

# THE VOICES OF WOMEN IN AUTOMOTIVE

Let's get personal.



## INTRODUCTION:

We believe the automotive industry should be diverse and inclusive for all, including (but not limited to) race, gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity. Online statistics showcase clear examples that the industry needs to improve, for example women only account 27% of the US auto manufacturing workforce, whilst 6% are from diverse backgrounds. Our mission is to create a collaborative network to unite under-represented groups and promote a future that is both diverse, equitable and inclusive.

For International Women's Day, we interviewed several incredible women in automotive, to inspire inclusion and unite others in how we build a better future for the industry.

In this article, we get personal, to shine light on real life experiences, views and advice.

We hope you are inspired!

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**For International  
Women's Day 2024  
and beyond, let's  
Inspire Inclusion**

”  
(IWD)



**Kristen Siemen**  
Vice President  
Sustainable  
Workplaces & Chief  
Sustainability  
Officer  
General Motors

### What does International Women's Day mean to you?

Women have contributed to every single facet of our lives and International Women's Day is a time to recognize and celebrate all they do. From the

women on my team, to my family and friends to our CEO, I would not be the person I am today without those contributions. I hope this day brings the appreciation, support and awareness all women around the world deserve.

### When you began your career, did you imagine that you would become a female leader in a male-dominated industry/profession?

I've been incredibly fortunate to have incredible mentors (male and female) that have not only supported me but have challenged me to believe I could do more than I ever thought possible. I've also always been passionate about supporting other women and building lasting relationships in everything I do. It's a large part of how I got to where I am and becoming the leader that I am. But one of the things that's most inspiring now is seeing the numbers of females in leadership positions in the Automotive industry and others continue to grow and the unwavering commitment these women bring forward to addressing today's most pressing challenges. In my role as Chief Sustainability Officer, I'm proud to work alongside them, many of whom are not only colleagues, but have become close friends.

### What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?

Now, more than ever, I am struck by the opportunity to play a meaningful role in helping people thrive on a planet that is safe and sustainable. As a mom and an engineer, when I look at my three sons, I feel an incredible sense of responsibility to protect them and their future. It gives me the kind of unrelenting determination, that many other parents and caregivers can understand, to help the world find solutions to climate change so that we leave future generations with a world that they can continue to thrive on. I'm proud to work for a company that continues to not only innovate to

bring great mobility products and services to market, but also transform how it has a positive impact on the world.

### How can women –and men! –support other women in the automotive industry?

All relationships are valuable – whether it be through mentorship or allyship, we need to take the time to cultivate and maintain our relationships with those around us because you never know how helpful even one conversation could be for someone. We need to be authentic with one another, always look for ways to elevate each other and foster an environment for continual growth.

### What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?

The automotive industry should continue to ensure its workforce, and leadership, represents not just its customer base but people from all communities and walks of life. I'm proud of the steps we've taken at GM to ensure we have more voices at the table and that everyone has an equal voice at the table. Engaging everyone in our workforce and having diverse leadership at every level of our organization, promotes innovative thinking and creates a culture where every team member can thrive.

### What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?

We often hear about how women tend to take themselves out of consideration for opportunities much more often than our male peers, even with the same qualifications. We should always remind ourselves to pursue our dreams, no matter how far-fetched they may seem. As my mom often told me, "Shoot for the moon, and if you miss, at least you will be one of the stars!"

### And finally, what is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders?

**You can do more than you think you can. Be confident, be yourself, trust your gut, and push yourself. I think as women, we often tend to second-guess our capabilities. You read all about imposter syndrome and many of us think we're not qualified – but you are.**



**Justine Johnson**  
*Chief Mobility Officer*  
**Michigan OFME**

**What does International Women's Day mean to you?**

For me, I think International Women's Day is about celebrating and amplifying the contributions of women from all over the world.

It's about shining a spotlight on the everyday heroes who have fought to overcome barriers, who stand courageously, and who make it easier for the next woman to come behind her.

**When you began your career, did you imagine that you would become a female leader in a male-dominated industry/profession?**

I didn't see myself doing the job that I'm doing now as the child. But I feel like I'd always knew I was destined to use my time on this earth to do something impactful.

I've always been inspired by women who bet on themselves and who are unafraid of taking risk and who are committed to winning whatever winning looks like for you.

I've always been driven towards seeing these types of women in, in a variety of different spaces. Who are shining? Who are using their voices? Whether that may be soft or loud to make monumental impacts to society, so that's always been my driving force.

**What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?**

It's something that I wear with pride. As woman in mobility, it's about really making sure that I use my thoughts and I use my opinions to really have that important voice, especially when we talk about technology and innovation and making sure that it's inclusive.

It's about asking those awkward questions that I think sometimes men never think about, for example in automotive, it could be from vehicle design to operation. Asking those questions such as, is this vehicle safe for women who are utilizing this vehicle inside the vehicle and outside the vehicle? has this form of mobility been crash tested using a female crash test dummy? It's it's important to have my voice at the table.

It's about leaning into who I am as a woman and how that shows up within mobility and thinking about, how women move in space, for example, what does that mean to cross a street and see a crosswalk? Does the timing make sense for a woman with her children?

I think it's about leaning into the things that make us unique but different, but also to make sure we have a more inclusive and just society.

**How can women –and men! –support other women in the automotive industry?**

Firstly, just show up and make a conscious effort in a deliberate commitment to the advancement of women. You can't just say 'I support a woman' and then the next day you're not doing anything.

My advice includes offering to be a mentor to a woman who you see has potential to grow beyond their existing role, lift a women's point of view when it's made in a room, oftentimes in a conversation where you know, someone may not.

Secondly, acknowledging a great idea, name the person, give the contribution to the person who's speaking in the room and don't rephrase.

Be conscious of yourself and look around if you really want to support women and lift women up and make sure that we're at the table, that our voices are heard, move outside of your assumptions, check your own biases and make sure you know you're committing to listening and uplifting the words that are spoken by woman.

**What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?**

You have to be intentional about recruiting, hiring, promoting and retaining women in your organization.

If your organization was founded by a man and the majority of your leadership and C-Suite is male then you have to acknowledge that you have blind spots. So, seek external coaching, so that you can recreate a work environment that is truly inclusive of women.

Also, look at your physical spaces and if they incorporate inclusive elements. For example, are there feminine products in the bathroom for women? Is there a lactation room? Is there a 'baby on the way parking spot' for priority parking.

