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International Women's Day: Q&A with 25 female execs from Subway, Tender Greens, many more



In celebration of International Women's Day — March 8 — FastCasual interviewed 25 of the industry's leading ladies to develop our **second annual** "Women in the Lead" series.

Each woman shared how she got her start in the restaurant industry, how she worked her way up in a male-dominated field and what guidance she would give to other aspiring female leaders.

Happy International Women's Day and International Women's Day and Women's History Month.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: My first paid job was a Subway Sandwich Artist. I still love making that individual creation the customer wants and putting a smile on their face. However, I have been with Subway since age 7, since its inception when my brother Fred DeLuca founded the company in 1965. Before I was able to serve customers I wanted to be involved even though I wasn't old enough to work. My family gave me small tasks in the back of the restaurant such as drying dishes and cutting olives. I learned so much observing and being involved. One of my fondest memories was going with Fred in his VW to get fresh vegetables in New York at Hunts Point Farmers market. Fred showed me how to identify great quality and how to negotiate prices. I thought it was so much fun. It wasn't until later I realized that the trips to the Farmers Market and meeting with suppliers for meats, cheeses and bread were valuable lessons about the quality value equation and food cost. My friends thought it was odd that I didn't watch cartoons on Saturday mornings, but in a family owned restaurant you grow up in the kitchen.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: I don't believe in quotas but I am a strong advocate of equal opportunity, for everyone. First and foremost, the leader of a multi-billion dollar enterprise must be a sound business person. But I have no doubt my perspective as a woman, a wife, a mother, a daughter, positively impacts my perspective. I'm proud to be a woman leader in the industry and I look forward to other women joining the ranks.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make the C-suite?

A: Be yourself and command respect. Put yourself in a place where you can fairly compete for the role you desire. Work for companies that appreciate people for their contribution not their gender, to position yourself for success. These companies have women on their leadership team. Stay focused on your goals. You can do it.

Q: If you were not in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: Subway is in my blood, and I have been involved my entire life. It's difficult to imagine what I would do. I have many interests but my first choice has to be an educator and inspire young women to pursue their dreams in business.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: My first job was a cashier at our Cousins Subs location in Germantown, Wisconsin. I just turned

15 and was eager to begin working. It was such a great experience and I firmly believe that everyone should have a job in a restaurant, even if their future is not with the industry. The life skills you learn are irreplaceable.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: I think that female leaders can bring a different style of leadership than their male counterparts. By using their innate strengths as a woman, they can be equally as successful. The best women leaders I know get results, build great cultures and have fun doing it.

I also believe everyone needs a role model to help them learn and grow in life. No matter what stage a person may be in their career, having someone to look up to can really make a difference. Female leaders can inspire others and help them to meet their goals. With more female leaders, young girls can see the many possibilities for themselves.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make the C-suite?

A: The C-suite doesn't happen just because you dream about it. I learned early in my professional career that if I wanted to take the next step in leadership, I would have to plan for it and then ask for it. Even being part of a family business, I needed to identify why I was the right leader for Cousins Subs and prove that to my father. I learned that you must assert yourself because the world does not hand you things just because you think you deserve it. Once a career plan is developed, it needs to be shared with the people that can support you in achieving your goals. Women have to be willing to put in the time, sacrifice and effort necessary to reach their goals, which sometimes is difficult while balancing a family life — making a strong support system critical.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: I love what I do so it's hard to imagine doing anything else, but if I weren't in the restaurant industry I would likely be involved with leadership and development training geared towards helping youth and young adults be successful in their jobs, in relationships and in life.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: This is my first job in the restaurant industry officially. I spent six years at Peet's Coffee. Well, I did spend six months at Chuck E Cheese when I was 15 but that probably doesn't count.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: Unfortunately, women often have to work harder than their male counterparts just to be seen as equal. This has improved with each generation and I'm hopeful this question won't need to be asked in the near future. Women are often discouraged from taking leadership roles — sometimes even in the most subtle ways. By the time a woman makes it to a leadership position, she's probably already slain a few dragons. Women in leadership, by definition, will come to the job with the ability to challenge the status quo which is arguably the most important skill of all.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make the C-suite?

