strong attachment to family is evident among Latinos who predominantly

speak English and are generations removed from the immigrant experience.”⁸

Workshop participants said companies need to have an honest understanding of where their organizations stand. “Companies should be willing to see if their workforce mirrors their consumers and ask, ‘Is our environment open to success?’” Bourgeois said.

The next critical question leadership needs to ask is, “Are we willing to instill accountability and create a world where success is possible?” Bourgeois said. “Companies need to hold managers responsible. Put mentoring programs in place. Put training programs in place. You have to monitor it, and you have to measure it, because in business, what is measured is what gets done. All that can start as soon as any senior executive starts the dialogue, and that doesn’t cost a dime.”

Rachel Cheeks-Givan, senior manager for diversity and inclusion at PepsiCo, says a key concern for Latinas is having “role models and mentors.” That’s why PepsiCo has Hispanic Networks in New York, Chicago, Dallas and Florida, and a Women of Color Multicultural Alliance that includes Latinas. PepsiCo’s diversity support also includes a Women of Color Initiative, featuring regional and national meetings focused on the attraction, development and retention of women of color. “These meetings provide the opportunity to provide a sense of community, development opportunities and networking at a high level.”¹²

Cheeks-Givan says the industry should “provide the opportunity [for Latinas] to connect in order to get that critical mass and adequate mentoring and coaching opportunities. Understand what their unique issues are. Don’t underestimate that sense of community. And provide tools to facilitate authentic relationships with managers. To me it’s more than just policies,” Cheeks says. “It is about retaining these [leaders].”

Affinity groups are one way to “create an open dialogue, mentor next-generation leaders, and reach out into their communities,” Bourgeois says.

Catalyst says Latinas in business take charge of their futures. The women’s research and advocacy organization says Latinas should first choose their employer “with thoughtfulness and care,” inquiring about potential employers’ management diversity and checking published rankings. Once hired Latinas should communicate their “credibility, experiences, contributions and value to your organization...performance is the bottom line.” Latina managers should be aware of micro-inequities, “subtle, sometimes unspoken, and often unconscious, devaluing messages.” Be direct but non-confrontational when encountering these stereotypes—they often arise out of ignorance and education is the key Catalyst says.¹³

A new tone was evident from emerging leaders at NEW’s Latina workshop. “They are saying, ‘I am Latina, take me or leave me.’ They are not asking ‘How high?’ when the company says ‘jump.’ They are not willing to wait, and they are not willing to give up their heritage in exchange for a title or a position.” Bourgeois said “companies must be willing to see if their workforce mirrors consumers and ask, ‘Is our environment open to success?’”

“These managers are passionate about whatever they’re doing. They have very strong family values. They bring great trust and integrity to their workplaces.” She said business needs the integrity and authenticity of Latina leaders. “We have to help corporate America tap into the power of Latinas and help our organizations recruit the new generation of Latina executives.”

The time for action is now. “Whoever doesn’t answer the bell, it will not ring a second time.”

**“Ask if your
workforce mirrors
your consumers”**

WHAT LATINAS BRING

While there is no one reality that covers all organizations and all Latina managers, there is common acknowledgement that Latinas are an extraordinary resource for

the consumer products and retail industry. They bring integrity, values and passion to the workplace, and their multiple roles as industry professionals and family shoppers give them valuable insights into the needs of the marketplace.

“The Latin culture really focuses on the family,” notes Angelus. “Just being who they are has been a big plus for Procter & Gamble, providing tremendous value to us in understanding this market.”

Bilingualism and biculturalism are another advantage that Hispanics bring to work (47 percent of second-generation Latinos are bilingual).⁸ Spanish rivals English as a native language across the globe and being bilingual can be a powerful link to the large and growing markets at home and abroad.⁷

Hispanics are optimistic and tolerant of others. Eight in ten Hispanics think Hispanic children growing up now in the United States will get a better education than they had, and a similar number (76 percent) indicate that they will have better jobs and make more money than they have. Almost seven in ten (68 percent) believe that these children will stay as close to their families as they have. Almost all Latinos (97 percent) agree that “getting along with people from all different races and cultures is important to success.”⁸

“Latino values and trends...affect how we view the world,” says Cristina Benitez, president of Chicago-based branding firm Lazos Latinos. “It isn’t any one particular or isolated event, but rather a combination of influences born from the twenty-two different Spanish-speaking countries that are homelands to the

Hispanic people in the United States. ‘Latinization’ fuses Latino influences into the North American lifestyle, enriching both cultures simultaneously. As Latinos integrate into the United States and adopt new ways of living, the U.S. is embracing a variety of Latino values, styles and language.”¹⁴

Two-thirds (64 percent) of U.S. Latinos are of Mexican or Mexican-American descent, the remainder comes from a variety of distinct cultural backgrounds, including the Caribbean and Central and South America.¹⁵

Despite its diversity, the Latino population shares commonalities: Latino households have more children, spend more per grocery trip, and tend to be culturally conservative. A majority (57 percent) do not feel they fit into one of the racial categories typically used by U.S. government (white, African American or Asian), but consider their race to be Hispanic or Latino.⁸

CPG and retail companies are reaching out to this market as never before.

Cheeks-Givan notes that her company, PepsiCo, has “developed products to target this market, and we continue to come up with consumer products to meet their needs.” New products and packaging, special promotion, and targeted marketing and advertising are key components in reaching the Hispanic market. Latina executives can help show the way.