Again, remove the barriers, especially when it comes to promotion and paying. Pay women, they're fair amount. Look at everyone in your organization and figure out where might there be disparities. It's a commitment to creating a pathway where women can grow and thrive in the workplace and making sure that culture is inclusive of women and the variety of their needs.

**What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?**

Embrace who you are as a woman and lean into your lived experiences as a woman because that's the most unique perspective that only you can hold. And no one can take that from you.

I always say, wear your woman. Your woman hat, purse, pants, dress, T shirt, whatever it is proudly.

Trust your intuition.

Know that women are phenomenal at identifying a problem. Women are often the first ones to identify what that problem might be and also use really creative solutions of solving that problem.

Continue to think like a woman, because that's just what makes you unique, unique.

And don't give up when you're faced with adversity.

Every experience, whether good or bad, is an opportunity to learn a valuable lesson.

**I'm really excited about what this day International Women's Day means and I'm looking forward to seeing more women in the mobility space and ecosystem and continuing to open the door and create more pathways for women to grow and thrive in these in these spaces.**



**Barbara Bergmeier**  
Executive Director,  
Industrial Operations,  
Exec Champion of  
D&I Networks  
JLR

### What does International Women's Day mean to you?

I think International Women's Day is an important day to celebrate, empower and recognise some of the brilliant women in our lives. However, it is just one day of the

year, and I think we need to acknowledge that the work needed in the space of gender equality is ongoing. We need to continue having honest conversations, act and ensure progression happens.

### When you began your career, did you imagine that you would become a female leader in a male dominated industry/profession?

During my computer science classes at university, I was one of only two women! I still actively chose a career in a very male-dominated industry as I loved the type of work, and I knew I wanted to build a career around manufacturing and engineering. The world of engineering has changed so much since I started my career, but I believe encouraging more balanced gender diversity will help us to need to break down the pervasive stereotypes that still exist. Diversity drives progress and continuing to be more inclusive of gender, race, culture, sexual orientation and social mobility diversity in our conversations, will benefit our business and society.

### What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?

I love what I do. I've worked in many different industries over last 33 years and the one thing that has always kept me motivated, even in the most challenging times has been working with some fantastic teams. I have met some incredible people and have had the privilege of having colleagues becoming friends and stay connected.

I think teams that are super engaged and diverse are by far, the highest performing ones. Instilling this mindset is the heart of my leadership style. I am passionate about creating team cultures in the automotive industry where honest, two-way communication is encouraged. Places where we can all bring our authentic selves to work and thrive.

### How can women – and men! – support other women in the automotive industry?

Over the past four months, I've been a part of a Reverse Mentoring programme within JLR. Pairing up senior leaders with employees from across the business, it's been an unforgettable experience getting to know my mentor. The conversations are so open and it's a real poignant reminder that leadership isn't about titles or positions; it's about the values we uphold and how we treat others. It's about compassion, empathy, friendliness, and helpfulness – qualities that go beyond any hierarchy.

I would encourage everyone to explore mentorship programs. The lessons in embracing diversity, fostering genuine conversation, and recognising our shared humanity is deeply enriching. The experience has been transformative in helping me grow as a leader.

Regarding allyship, I think it's incredibly important. No matter gender, race, culture, sexual orientation and social mobility, it's about creating a shared

network of support to empower and create meaningful change.

### What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?

There has been progress but there is still lot more we can do to encourage more diversity. We need to get people interested in Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths (STEM) topics at a much younger age and inspire them to want to continue studying them.

We need to offer training programmes where we can recognise transferable skills – identifying people who may not have the traditional qualifications and working to upskill them to new roles which they are perfectly suited for. In a first for JLR, candidates with BTEC and T-Level qualifications can now apply for its Higher Apprenticeship in engineering, alongside candidates with A-level maths.

There is so much talent in the world and we need to create opportunities to harness it. We need to inspire people with strong role models and show them the fantastic career opportunities that exist in manufacturing and engineering.

### What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?

- Don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone and see the world – or the industry you work in – from a different perspective.
- Find out what interests and motivates you and bring this into your professional life – keep looking for that career that inspires you every day.
- Don't stop developing yourself – this is only possible by facing challenges and being open to the unexpected.
- Do what you can to break down stereotypes – not only is it okay to be diverse but it's usually exactly what an industry needs and wants.
- Challenge poor behaviours, when you see them - it might feel frightening at times but small steps by everyone helps make bigger change.

### And finally, what is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders?

This is the advice that I would not only give my younger self but to everyone: be true to yourself and your values.

We are often our own worst enemies, and we are the biggest obstacle to believing in ourselves. Please don't stand in your own way!

We can also put a lot of pressure on ourselves to always give 100% in both our personal and work lives, but this reality isn't always possible. Accept help when you need it and know that it's a marathon, not a sprint - there will be ups and down.

**It won't always be easy, and change won't happen overnight but actively choose to challenge stereotypes, broaden perceptions, improve situations and celebrate the achievements that come from diversity. Continue to believe that collectively, each one of us can help create a diverse and balanced world.**



**Laura Brailey**  
Sales Director  
Mazda UK

### What does International Women's Day mean to you?

It's a great catalyst to continue to stimulate and further evolve the conversation around inclusion and equality for women all around the world. The IWD's global focus on all

women and inclusion regardless of background is a powerful platform and the Day allows everyone to pause for a moment and think about the focus on continuous improvement that has to take place in order to grow the momentum and awareness even more.

### When you began your career, did you imagine that you would become a female leader in a male dominated industry?

Not for a second! I entered the industry in a junior role during the mid-90s when the dress code for the business I worked at that time for dictated that women were not allowed to wear trousers in the workplace – only skirts or dresses!! But despite this I immediately fell in love with the fast pace, variety and challenges that a job in automotive brings so I got involved and immersed myself in learning all I could!

### What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?

I have a huge sense of pride for my Brand – Mazda. Being able to encourage others into an industry and to grow and develop within the world of automotive. The industry which offers great challenge and satisfaction in a host of different fields. So despite your skillset or chosen field there will be a place for you to grow and make a difference. I get a huge sense of satisfaction watching people progress their careers with the right support that I may be able to help a little with!