A: Stay true to who you are and play to your strengths. The greatest leaders in history were flawed

and ever-evolving human beings. Don't wait until you're "ready" to take the lead ... just take it and figure it out later.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: I'm not in the restaurant business. I'm in and I've always been in the people business.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: My journey in the restaurant industry started with the creation of Chicken Salad Chick. I needed to come up with a way to support my three kids, while continuing to fulfill my stay-at-home mom role, so I decided to start selling chicken salad out of my kitchen. I would drive around town with a phone number decal on my car and people would say, "Hey, there's the chicken salad chick," and the name Chicken Salad Chick was born. With luck on my side, delicious chicken salad in a basket and a focus on serving others, the door-to-door business took off. However, that plan failed when an anonymous caller turned me into the health department and I learned that what I was doing was "illegal."

I had to come up with a new plan, which resulted in the idea to open a take-out only restaurant serving chicken salad with a friend and business advisor, Kevin Brown. Everyone else thought it was a bad idea ("oh, bless your heart, Stacy") and we opened it up anyway. Neither of us had restaurant experience, but we grew it into a successful business pretty quickly...and fell in love along the way. Kevin and I married less than a year after we became business partners and opened the first restaurant together. Today, we are more than 80 restaurants going across 11 states.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: Female leaders bring different talents and perspectives into the workforce, especially mothers. Moms are good jugglers and are nurturers who take care of people. These traits carry over into any business and greatly contribute to the business' success.

No matter how much technology takes over the world, people have feelings and are led by their hearts. They want to be loved, taken care of, validated and understood. A woman's nurturing quality understands those emotions and allows a unique approach to situations that aren't strictly business focused.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make the C-suite?

A: Consciously prioritize what it is you want out of life. Decide your long-term goals and determine what's most important. Know that you are always going to feel that you're cheating one side, either work or family. That's OK! No one's perfect at everything all the time.

Make a life plan according to those goals and then be flexible, because it's unlikely that things will work out exactly as planned.

Find (or create) a culture that fits you! Nurture and uplift others and they will want you to succeed. If you take care of people and treat them well, the rest will fall into place.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: If I wasn't in the restaurant industry, I would follow another passion of mine, but one that allowed me to be close to my children and give back to others. It's hard to put into words just how special being a mom is, but it truly is the most rewarding experience. I'm so grateful that my husband, Kevin, helped me cultivate a culture within Chicken Salad Chick that allowed me to continue participating in my kids' lives. We have made family a priority and because of that, we have been able to attract franchisees and employees that have a similar heart, passion and drive as we do.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: My first job was as a bus girl at a Sushi Bar in Durham, NC. My 14-year-old self was dressed in full kimono, including the shoes. I used to eat gallons of green tea ice cream.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: Is there an industry that couldn't benefit from more female leaders?

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make the C-suite?

A: Invest your time in other people. Mentorship is the single most important thing we can do as leaders.

Q: If you were not in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: I would either be a radio talk show host, a tiny house designer or dog walker.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: My first experience working in a restaurant was when I opened my first Teriyaki Madness franchise store in 2016. Prior to this, I had no restaurant experience. I had previously had a successful career in the financial investment industry for almost 20 years.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: The restaurant industry is dynamic, intense, and fast-paced. Women comprise a large portion of the restaurant workforce, especially at relatively entry-level jobs. One of the most significant benefits of more female leaders in the restaurant industry would be an inspiration. Female leaders can serve as role models and act as mentors to other women working in the restaurant industry, allowing more of them to believe they can fulfill their dream and reach their potential.

In addition, women are good at multi-tasking, well organized, balanced and efficient. The ability to manage several things at the same time while taking various factors into consideration, reaching well thought out and effective decisions are extremely important for the fast moving restaurant

industry.

Furthermore, the success of a restaurant depends on a repeated customer base, loyal staff members and expanding networks. Female leaders are collaborative and are good communicators. Lastly, having more female leaders improves diversity which in turn leads to better and more creative solutions.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make the C-suite?

A: The restaurant industry has many talented people and fierce competition. In order to make the C-suite, women should dare to dream big and have confidence in themselves. In addition, success also requires working hard and smart to win the trust and confidence of co-workers, managers, customers. Lastly, never be afraid to speak up and make yourself heard with well thought out messages.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: My previous career was in a male-dominated environment. If I had continued in my career, I would be working on a bond or equity trading desk of an investment firm managing risk and analytical support. I was accustomed to being the only woman working on the trading desk.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: I have worked for Taziki's for my entire restaurant industry career (6 years). It was eye-opening on my first day because I worked alongside many men and women who have been in restaurants since they were teenagers. That being said, I have fallen in love with this industry. Everyone's got to eat! I have stuck with Taziki's because the culture is on-point. It's very people- and relationship-oriented, and I am proud of the food quality and healthy living standards.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: It's a flywheel effect because with more female leaders come more female workers. I have personally been mentored and encouraged by many women in my career. I wouldn't be in the position I am today without the mentorship and sponsorship of these powerful women.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make the C-suite?