COMPANIES IN THE LEAD

Avon, the Coca-Cola Company, Colgate-Palmolive, Deloitte & Touche, Eastman Kodak, the Kellogg Company, Kraft Foods, PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble and Wal-Mart Stores are among the Top 50 Companies for Latinas to work for, according to *Latina Style* magazine.¹⁶

Nearly a quarter of *Hispanic Magazine’s* Corporate 100 is comprised of consumer products and retail industry companies, including Anheuser-Busch, Chevron, the Coca-Cola Company, Colgate-Palmolive, Coors Brewing, Deloitte & Touche, Eastman Kodak, ExxonMobil, Federated Department Stores, General Mills, H-E-B Grocery, the Kellogg Company, KPMG, Kraft Foods, McDonald’s, Nordstrom, Office Depot, PepsiCo, S.C. Johnson, Sears, 7-Eleven, Shell, Target, and Wal-Mart Stores. The magazine ranked the companies based on the firms’ “diversity training, recruitment efforts, ethnic representation on their boards and other minority business initiatives. Funding provided for Latino-related scholarships, grants and philanthropic donations are also factored into the selection process, as is the company’s overall image in the Hispanic community.”¹⁷

PepsiCo is at the forefront of Latina diversity and diversity overall, and the company has been widely recognized for its efforts. It has received top rankings from the Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility, the National Association of Female Executives, *Diversity Journal*, and the

Top 50 for Diversity list of DiversityInc, where it has ranked number one in Latino diversity.

“PepsiCo makes a tremendous effort regarding diversity,” according to Marie Quintana, vice president, ethnic sales development for the firm’s Customer Team Organization. “We are very aware of our consumers and we try to mirror that in our employment efforts. A third of my peers here are female, and I feel valued and important as both a woman and a Latina.”¹⁸

As the nation’s fastest growing consumer demographic, Latinas are critical to the future of every company in the consumer products and retail industry. More to the point, they are one of the industry’s most promising talent pools. Companies that lead in recruitment, advancement and retention of Latinas will enjoy a growing competitive advantage over those that don’t.

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NEW Latina Agenda

ACTION ITEMS

Discover where you stand. Determine how many Latinas you have in managerial jobs and how many you have in senior leadership positions. Does your leadership look like your customer base? If not, you may be missing significant opportunities.

Check your pipeline. Look at your talent pipeline to see if you are recruiting, retaining and advancing enough emerging Latina leaders to lead your company tomorrow.

Set big goals. One company has an ambitious goal of hiring 50 percent women and minority managers. The result has been rapid progress in management diversity in just a few years.

Leadership commitment. Let everyone in your organization know that senior management is committed to diversity with official statements, policies, programs and, most importantly, actions. Hold leaders accountable for results, not just intentions.

Enroll middle managers. Give middle managers the training, support and motivation they need to advance emerging Latina leaders. Enlist them in the planning of diversity initiatives and reinforce the fact that diversity impacts everyone's bottom line.

Empowerment. Create opportunities for Latina leaders to serve, train and network within your organization and throughout the industry. Ensure they have a seat at the decision-making table as individuals, and recognize their combined wisdom through Latina affinity networks and events. Remember that such networking is not only valuable in promoting management diversity, but provides critical market insights for your company.

Support mentoring. Partner senior executives with Latina managers through internal mentoring programs or outside programs like NEW's "Deep Dive into Career Development." Such mentoring helps nurture new talent and retain company knowledge.

Reach out. Attend minority and women job fairs, hire Hispanic recruiters, join professional associations like the Society of Hispanic MBAs and support diversity networks like NEW and HACE, The Hispanic Alliance for Career Enhancement.

Community. Show your commitment to your Latina employees and consumers by showing commitment to their communities. Partner with advocacy groups, sponsor scholarships, adopt a school, donate products, support charities and become an active partner in the communities where your employees and customers live.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. **Outline the ways diverse management benefits every stakeholder.**
2. **How can supplier diversity improve your bottom line?**
3. **Name some ways to help improve the visibility of Latina managers in your organization and industry.**
4. **Millions of Hispanic U.S. residents are Spanish-language dominant. How does your company's marketing, merchandising and customer support reflect this language diversity?**
5. **What can your company do to win the loyalty of more Latina consumers?**

Let Latinas lead the way

Latina executives represent an extraordinary talent resource for the consumer products and retail industry. They are growing in numbers and standing. They bring integrity, values and dedication to work with them. They have insights into today's multicultural communities. And since many are family shoppers themselves, they know what customers want.

The Network of Executive Women is helping consumer products and retail companies advance Latina executives and take the lead in workplace diversity. Our Latina Workshop "provided an opportunity to meet and learn from other Latina women" and was "a mind stretch to explore, issues, opportunities and responsibility within yourself and the organization." Our 2008 symposium, Leveraging Your Multicultural Workforce, brings the message home to leaders throughout the consumer products and retail industry.

Latina leadership can increase the creativity and diversity of your decision-making, increase consumer loyalty, build productivity, and bring fresh insights to expanding markets.

Discover where your company stands. Check your talent pipeline to see if you are recruiting, retaining and advancing enough emerging Latina leaders to lead your company tomorrow. Set big goals. Create opportunities for Latinas to serve, train, mentor and network. Use affinity groups and events to enlist senior and middle management. Measure results and hold managers accountable for results. Reach out to the communities where your employees and consumers live.

NEW can help, by providing networking, mentoring, professional development, best practices, outreach, score carding, and other benefits. For more information on how we can help you utilize the power of Latinas and promote diversity in your business, visit our website, www.newonline.org, or contact our Executive Director, Joan Toth, jtoth@newonline.org, telephone (312) 693-5393.

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