### How can women – and men! – support other women in the automotive industry?

Never underestimate the power of a both mentorship and allyship. I have

been so fortunate to have both during the various stages of my career and I still value them today and indeed need them to continue to encourage me beyond my comfort zones. Research still shows that women actively need encouraging to push on for new experiences or challenges because deep down they have a sense of self-doubt when compared to male peers, A good mentor can recognise that and provide firm encouragement when needed!

### What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?

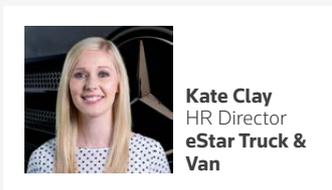
Do not allow complacency to be a “thing” within your culture. Many people I speak to believe they operate truly inclusive policies and activities because they “hire based on merit not gender”! And therefore no further action is required! The whole area around how to attract women into the industry in the first place needs to be tackled – gender neutral job advertising, and job descriptions and titles are just a few areas that must be promoted. The training of recruiting managers in the importance of culture and how to grow a healthy and inclusive culture is important to raise awareness.

### What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?

Be clear on owning your personal viewpoint or an opinion and use your own natural way of getting that across. Your view may not always be agreed with but in a male dominated industry that is full of different and diverse views that are voiced strongly it is important that your voice is heard well conveying your thoughts and ideas that you are passionate about.

### And finally, what is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders?

**Always make sure you have fun and remember that our industry is a great place to work with the best people of all genders/backgrounds!**



**Kate Clay**  
HR Director  
eStar Truck & Van

### What does International Women's Day mean to you?

I am passionate about women having an equal seat at whatever table they choose to be at, particularly in the motor trade. International Women's Day serves as a reminder to everyone

to keep on pushing the agenda for gender balance, and for women to celebrate themselves and each other as much as possible – if we can't do it for ourselves, we can expect our male counterparts to do it for us.

### When you began your career, did you imagine that you would become a female leader in a male dominated industry?

No, I began my career in HR at the tender age of 17 for Sainsbury's PLC, which has a much more diverse workforce and the motor trader wasn't even a consideration at this point. When I moved at the age of 20 into my first motor industry role, I don't think it affected me as much as it can affect other women – you still have to be thick-skinned as a woman in our industry, and while it shouldn't be like that, it unfortunately still is in some cases. At 20, I was a confident person in general, and working in the motor industry never phased me. I've experienced inappropriate comments in the past, but now in the position I am, I can set the culture in our business to make sure that this type of behaviour doesn't happen to protect more women moving forward and create a more inclusive environment.

### What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?

I love working in the motor industry and now have nearly 13 years' experience in this sector, and I do enjoy working in the trade. For me, it's about leading the change for the historical reputation in our industry and the stigma that is attached to a male-dominated working environment, implementing strategies and new initiatives to allow us to catch up with some of the more forward-thinking industries in terms of gender diversity and diversity in general.

### How can women – and men! – support other women in the automotive industry?

Everyone has their own individual strengths, and this should be something that can be utilised for the greater good – using energy to create positivity

rather than seeing other women as a threat, utilising allies and specific working groups to create a support network for women that will fly the flag for each other. Mentorship within your own business, or seeking it elsewhere, will also create a network of people you can rely on, share ideas, and be a go-to, should you need it.

### What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?

Firstly, take a zero tolerance stance on bullying, harassment, and discrimination, ensuring that policies are robust and that management adhere to this from the top down. It's a cultural piece that needs to be addressed. Once this is a working practice within a business, it will allow new ideas to come into play, for example with addressing training needs, ensuring managers are aware of what is and isn't acceptable i.e. unconscious bias training., and this links into unconscious bias recruitment that will allow broader talent pools to be created. Reviewing benefits is also important to ensure that you have a wide range of rewards that are inclusive and are set to attract a different and more diverse workforce.

### What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?

Don't be afraid to speak up if you see something that you don't feel is right. Don't allow yourself to put up with unacceptable behaviour for fear of being seen as a problem or in fear of retribution –any good business will take concerns of this nature seriously. Set out your career path or an idea of what you would like to achieve. And ask questions – no question is a stupid one.

### And finally, what is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders?

**Find a good mentor that you can use as a sounding board, someone to go to for advice, someone that you trust to support you in your future development. Set out your career goals – define them and don't be afraid to move or deviate temporarily, but keep the ultimate goal in mind and strive to achieve it. Finally, ensure you understand the business that you work for so you can add the most value to the business, aligning your goals to that of the organisation.**



**Katrin Schneider**  
Senior VP of  
Transformation Project,  
SBU Intelligent Cockpit  
**HARMAN  
Automotive**

### **What does International Women's Day mean to you?**

International Women's Day is a day where the entire world celebrates and honours positive change, actions and achievements in equality.

### **When you began your career, did you imagine that you would become a female leader in a male-dominated industry?**

When I began my career, I was curious and very interested in electrical engineering – I didn't foresee where that journey would take me. Mobile networking and mobile phones played a major part in my younger life, as well as the automotive industry. And to be honest, I was so interested in the technology that I didn't even think about it being a 'male dominated' industry and that it could be a barrier.

### **What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?**

The automotive industry is a wonderful and incredibly interesting sector to work in. While a key industry topic of discussion is automotive transformation – and one that is a huge part of our every day – there is so much more happening to get involved in and get motivated about.

### **How can women –and men! –support other women in the automotive industry?**

A good feedback culture is incredibly helpful in fostering diversity. An environment where open and constructive feedback is fundamental to day-to-day activities, along with the organisation's values and practices, can really help enhance employee engagement, communication, motivation and a

greater sense of responsibility and belonging. If we communicate with a very honest and respectful mindset, we all have the potential to support others and improve ourselves.

### **What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?**

The automotive industry has already established many mechanisms to focus on diversity, equality and inclusion. It is everyone's responsibility to continue making forward steps and strive for a diverse environment. Statistics show that diverse teams are more successful, illustrating great benefits from seeking team members who are not like ourselves. In my opinion, it is always good to take responsibility for identifying areas of personal improvement and to find subject matter experts, team members, peers or friends that can support me in making progress and bridge these skill gaps.

### **What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?**

Be yourself. Focus on objective thinking. Always base your decisions on data and facts – do not get caught up in emotions. Embrace your passion, and always strive for excellence.