A: Know your personal marketing plan and brand. Don't just resume build, really push yourself out of your comfort zone to qualify you and let those experiences propel you forward.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: Hard to know! I would either be a full-time missionary in Haiti, a full-time mom, or a travel vlogger. That being said, I think that the experiences that restaurant industry gives are so transferable. You know how so many people suggest to teenagers to be waiters so they can learn many life skills and the value of hard work? I think the same thing about business professionals. The restaurant industry connects you with consumers in such a real way. It teaches you about community/hospitality/service, it let's you make mistakes, and it bridges the gaps between demographics [so] that you will be set up for any career path.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: Unlike most people I meet in the industry, I never had a bussing or serving job as a kid (I'd always opted for working in record stores and summer camps). So, my first job in the industry wasn't until I got an internship with Quizno's Corporate while in college. I worked on their Franchise Development Team developing marketing and placing advertising during Quiznos' period of rapid growth. It was a crazy time with large budgets and a lot of success; I loved how fast, nimble, and fun it all was ... I was hooked!

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: I'm a big believer in the strength and benefits of diversity in general, because I think the best decisions are made when there's a variety of viewpoints involved in the decision-making process. These days, creativity is key to helping brands outperform competitors and the best ideas haven't been thought of yet. So why not have as many different people, with the broadest array of experiences possible, thinking on them?

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make the C-suite?

A: Authenticity and passion are the greatest assets you have. I used to stress out about my shortcomings and the things I perceived other people to be better at than I was. Everything changed when I learned to identify the things I was good at, and leverage them for continued growth. Use your strengths, push yourself to try new things, and don't be afraid to ask for advice. Don't overthink it all. Be you, and do it with confidence.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

If we're talking dream job here, I'd spend my days in the shop fixing up old cars — a personal passion of mine! In the real world, I think it'd be really fun and interesting to work in tech. I love seeing how innovation affects change in every single aspect of our lives; it would be fascinating to be a part of reimagining and improving the way we do the things we've always done!



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: My first job in the restaurant industry was serving on the Pizza Hut account at TracyLocke. I spent quite a bit of time at their headquarters working with them to understand their challenges and how they apply their resources and analytics to drive the business.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: Every industry can benefit from having a gender-balanced leadership team. Diversity in leadership style, perspective and background will only strengthen the business if there's trust and

mutual respect among the leaders.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make it in the business?

A: First, listen before speaking, but don't be afraid to speak up—ever. Second, work hard on projects that will have a measurable or visible impact on the business. Be sales-minded and spend the bulk of your time on initiatives you feel will drive sales. Third, build relationships with your peers and their leaders and dig in to learn how your spheres intersect. Be a team player and jump in and help whenever you can because every experience will be referenced later, even the most unlikely.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: I would be designing interior spaces and working my tail off to join a world-class hospitality design team.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: My first job in the restaurant industry was actually here, with Checkers. When I started at Checkers I was an accounting manager, before eventually transitioning to the development side. I never worked in restaurants as a teenager but was certainly familiar with Checkers before starting my role.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: I think in general the industry is a bit skewed and there are definitely a lot more men in the restaurant industry. Females are able to create a great balance here because we are able to bring different qualities to the industry. Women have empathy and are great at bringing teams together by coordinating different work styles. Servers are going to have different personalities than chefs and being able to navigate those different personalities is so important in the industry.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make it in the business?