### **And finally, what is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders?**

**The next generation has been fortunate to grow up in an environment of already increasing diversity. Therefore, my wish is for further investment in the positive actions and initiatives that will continue to promote diversity across all aspects, and to concentrate on building a common understanding of 'what good looks like' in a diverse environment, so we can continue to strive for these positive standards.**



**Cheryl Thompson**  
Founder and CEO  
Center for  
Automotive  
Diversity, Inclusion  
& Advancement

### **What does International Women's Day mean to you?**

IWD is learning about, celebrating and honoring the women that paved the way for us, it is about lifting other women up and raising awareness to what we can bring to

the bottom line, and it is about inviting men to be our allies.

### **When you began your career, did you imagine that you would become a female leader in a male-dominated industry/profession?**

No, I accidentally landed in automotive as a tool and die apprentice. I would listen to the men I worked with complain about the "boss man", and I thought I don't EVER want to be in that position. Well, I overcame that hurdle, and I remember just smiling to myself knowing some may be complaining about the "boss woman", and that's ok.

### **What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?**

To me working in the automotive industry is all about the people. I believe relationships are currency – it is how we get things done. I still love the smell of a manufacturing facility – it gets into your blood. As we used to say, "I have chips in my shoes". Chips meaning – machining chips. I am still fascinated by our ability to make something out of nothing. I've been in the industry for over 30 years, and I can say without a doubt, this is the most exciting time to be here.

### **How can women –and men! –support other women in the automotive industry?**

We all know that women are underrepresented in the automotive industry. I believe this industry has the BEST problem-solving tools that help us identify and solve for root cause. We need to apply those tools to this challenge. A lack of women is a symptom of a bigger issue – actually several issues.

Mentoring and allyship can only get us so far. We need to be strategic and systemic in our thinking and use tools like the 5 Whys, PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act), 8D,  $y = f(x)$ , and many more.

### **What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?**

We need to be more inclusive with our recruiting and need to put more of a focus on retention. Let's learn from attrition and take the steps to REALLY change the culture - it is time. We can do all of the inclusive recruiting we want, but if the culture isn't ready to receive them, they will leave. Let's define the behaviors we expect of our leaders and hold each other accountable to living out these behaviors on a day to day basis – even when it is hard. One of my favorite quote is, "your culture is defined by the worst behavior you tolerate". Words to live by in my view.

### **What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?**

Surround yourself with a tribe of those who lift you up and support you. If you find yourself around people who say, "I'm not sure she can", you need a new tribe. I was able to make a significant leap once I surrounded myself with people that said, "of course she can". My second piece of advice is to have a few different mentors, and at least one should be outside of your company to broaden your perspective. My last piece of advice is, do not sell yourself short. Everyone has a bit of imposter syndrome – accept that and carry on.

### **And finally, what is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders?**

**You belong. We need you. When I got my first leadership position, I remember being in the room with my new peers thinking, "hmm....I thought you guys had it all figured out". They don't. Step up and let's go!!**



**Erin Baker**  
*Editorial Director*  
**AutoTrader**

**What does International Women’s Day mean to you?**

I’m always in two minds about IWD. I think it’s important we don’t mindlessly celebrate the achievements of women, because that only serves to highlight that we have different expectations in

the first instance for the two genders, and I find it patronising: equality should negate the need for IWD. But until we get there, we can use it to remember that there is still a gender gap to close in so many industries and markets, so it should be used to raise awareness of inequality, in my mind.

**When you began your career, did you imagine that you would become a female leader in a male dominated industry?**

This sounds startlingly arrogant so bear with me! Yes, I did imagine I’d become a female leader in automotive journalism when I started on that path, because it was immediately startlingly obvious that there were almost no female motoring journalists, so it wouldn’t take long to become a senior female figure, given there were about five of us in the UK! I’m good at what I do, but, like all leaders, I’ve also been very lucky and my timing has been great: the industry is very focused on narrowing the gender gap now, which propels those of us who are women to the front of the queue.

**What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?**

I’m so proud to work in automotive: it’s been an incredible part of the UK’s manufacturing and export success story for over a century now. It’s a hot bed for innovation, and science, and so many great careers.

**How can women – and men! – support other women in the automotive industry?**

Allyship and sponsorship are both strong buzzwords at the moment, but



**Lauren Tedesco**  
*Senior Vice President*  
**Automotive Parts Manufacturers’ Association (APMA)**

**What does International Women’s Day mean to you?**

This day is about celebrating women’s achievements globally while recognizing the work that still needs to be done – there is a long road ahead of us when it

comes to women’s rights and participation in political and economic arenas.

**When you began your career, did you imagine that you would become a female leader in a male-dominated industry profession?**

No and I would be surprised if other women in the auto industry had a different response. This sector has been dominated by men since it started 120 years ago and very few women have made it to the top, even when we see this changing in areas like healthcare, tech and finance. I’m proud to see women like Bev Goodman, President and CEO of Ford Canada and Linda Hasenfratz, CEO of Linamar grabbing the bull by the horns.

**What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?**

Working in the auto industry is about building the future of mobility for everyone. Crash test dummies are based on the average male body, which is likely why women are 73 per cent more likely to be injured in a car accident. This is why we need more representation, such as women, racialized communities, people with disabilities, to define and shape the future of cars – it is life or death.

essentially it boils down to respect and kindness in the workplace. It’s vital to see men turning up for gender equality discussions, and supporting women’s networks.

**What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?**

D&I is now at the forefront of most organisations’ practices and policies. But I’d caution against ignoring inclusion in the race to champion diversity. For example, when the focus is on championing women, men can feel left out or rejected. I also think that while a focus on building pipelines is excellent, we haven’t done nearly enough work on retention, especially of women in their 50s and 60s.

**What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?**

The first bit of advice I’d give to women coming into automotive is to be yourself. That doesn’t mean you shouldn’t be flexible and accommodating in your approach to your company and your colleagues, but it does mean not trying to ape the men around you in your language or thoughts. I spent far too long mirroring the behaviour and beliefs of my male colleagues because I thought they would be more intrinsically right in the automotive world. Women look at things sometimes through a lifestyle lense, or more emotively in their language, and these are strengths, not weaknesses.

**And finally, what is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders?**

**To the next generation of female leaders: lift the women around you as you rise. Challenge the organisational structures built around the male working pattern, and be radical in the language you use in your content and communications, so that it reflects the way women feel and speak more authentically.**

**How can women – and men! – support other women in the automotive industry?**

Supporting women in the automotive industry is twofold. We are agents of change leading our own advocacy but we need change in the organization, its systems and structures. Together, these create a powerful environment for women because employers will see us as a person, not just an employee. Women are often the primary caregiver for their families, not just children but aging parents. Our job doesn’t start at 9am and end at 5pm, only our paid work does.

**What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?**

It’s on repeat but we need to say it a little louder for those in the back. Bring in diverse leaders – and not just one – at all levels of leadership from management to C-suite to the board of directors. Diversity of thought through lived experience will bring about monumental shifts and small nuances that make the workplace equitable and inclusive. The excuse “we can’t find the right candidates” only says you keep looking in the same places for the same people.

**What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like automotive or tech?**

Don’t ask for permission.

**And finally, what is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders?**

**Stand on the shoulders of giants, the women who are leading now, and never look back.**



**Anya Ernest**  
Principal Engineer  
Polestar

### What does International Women's Day mean to you?

Every day I feel a deep sense of pride for the women in my family, among my friends, at work, in the world and throughout history. And on International Women's Day, I

take a pause and reflect.

It's a day dedicated to celebrating the hard work of women throughout history, and all the women today who continue the fight for equal rights. Whether that involves boosting a colleague on LinkedIn, raising your son to be aware of his privilege, knitting a pussy-hat, writing to the government to highlight discriminating interpretations of laws, speaking at a Reuters conference, or just being mindful of your integrity. We don't all have to advocate for equal rights in the same way, but we should all be celebrated for our efforts.

### When you began your career, did you imagine that you would become a female leader in a male-dominated industry/profession?

My mother raised me up in a way that didn't focus on people's genders. I think this had both pros and cons for me. For example, when I was younger I struggled to connect with girls, though it might have been just as challenging with boys if they had been brought up to reflect and share their feelings more freely. But as it was, I believe this steered me towards, or at least did not deter me from more male-dominated industries such as software, automotive, research, and design.

But I think I have always been taking the role as a leader in one way or another. The difference today being that I am now a manager.

### What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?

This is an industry in desperate need of redefinition. While we've enjoyed comfortable profits and development the last century, margins and new legislation now demand a shift. One driving force is sustainability, both financially and ecologically. We need to be smarter in our designs, the manufacturing and recycling of our products, and take responsibility of the entire lifecycle, including use phase, reuse and repurpose. And in parallel, we should explore new innovative business models.

I believe that applying a design-thinking mindset to building processes and new ways of working is the only way forward. We must prioritise user and planet-centric approaches.

As a designer, I of course find this incredibly exciting. Being able to support my organization in making big decisions about the unknown within a constantly evolving field is a driving factor. We have the opportunity to make impactful changes for the bigger picture.

### How can women – and men! – support other women in the automotive industry?

Thank you for including men in this question. We all need to fight for those who are less privileged than ourselves! And equal rights are not confined to gender. Wherever we are more privileged, we need to support those who aren't. That can vary and be contextual. Be aware and empathetic!

Leadership plays a crucial role, starting from the top. At Polestar our HR department is actively driving the diversity agenda, making it so much easier for me to evolve to a better leader. It involves growing a mindset and aligning actions accordingly. Collaborating across the organization and engaging with other companies within the industry on these topics also plays an important role.

### What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?

I think that we have taken several important steps at Polestar to create a more diverse and inclusive workplace, including initiatives for unbiased recruitment through anonymised applications and training of recruiters and leaders. We also have set clear targets and KPIs for Inclusion-initiatives, i.e. gender balance. Even if the share of female employees at Polestar exceeds the industry standard, we are convinced that an improved gender balance will make us a better company.

This comes back to an active HR and recruitment department, as well as top management being engaged and appointing a diverse group of people on all levels.

We need role models. It's hard to envision yourself at an organization that is based on a norm that you can't relate to.

### What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?

I believe in seeking good leadership, or if that is lacking finding a mentor who can help you break through. Apart from that, just go for it – remember to take responsibility for your own personal and professional development while considering how you can support your business and colleagues. Believe in yourself and your capability; you're there for a reason! Ally and collaborate with others who believe in you.

### And finally, what is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders?

**I would so much like for us to drop the prefix, we are not female leaders, we are leaders. The most effective way forward is for us to break the prejudice and see all of the amazing humans around us. Believe in yourself and your vision, but always be empathetic. To be able to lead you need someone to follow you, and that is the way to success.**



**Shantera Chatman**  
President,  
Global Culture  
Strategist  
PowHer  
Consulting

### What does International Women's Day mean to you?

IWD means an opportunity to share the contributions of women and the true value we bring to the world. It is a time to celebrate our accomplishments but also to acknowledge the work yet to be

done on the way to true equity in the workplace, in sports, and other areas of our lives.

### When you began your career, did you imagine that you would become a leader in a male-dominated industry?

I always saw myself as a leader. When I was young, I knew I would succeed and be one of the best and when I graduated from college, I began my career at NASA, which is male-dominated so yes, I always imagined being a leader in a male-dominated profession. As a consultant who works predominantly on IT-related projects, it has been my reality from the very beginning.

### What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?

I genuinely enjoy working in the automotive industry because I am always on the cutting edge of technology and innovation. Things change rapidly, and there is no time for complacency or boredom. It is an exciting time in my career.

### How can women – and men support women in the automotive industry?

Of course, both women and men can support one another by mentoring each other when there are opportunities. Still, they can also advocate for each other in meetings with leaders and amplify their voices when they are not in the room or silenced. These are the situations that matter the most. We must be courageous enough to use our voices and seats at the table to help usher others in.

### What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?

There are several steps the automotive industry can take to continue to ensure their organizations are equitable and inclusive. Instituting blind recruiting practices helps to reduce bias in the process and assures the candidates are reviewed fairly. Another essential recruiting technique is to cast a wide net for job postings. Long gone are the days of recruiting from your network, as it only allows a particular type of person to be considered for the position. Casting the net far and wide ensures more than the "usual" candidates will get an opportunity to apply, allowing for a greater chance to find a diamond in the rough.

### What advice can you share with young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?

I would advise young women entering a male-dominated industry not to be intimidated. You belong in every conference room, office space, and meeting where decisions are made. Take up space and allow your voice to be heard. No question is a dumb question. Everyone there was a new employee once and had to learn the ropes. You will soon be the leader. Walk into the room as if you own the place, with your head held high. You have earned your seat. Sit tall.