A: Put your head down and work really hard — there is a lot of opportunity to be had. Then, pop your head back up and look around for things that will challenge you beyond what you are already doing. If you're driven or focused on a specific end goal, you can miss some opportunities along the way. At the start of my career with a background in accounting, I never aspired to get into the development role. Rick approached me about it and opened that door, and it's been an amazing ride ever since. This new opportunity created incredible fulfillment in my professional and personal life — to be able to meet with franchisees and help them live out their dreams. The role is motivating, fulfilling and inspiring.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: It's evolved over time. My original aspiration was to be a CFO somewhere, with a strong background in accounting. I thought that's where my career would end. Today I think about how fulfilling it is to do what I do, bringing new franchisees into the system and leading the design, construction and real estate of the new locations. I would love to lead a restaurant concept as a president or CEO one day — which is something I never anticipated from the start.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: In high school, I scooped ice cream at Baskin-Robbins 31 Flavors. To this day it is still my favorite ice cream and my favorite job I've held.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

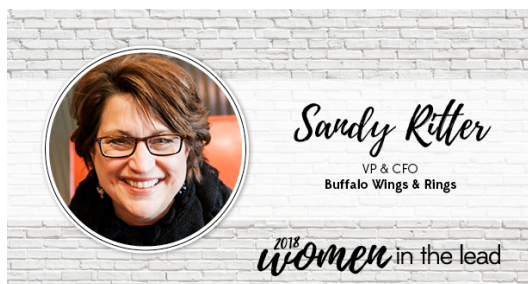
A: I believe in some instances women are more comfortable with paying attention to the details and the little things, instead of seeing everything is more of a global vision. While they can maintain a global view, the brain works in a way that they are able to recognize the details that are so important to a business. The little things are what help propel a brand forward, drive processes, increase productivity and allow for thinking outside of the box. Our organization is filled with driven women including our Director of Operations Dee Chippas and an entirely female operations team. The brand was also founded by a woman, Gloria Jean Kvetko.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make it in the business?

A: Always stay focused on the end zone and be clear in your objectives. Let everyone else know what their job is and maintain a strong head when others around you are not as confident. Be goal oriented and revisit your goals on a regular basis.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: I would love being an architect. In my current role, I am able to look into store design and flow of different businesses, and it would be interesting to see that through the eyes of an architect. In this role, you'd be able to use creative juices to put a store together to optimize traffic flow and design.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: Actually, this is my first job in the restaurant industry unless you count the one day I worked at our local Dairy Queen in high school. I am blessed that Buffalo Wings & Rings is my first because they allowed me to take my prior experience in both public accounting and the private sector and apply it to allow for our current growth.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: I think diversity in the leadership ranks in all industries is a good thing, and not just on the basis of gender. More and more companies are realizing the benefits of having a diverse set of opinions around the table to discuss and fully vet issues in the decision-making process.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make it in the business?

A: I think persistence in anything worth fighting for is the key. Women choose business just like they choose medicine or engineering or staying at home to raise a family. You decide what it is that you want or are called to do — what you want to fight for — and then you do it. You don't take 'no' for an answer. You don't cave in or fold at the first sign of trouble. You work hard to meet the challenges that come up and eliminate the hurdles. You do this one hurdle at a time and by doing that, you keep getting better. Behind every successful person, male or female, is a person who has persisted to make themselves better each day and has overcome the obstacles and challenges that come up along the way.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: I am passionate about the restaurant business. I love the challenge of distinguishing our service and product from our competitors'. I love the challenge of surviving and thriving in an industry with tight margins and where only the best of the best succeed. I love this environment because at the end of the day, these things make you strive to always be better than you were the day before. If I were not in the restaurant business, I would want to be in a business that challenges me in similar ways.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: I was an Oscar Mayer Weiner Hotdogger — a.k.a. an Oscar Mayer Wienermobile driver. I traveled to 24 states with my fellow hotdoggers, handling PR and working events. I wrote press releases, pitched the media to attend promotional and charitable events, and even listened to more than 600 kids sing the Weiner Jingle or Bologna Song as an audition judge for the next commercial.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: The restaurant industry can benefit by having more female leaders because women get things done! Women tend to be more organized and can efficiently carry projects from idea to execution.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make the C-suite?

A: Don't be afraid to speak up in meetings — share your thought-out ideas or your positions on discussion topics. Also, don't be afraid to ask for a raise or promotion; the worst thing your manager can say is no. One of the most valuable lessons I learned early in my career was when I had two female VPs above me, and one of them had a much higher salary than the other. I asked her what she did to earn the higher salary, and she told me she asked for an increase in pay and stated her case for why she deserved the raise; the other VP didn't ask.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: I'd hope to still [be] driving that 27-foot hotdog around the country, but unfortunately they only take college grads first year out of school. Best job ever!