### What is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders?

**My advice to the next generation of leaders is not to try to be something you are not. You are female, and you are leaders. Embrace both to the fullest. One should not have to sacrifice for the other. Find your balance between the two and thrive in it.**



**Jody DeVere**  
CEO  
AskPatty.com,  
Inc.

### What does International Women's Day mean to you?

International Women's Day for me is an opportunity to inspire and uplift future generations of women. It's about creating a world where younger women can aspire to achieve their goals

without facing gender-based barriers.

When you began your career, did you imagine that you would become a female leader in a male dominated industry?

While I did not plan at the beginning of my career, it's not uncommon for women like myself to find themselves in leadership roles in industries traditionally dominated by the opposite gender as their careers progress. Many leaders, including myself, have broken barriers and contributed to creating more inclusive and diverse environments within their respective industries.

### What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?

Being recognized for my advocacy for women in the automotive industry and my efforts to promote a female-friendly approach in automotive retail locations like car dealerships has been a very satisfying and meaningful career in automotive for me. My journey involved overcoming challenges and breaking through stereotypes, I really enjoy leading the charge in making a difference for women in the automotive industry.

### How can women – and men! – support other women in the automotive industry?

#### Mentorship:

- Establish Mentorship Programs: Companies need to create formal mentorship programs pairing experienced women in the industry with those seeking guidance. This helps build professional relationships and provides guidance for career growth.

- Informal Mentorship: Encourage informal mentorship by fostering a culture where individuals feel comfortable seeking advice and guidance from colleagues.

#### Allyship:

- Promote Inclusive Practices: Allies can advocate for policies and practices that promote gender inclusivity, such as diverse hiring practices and equal opportunities for career advancement.
- Amplification: Actively amplify the voices of women in meetings and discussions, ensuring their ideas are heard and recognized.

### What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?

Offer regular training on diversity, equity, and inclusion to all employees. This should cover topics such as unconscious bias, microaggressions, and creating an inclusive workplace culture. Establish and support Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) focused on various dimensions of diversity. These groups provide a space for employees to connect, share experiences, and advocate for change.

### What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?

Find mentors, both male and female, who can provide guidance, share their experiences, and offer support as you navigate your career path.

### And finally, what is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders?

**Learn to advocate for your ideas, contributions, and career goals. Don't be afraid to speak up in meetings, online at industry events to advocate for yourself and make your voice heard.**



**Kathy Gilbert**  
*Governing Board  
 Women In  
 Automotive*

**What does International Women’s Day mean to you?**

International Women’s Day holds significance for me as a globally acknowledged and observed occasion dedicated to recognizing the historical achievements and contributions of

women across diverse fields. It serves as a platform to raise awareness about the pivotal role women play globally and within the automotive industry.

Within CDK, we commemorate this day through organized events and discussions aimed at shedding light on both the challenges and accomplishments of women. These initiatives contribute to fostering mutual support and furthering our collective personal and professional development. And as a Founding Board member of Women In Automotive, International Women’s Day means giving back, advocating and helping to build a community of women who celebrate the advancements that women are making in moving the industry forward.

**What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?**

With nearly three decades of experience in the automotive industry, my journey has been characterized by both gratifying moments and challenges as a woman and minority professional. Historically, the industry has witnessed underrepresentation from both these groups, but there is ongoing progress. The significance of contributing unique perspectives and ideas, which enhances opportunities to drive positive changes within automotive, holds paramount importance to me.

**How can women – and men! – support other women in the automotive industry?**

In the month of March, encompassing Women’s History Month and International Women’s Day, it is imperative that we collectively cultivate an inclusive and empowering workplace conducive to enabling individuals

to realize their fullest potential. The true support for women begins with a genuine commitment to equity in all facets of our recruitment, hiring, development, and promotion processes for women. The provision of mentorship, sponsorship, and coaching serves as a means to share our experiences, bringing out the best in individuals and guiding them through their unique career journeys. Finally, investing in training and professional development programs becomes instrumental in honing the skills requisite for excelling in our chosen roles and within the profession at large.

**What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?**

The automotive industry has the potential to evolve into a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization by recognizing the inherent value it can derive from such transformation. The pivotal aspects of recruitment and retention demand a strategic approach, wherein adopting targeted diversity strategies and implementing unbiased hiring practices serve as integral initial measures. Furthermore, the imperative lies in providing comprehensive Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training for all stakeholders, fostering awareness and understanding to drive sustainable change. Lastly, a collective call is extended to individuals, including men, to share their diversity stories, collectively contributing to advancing the role each of us plays in shaping a more inclusive workplace and automotive industry.

**What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?**

The automotive industry presents significant opportunities for women to thrive. I strongly urge them to leverage their skills, adopting a continuous learning mindset to expand their knowledge daily. Embrace both strengths and weaknesses, placing trust in oneself. Networking is crucial; therefore, women should actively build a support system that offers guidance, encouragement, and, most importantly, a sense of community. **Lastly, I encourage young women to advocate for themselves confidently, recognizing the value they bring to the industry.**



**Amberly Allen**  
*Managing Partner  
 of Dealer Merchant  
 Services and President  
 of DI Marketing  
 Dealer Merchant  
 Services*

**What does International Women’s Day mean to you?**

When starting my career, I was part of The Women’s President’s Organization. My mentors had to have their husbands open their business bank accounts as it was

a requirement at that time. Women have sure come a long way since then. As a woman, mother, sister, and aunt - women make the world a better place, and we appreciate the recognition! We certainly make the planet a lot more fun!

**When you began your career, did you imagine that you would become a female leader in a male-dominated industry?**

Growing up as the only girl with 3 brothers, I’m not sure I imagined working in the automotive industry, but I do think it was meant for me. My brothers never treated me any differently than they treated one another, so I don’t consider myself as being different in this industry. I have the great fortune of working with some incredible men that are smart, supportive, respectful, and loyal.

**What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?**

It means everything to me. My life and my kids’ lives are forever changed in a great way as this industry has given me the ability to support my family as a single mother. I wouldn’t want to work in any other industry. Car dealers are some of the most resourceful entrepreneurs in business, and I have learned so much from so many of them.

**How can women – and men! – support other women in the automotive industry?**

Within mentorship, when you speak prosperity over people and confidence, capability, and positivity - they can receive it. When you speak confidence over people, men or women, and guide them and give them the tools they need to

get the job done, they will be successful. Choosing, with intentionality, to be positive over negative is the keystone in any industry, especially ours being as fast paced as it is.

**What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?**

Offer flexibility. Mothers are some of the most capable and hard-working people out there. And if they are given the flexibility to manage home and work with flexible parameters, the automotive industry would benefit in a great way. Women care, and they will run through a wall to get the job done.

**What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?**

You can’t take things personally. The leaders are running their business, and that is their priority. Focusing on anything but getting the job done is a waste of time. Must be thick-skinned, know how to protect your energy from negativity. Emotions or personal life must be left at the door, and you must focus on getting the job done. Emotional intelligence is huge. Actually, it’s less and less male-dominated now, and it’s simply full of ambitious people. Plus, the automotive industry is one of the most lucrative industries for people that are willing to work hard. It will give back by way of financial independence.

**And finally, what is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders?**

Be confident. Using your feminine energy to your advantage allows you to be strong and vulnerable. And with that, you can connect with your team the right way. When you enter a room thinking you have to prove yourself, it sometimes comes across too strongly. Having the knowingness that you deserve to be in that room will help. **Don’t try to be perfect. Progress over perfection. We all know that Microsoft launched with 40,000 bugs. If they tried to be perfect before moving forward, there would be no Microsoft as we know it today.**



**Diana Lee**  
Co-Founder &  
CEO  
Constellation

**When you began your career, did you imagine that you would become a female leader in a male dominated industry?**

No, I never imagined that I would become a female innovator in a male-dominated industry. It became evident

to me at every event and meeting I attended, as I consistently found myself being the only woman or minority present. The lack of diversity in the auto industry was glaring, and it seemed improbable that I could make a significant impact. However, after accumulating 30 years of experience, I came to the realization that it is crucial for women to shatter the glass ceiling and demand representation in an industry where female customers make up 50 percent of the market.

**What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?**

I'm really pumped about working in the auto industry right now. There's so much disruption happening, especially with new ways of selling cars and the rise of electric vehicles (EVs). It's incredibly exciting to be part of this wave of change and to have the chance to rethink how we use and sell automobiles in the US markets. We're essentially rewriting the rules and creating a new path for the industry. It's an exciting time to be involved!

**How can women – and men! – support other women in the automotive industry?**

Promoting gender equality and fostering a culture of support is beneficial for everyone involved. It's not about men versus women or women versus women, but about creating an environment where everyone can thrive and succeed together. By challenging stereotypes and embracing a more collaborative mindset, we can work towards a more inclusive and supportive auto industry for all.

**What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?**

From my perspective, promoting and hiring more women in the auto industry is a fairly straightforward concept, but it does require intentionality. It's about making a conscious decision to prioritize gender diversity and actively ensuring that women are represented in the seats we fill within our organizations. This decision typically starts at the top, with the CEO or other top leadership taking the lead.

When the CEO makes a deliberate choice to prioritize gender diversity, it sends a powerful message throughout the organization. It sets the tone and expectations for everyone else to follow suit. It's not just about making a statement; it's about taking action. That means implementing fair and inclusive hiring practices, providing equal opportunities for professional growth, and creating an environment where women can thrive.

By intentionally promoting and hiring more women, we can tap into a broader talent pool, bring fresh perspectives and ideas to the table, and ultimately create a more balanced and representative auto industry. It's a decision that can make a significant impact on the success and innovation of our organizations.

**What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?**

Here's the advice I'd give to women: always remember to "ask for more." It's something we're not always encouraged to do because we're often raised to be supportive and not take up too much space. But in the world of business, I've learned that if you don't ask for more, you might miss out on incredible opportunities.

It's fundamental for me because I've seen firsthand how asking for more can make a significant impact on our careers. If we want to move forward and seize those opportunities, we can't be afraid to speak up and advocate for ourselves. Whether it's asking for a promotion, a raise, or more challenging assignments, we have to be proactive and assertive.

I understand that it can be uncomfortable to put ourselves out there and ask for what we want, but it's essential for our professional growth. We need to recognize our own value and worth and have the confidence to demand what we deserve. More often than not, when we ask, we'll find that people are receptive and willing to support us.

So, let's break free from those societal expectations that hold us back and embrace the power of asking for more. It's a game-changer in our careers, and it can open doors we never thought possible. Remember, you deserve it, so don't be afraid to ask for more.

**And finally, what is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders?**

Fear can really hold us back from reaching our true potential. Our minds have a way of creating all these scenarios that make us hesitant to take risks. But here's the thing: if we want to move up and achieve success, we have to be willing to step out of our comfort zones and take some risks. It's through those risks that we often find the greatest rewards.

Now, let's talk about some eye-opening statistics. Did you know that only 2 percent of venture funds in the US are allocated to female-led companies? And that includes women from all backgrounds, whether they're white, black, Asian, or Hispanic. Just 2 percent! It's clear that we still have a long way to go. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/shelleyzalis/2023/08/01/we-can-fix-the-funding-gap---heres-how/?sh=46f9f5932a1e>

But here's the deal: it's our duty to the next generation to change this. If we don't take action, our daughters won't have a fair chance at success. We have to break through that glass ceiling and create more opportunities for women. It won't be an easy task, but it's one that we can't ignore.

By challenging the status quo, advocating for change, and supporting female-led initiatives, we can start making a real difference. It's time to level the playing field and create a more inclusive and supportive environment for everyone. Together, we can pave the way for a brighter future and ensure that our daughters and future generations have the opportunities they deserve.

**So let's roll up our sleeves, rally together, and push for progress. We owe it to ourselves, our daughters, and all the women who will come after us. It's time to shatter that glass ceiling and create a world where gender doesn't limit anyone's potential.**



**Jamie Farley**  
Podcast Creator  
*Get In Her Lane*

### **What does International Women's Day mean to you?**

The day signifies an opportunity to express solidarity with women worldwide. It is important to me that we continually strive to create a world where all individuals, regardless of

gender, have equal opportunities and rights. International Women's Day allows for the celebration of inspirational women who have paved the way for positive change. It is my responsibility to do the same through the work that I do and the relationships I have at work and in my personal life.

### **When you began your career, did you imagine that you would become a female leader in a male dominated industry?**

I had no idea that I would end up in a male-dominated industry! Like many women, I fell into automotive because the timing and opportunity hit me at the right time. I was fortunate to be recruited from college to work at an OEM. Growing in this career has allowed me to see the opportunities for more women to consider a career in automotive and grow into leadership positions, whether with an OEM, Dealer, or Vendor. I am passionate about sharing all the great things this industry offers to attract a more extensive and diverse talent pool.