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: I started in the industry working at McDonald's, which allowed me to pay for college. The most valuable lessons I took away from that experience were the importance of living up to your commitments by showing up on time and working as part of a team, and, how you can make someone's day and a genuine connection with a customer, just by smiling. Most of my career has been in the food/restaurant industry, and for me, it has been a great career choice—I love food and I find it is easier to sell something that I have a passion for. Plus, the industry provides real career opportunities for women.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: The continued success of the restaurant industry will be dependent on finding innovative leaders that represent diverse ideas and backgrounds. I believe that women bring both mental toughness and a high degree of emotional intelligence to leadership roles. With a changing workforce, this combination will be able to more successfully create organizations with high performing cultures that deliver results by building teams that respect individuals and value their differences.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make the C-suite?

A: Work hard, and develop the people around you. It takes a team to succeed. You should always strive to continue learning and take on new challenges—don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone to tackle a new assignment. You are in charge of your career—do what it takes to clear the path to your goal.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: I love animals. I would be working with an animal rescue organization.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: [It was] the first Your Pie, which opened in April 2008. Before that, I had never worked in the restaurant industry!

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: A fresh perspective is always a good thing. Drew (my husband and co-founder of Your Pie) appreciates my perspective on the various issues or decisions within the company. Like anything, looking at something from another angle can provide restaurants or companies with an idea or

solution that may never have surfaced. Diversity and varying backgrounds in any business [are] important for a company's ability to act and react appropriately.

In addition, women account for a high percentage of what determines restaurant choice. We need women in the industry to facilitate the needs and wants of our female customers. At Your Pie, we have so many wonderful women on staff not only in the corporate office, but entrepreneurial female franchisees and employees in our stores. They are working on an operations level every day and investing in making our business and culture what it is.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make the C-suite?

A: My advice to women aiming to join the C-suite would be to look at every challenge or obstacle as an opportunity to grow, no matter how daunting it may seem. I was not trained in the restaurant industry or in business, for that matter, so I have often had moments where I have doubted if I was equipped to meet a challenge. Each time I set the doubts aside and face the challenge, I learn something new about myself and obtain a new skill set at the same time. It truly is the only way to advance in any aspect of life.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: I am actually a licensed veterinarian and own a small art business. So, I would probably be doing more of those things!



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: When I was 16 I started working as a team member at Noodles & Company in Menomonee Falls, WI. I've always felt pulled to the restaurant industry. I enjoy the collaboration and teamwork that exists in the restaurant and across a restaurant system.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: I have been fortunate throughout my career to have strong female role models in the various roles I have held. In the restaurant industry, like in any industry, I think it will always be strongest if you have a variety of viewpoints, experiences and opinions fueling growth and evolution. Any industry that doesn't tap into a rich variety of perspectives will suffer. Women account for half of your restaurant's customers — and in many cases, the mother is still the decision-maker within the household. It's important that women are properly represented in the leadership driving our industry. However, overall diversity is important to continue building a stronger restaurant industry.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make it in the business?

A: Be confident in your ideas. People will believe in your ideas if you believe in yourself. Learn how to think like an operator and understand the pressure points that a team faces when executing on those ideas, but don't just limit yourself to learning one discipline within the restaurant industry. Invest in learning all aspects of the businesses. Ask as many questions as you can on your way up and truly understand the ins-and-outs that every person within a restaurant system faces on a daily basis. Don't be afraid to try new things and learn from your failures. This is a very competitive business, so it's vital that you work hard. Those who hustle in the restaurant industry thrive.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: That's a tough question since I've been in the restaurant business my entire life, and that's really where my passion lies. I love the ever-changing nature of the business and the fact that there is opportunity every day to try out new ideas in order to make people's lives better. I enjoy the competitive nature and fast pace of the industry. I think if I wasn't in the restaurant business, I would gravitate towards a teacher or coach — a profession where I could help inspire others and guide them to learn and grow, but also continually evolve in the way that I approach my audience, engage with them, and find fulfillment in their success.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: Technically, my first job in the restaurant industry was in a hot dog truck. But, it was my friend's aunt's truck and I was a bit young, so I'll skip that one. In high school, my parents wanted me to focus on my studies but I was eager to get out into the world and make my own money. My dad was in the food business, so starting there seemed to be a natural fit for me. At 16, my first real job in the industry was as a server at a private country club. I worked most weekends and of course, they always put me on the schedule for “men's night.” It was my first glimpse into the realization that there is a dynamic tension between men and women in the foodservice industry.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: Although the prevailing mindset of political correctness would say otherwise, men and women are inherently different. Women, as an example, typically excel at multi-tasking. This often-instinctive character trait allows women to mentally juggle the issues and tasks at hand while contemplating long-term strategy and affecting change smoothly in their organizations. As a leader in business, there are an infinite number of things that are typically occurring at the same time. In the franchising industry, there is a constant need for balance between corporate initiatives and franchisee relations, between consumer satisfaction and profitability, between strategic selling and franchise disclosure law and between quality and cost. Each endeavor, issue, and initiative has its own set of needs but there is also a foundational interplay between them. Recognizing the cross-functional nature of business and being able to manage it plays a key role in business achievements. This ability to “juggle” with grace and distinction has been at the core of some of the most successful female business leaders I've had the pleasure to meet.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make it in the business?

A: Make yourself professionally uncomfortable. The greatest achievements I've had in my career are because I took on a role or a project that I was unfamiliar with. I had to learn it before I could make it better. This intellectual curiosity allowed me to build not only my professional level of expertise but it has allowed me to leave every department better than when I found it. When you aren't encumbered by prior knowledge or an antiquated way of doing things, you are able to find more effective and efficient ways of doing business. Your success will translate to the organization's success.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: Possibly writing this article. I was an English major in college and while I was studying to be a teacher, I had a true passion for journalism.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: My first job in the restaurant industry was working in my dad's pizza restaurant. We lived behind our first restaurant and I started making pizza at an early age. But my first paying job was at age 11 when I had the opportunity to work during the summers with my grandma and grandpa in our bakery. My siblings and I would spend the summers cracking eggs for the dough for our six restaurants.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

I believe that females add value at any level of business because we tend to lead where we stand. Historically we may not have always held the C-level positions in companies, however many women who have come before my generation took a stand and led with grace and resilience regardless of the position they held. I think our industry benefits by having people in leadership roles with a high Emotional Quotient, whether it be a male or female. A high Emotional Quotient in a leadership role, allows a leader to truly demonstrate a Servant Leadership style which in turn empowers the team to be highly engaged.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make the C-suite?

A: The advice that I would give to any leader, I refer [to] as my 4Cs. I had a great opportunity to be part of a family business that sold to the world's largest restaurant company and then buy the company back with my dad four short years later. While I learned many valuable lessons that I talk about in my book, *The Missing Piece*, my most valuable lessons are summarized with my 4Cs to Success.

1. Character: The fiber of your moral code. Recognizing that it is who you are, not what your title is that makes you a leader.
2. Courage: Always living your true north means having the courage to live your values out loud regardless of your position or title.
3. Conviction: Staying true to your purpose and passion. While you are getting to where you are going, always hold strongly to your beliefs and live a life of purpose while you are purposefully living.
4. Compassion: Live life with a lens of love. Have a deep awareness of oneself and emotional maturity centered on love. Values are not the "soft" stuff in business.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: I often think about what I would be doing if I didn't grow up in a family business making pizza's and I believe my sole purpose in life is to serve others with love. I would be in the people business serving others, whether it is pizza, or any other industry. Leading is bigger than the product that you sell — it is the people that you serve. Every piece is important.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: My true introduction to this incredible industry occurred when I got a job at an ad agency coming out of college and my client was a franchisee co-op of a competitor of White Castle! I worked behind the counter with our franchisee (a woman!) and found an appreciation for the importance of a focus on customer service, having operational standards and giving back to community. I quickly found out how great the people were in this industry and I worked with many women franchisees who were especially interested in helping me to see (and seek) more opportunity.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: After many years, I've come to believe that instead of gender differences, there are experience differences. And those varied and different experiences broaden our leadership problem-solving skills which can add to our collective success. Ultimately, having more female leaders creates a more dynamic mix of experiences and perspectives, which contributes to better decision making. Those who learn to listen to the problems and find solutions can often get the focus off gender or other bias and moved to contributions and execution. It is then that we can offer to improve the support of others based on our early career years when we might not have had it for ourselves.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make the C-suite?

A: Envision a world where both business and home successfully converge through your leadership. Challenge yourself and others to engage with this diversity so that it is beneficial for our companies, our country and our world cultures through many different perspectives and experience. Make a difference in the lives of others — our teams, our customers, our business partners and our communities. Our ongoing role as we achieve leadership positions is to bring balance to equal opportunity once achieved with work/life harmony and not just be advocating for a voice at the boardroom table. Develop teams which are able to execute well when you are not there. Be supportive of others assuming positive intent. Develop networks which help you learn to be flexible of thought and actions.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: I'm teaching hospitality management students at The Ohio State University and love it! So, perhaps I'd follow that calling though I enjoy what I do so very much because of what I have learned and that — now that I have the experience — I can share it due to the honor of teaching future leaders in hospitality.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: I've grown up in the restaurant industry. I started working for my parents at our family-owned Troy's Greek Restaurant in San Diego. I've done everything from serving, expediting, cashiering, and eventually found my way to management.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: I believe that female leaders typically have more compassion and empathy which give them a greater ability to bring a team together toward a common goal and we can foster the growth of our teams in a different way. In regards to our industry, dining decisions are highly influenced by females, and thus our different and cultural perspectives should be represented at the highest level.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make the C-suite?

A: My biggest piece of advice is to focus on your leadership skills and continually push yourself outside of your comfort zone. Don't be afraid to take initiative and be vocal about your ideas. Form your opinions, back them up and don't feel like you have to apologize for it. In order to truly grow you have to constantly be learning and evaluating your path. It's easy to get discouraged so find your determination and don't focus on what other people are doing. Focus on you and how you can be your best self while being an invaluable asset to your company.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: Probably growing grapes and making wine on a vineyard.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: My first job in the restaurant industry was working as a waitress at my parent's sushi restaurant. It was a different experience than what most adolescents have for their first part-time jobs since it wasn't just about a paycheck. I felt the weight of the entire business on my shoulders as the restaurant was my family's only source of income. Needless to say, I wore multiple hats that included HR, operations, serving and even prep cook.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: The restaurant industry has long been dominated by male owners, managers, chefs, etcetera. It is typically an industry where women do not have equal positions or pay, and this is precisely the reason why more women in leading positions are needed. I think by having more women in leading

positions,[it] will help other women feel less intimidated to enter the industry and also be confident that they can make their way up to the top.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make the C-suite?

A: My advice for women looking to make the C-suite is to take the risks that seem intimidating and always figure out what you value most about the business and remain true to those values.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: If I was not in the restaurant industry, I would probably work in finance or be at home with my toddler while doing some day trading on the side!



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: My first job in the restaurant industry came during a time when I was having financial difficulty. It was post-divorce and I was caring for my three, very young at the time, children. I needed hours that did not conflict or interfere with my being there for them in any way. The only option was to waitress as I could set my own hours. I made sure that I was the best waitress possible and was rewarded by becoming a cashier and then a hostess for various restaurant venues. The atmosphere of the food and beverage industry was like an extended family getting together at mealtime. I always enjoyed watching people enjoy their food as I've always been a nurturing person.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: The most obvious reason is that under a woman's leadership there would certainly be a more level playing field for all genders. In today's sensitivity to abusive behavior and inequality to women, women leaders would neutralize the playing field by eliminating sexual harassment and financial inequality. Additionally, women are natural nurturers and have very little bias toward race and sexual barriers. Women are now seeing an uptick in being accepted in this gender-biased industry. I know that we have come to a new threshold in equality and acceptance in many industries, but especially in the food industry where the pendulum has swung on our behalf.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to making the C-suite?

A: I would say the first thing you must do is change any negative mindsets that have prevailed in this industry regarding the possibility of women reaching the C-suite. Empower yourself firstly, you have the intelligence and motivation to succeed. Put yourself out there and do not fall into old

stereotypes of women who are achievers as aggressive and manly. No, not at all they are human first, with capabilities and the desire to achieve. The time that women were silent without a voice is over. We have found our voice, our motivation, our achievements and we will prevail. Not only will we prevail individually, but we will mentor other women to realize they're taking their leadership role. As I have two granddaughters that I adore, I want them to know that there is no downside to success in being women.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: If I weren't in the restaurant business, I would be in some field in which I was improving and enhancing my fellow man's existence. I love to nurture and make a difference in people's lives. As a very wise sage, Hillel [the Elder, a Jewish religious leader c.110BCE] said, "If I am not for others, then what am I." I am without a doubt a humanitarian and am naturally drawn to this end. The strongest aspect of my character is empathy. I neither feel entitled nor more superior to anyone. I treat all people of every station in life with dignity and respect. I guess I would be involved in social work or a field that is closely related.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: I worked at a bakery in Los Angeles. I did everything from mopping the restaurant floor to taking orders.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: To a large extent, women are more compassionate, and this makes them warm, welcoming and approachable. Our intimate nurturing capabilities and inherent capacity for empathy and compassion gives our teams the confidence they need to feel comfortable discussing challenges and sharing their ideas. We also tend to be less affected by interference and, therefore, much better at multitasking, which is incredibly important when running a business.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make the C-suite?

A: Stay connected with what is happening in your industry. Delegate and train others while still having knowledge of all aspects of your business. Be a good listener. Be kind and grateful to your team. If something doesn't seem right, trust your gut. Learn from your mistakes and stay focused.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: I think I would be in the fashion industry.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: Le Macaron French Pastries has been my only experience in the restaurant industry. We opened the first location in Florida about nine years ago. As a teenager, I had minimal experience as a server in France and a few years later I was the manager of a small hotel in the Netherlands for six months with my husband — that's where I learned my passion for customer service. Once my mother and I created Le Macaron French Pastries, it was really my first time fully immersing myself in the industry.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: Women are just as capable as men in every aspect of life. Of course, it would be ideal to have more female leaders in the industry—they have a better way of understanding and place a higher importance on internal relationships. My mom makes the perfect business partner because [we] are both able to manage several business tasks while still keeping our home life together — I have three daughters and a business to run. The more female leaders we have, the more we can ingrain in our daughters' minds that they can accomplish anything they want in life.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make the C-suite?

A: Work hard and remain dedicated. People will often tell you, you can't do it but you can't let that stop you or even slow you down. You're the determining factor of your own success and it's up to you to pursue your dream. You can achieve so much more if you support others and believe in yourself. Women need to support other women—lift each other up and break the glass ceiling.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: I think I would have my own practice as a psychologist or possibly be working for a human resource company that provides different services. I have my masters in social psychology and human resources.



Q: What was your first job in the restaurant industry?

A: I have always loved the restaurant industry, but never worked in a restaurant until I opened my own. I had a career in advertising and marketing for 15 years, but I was always drawn to the restaurant industry. I ironically didn't have any experience with restaurants since my high school and college jobs were office based, so I had to use my own money to open my own restaurant to have my first restaurant job.

In 2010, I saw an opportunity to pursue a passion, so I moved west and opened a wine bar in Los Angeles, Vintage Enoteca. It has been long-considered one of the best and most innovative wine bars, having been featured in the New York Times and named one of the Top 100 Wine Lists in the country by Open Table Diners' Choice. Under the same brand umbrella, I opened a retail wine store, Vintage Wine+Market, and ultimately sold that part of the business to a like-minded purchaser who continued the concept.

Q: Why do you think the industry could benefit by having more female leaders?

A: Any industry can benefit from more female leaders. Diversity in thought and interpretation is always useful as it helps counteract group think. And I'm not intending to be disparaging to anyone in this situation, but often people hire people like themselves which can lead to a homogeneous

perspective. In my career, I have often been the only woman in the room, and that can make it harder to be heard, and take years to gain the confidence to be able to learn how to navigate the politics of the conference room. I'm a fierce defender of the young people on my team and will use these types of opportunities to showcase their accomplishments to help them (female or male) find their voice early on.

Q: What is your advice to women looking to make the C-suite?

A: Work hard, be smart, think strategically, and always add value. This is career advice for any industry, but I think the strategic thinking is especially valuable in the restaurant industry where things are so operationally focused, with many potential problems on a daily basis. Forward and creative thinking, research, and data-based recommendations help separate one from the pack.

Q: If you weren't in the restaurant business, what would you be doing?

A: Being able to combine my background in big brand marketing, with my experience in the restaurant industry and as a small business owner, makes this job as marketing director for The Pizza Press — an emerging brand with 18 stores open now and 85 units sold — pretty much a dream job. I get to use my experience in an industry that I both know and love. If I weren't doing this I would be cooking elaborate menus at home or working on my passion project — launching my sangria brand, V Sangria, which I conceived at my wine bar.

Artwork created by Willie Lawless