### **What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?**

I love working in automotive because it is dynamic, exciting, and constantly changing! There are a lot of opportunities in the industry and the ability to make an impact on people's lives. Cars are becoming increasingly sophisticated. There is always something new to learn to keep pace with customers' needs and wants.

### **How can women – and men! – support other women in the automotive industry?**

Intent and action differ, and everyone should realize that the intent to improve gender equity isn't enough. Leaders should be taking action to invest in

women to create gender balance. Women shouldn't be left wondering if they are the problem and trying to solve it on their own. Women should be working to meet the industry where it is by showing up daily, raising our hands, and paving new paths while supporting other women along the way. Men must get more involved and engaged to move from awareness to true advocacy.

### **What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?**

Step one is understanding that women are leading the consumer economy! Women account for up to 85% of consumer purchases because we have the decision-making power, including what we drive. The make-up of the industry should reflect its consumers. If companies can lead with that critical thought, hiring women and a more diverse workforce would be at the top of the priority list, and the actions taken for hiring, recruiting, and growing leaders would also reflect that. Diversity in the workforce drives diversity of thought and fosters innovation, which is critical to success.

### **What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?**

Embrace your differences and use them in your work to complement what's out there! You likely have a unique background, set of skills, or a different perspective, which is a strength, not a limitation. Use these to your advantage as you grow in your work and make an impact in the industry.

### **And finally, what is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders?**

As someone deeply immersed in the automotive industry and passionate about empowering women, my advice is to set ambitious goals for yourself and pursue them with determination. Don't let stereotypes or preconceived notions hinder your progress. **Don't be afraid to navigate the twists and turns while staying true to yourself. The automotive world will be richer and the future brighter with your involvement.**



**Jaymi Wilson**  
Senior Vice President  
and General Manager  
North America  
Automotive, Global  
Sales and Marketing  
Gentherm

### **What does International Women's Day mean to you?**

International Women's Day is special to me as it is a day to celebrate the achievements and contributions of women across the globe and provide a broad

platform to support women. It's an opportunity to amplify the voices of women and inspire the next generation of female leaders. International Women's Day is also a reminder of the importance of inclusivity, equal opportunities, and the ongoing commitment to creating a world where women can thrive and excel in every sector, including the dynamic and evolving landscape of the automotive industry.

### **When you began your career, did you imagine that you would become a female leader in a male-dominated industry/profession?**

When I started my career, becoming a female leader in a traditionally male-dominated field was not something I had on my radar. My initial focus was on pursuing my passion for solving problems, both technical and business problems. However, as I navigated through my career, I became increasingly aware of the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles. I was lucky enough to have a couple of very strong female leaders early in my career that provided the opportunity and encouragement to push myself to the next levels of success. While this was challenging at first, over the years I learned that if I was the only woman in the room, I could provide value to the team by sharing my perspective as it was typically unique and drove a more comprehensive approach to business solutions.

### **What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?**

Working in the automotive industry has presented me with incredible opportunities and diverse experiences that have shaped my career. At Gentherm, I have been able to work on all areas of the business, which has given me an incredible perspective on the industry and allowed me to work with talented team members from across the world deeply inspiring me both professionally and personally.

### **How can women –and men! –support other women in the automotive industry?**

Mentorship certainly helps to maximize the potential of any individual. Throughout my career, mentorship has been an instrumental part in developing new skills and networking within the industry. Curating multiple informal mentor relationships and building a personal board of directors can help you grow through different parts of your career. Also, a sponsorship is very impactful, especially from men. This sponsorship role is focused on actively identifying and advocating for leadership positions for women within the organization they work.

### **What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?**

Creating a diverse organization is an important responsibility for leaders across the industry. By supporting early engagement and academic success in STEM, leaders can position young women to have a transformational impact on our future. In addition, seeking out and attracting diverse talent allows for a range of perspectives that can bring new ideas. Finally, fostering an inclusive workplace culture through mentorship programs, leadership development initiatives, and networking opportunities can provide support and guidance for all individuals from diverse backgrounds.

### **What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?**

Recognize that your unique perspective brings valuable insights to the team. Don't be afraid to pursue new opportunities and build a network of allies who can help you invest in your skills. Most importantly, don't be afraid to assert yourself – your voice matters.

### **And finally, what is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders?**

**Embrace the industry and have confidence in your abilities. Build a strong network to overcome challenges and continue to pave the way for a more inclusive future as the next generation of female leaders in automotive.**



**Eileen Falkenberg-Hull**  
Senior Editor,  
Autos  
Newsweek

### **What does International Women's Day mean to you?**

While great strides have been made in women's rights over the last century, International Women's Day is a time to reflect on how far there still is to go in many nations across the globe.

### **When you began your career, did you imagine that you would become a female leader in a male-dominated industry/profession?**

I never considered not becoming a leader. Why would the profession's genre stop me from wanting to achieve my goals? That would be nonsense.

### **How can women –and men! –support other women in the automotive industry?**

The best thing any professional can do is to lead by example. Improving upon your lessons learned and passing on that knowledge to others helps establish stepping stones for the betterment of those who come after you.

### **What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?**

Do not allow your perception of someone else's bias stand in your way. Never forget it. Strategize to move past it. Reflect that lesson in how you move forward. But, never let it define you.

### **And finally, what is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders?**

**Do not simply say you deserve equal treatment. Show up and do the work. Prove that you belong there, regardless of your sex. Let your good, valuable work be your demand for their respect.**



**Scotty Reiss**  
Founder  
A Girls Guide to Cars

### **What does International Women's Day mean to you?**

We get so caught up in our routines, challenges and obligations that we sometimes forget to look at the big picture — who we are and what we've

accomplished. It's nice to have a single day that lets us focus on this. Everyone deserves the spotlight for a moment each year.

### **When you began your career, did you imagine that you would become a female leader in a male-dominated industry/profession?**

When it was first proposed to me that I work in automotive, I dismissed the idea. I didn't see the automotive industry as friendly to women, nor did I see the topic as naturally interesting to women. I couldn't have been more wrong. One look at the statistics shows how powerful women are as consumers; it's clear that female consumers deserve a stronger voice. And with such a large consumer base, it's also clear that the industry needs to hire and promote more women in order to build deeper connections to its customers.

### **What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?**

Given that I wasn't particularly interested in working in automotive, it's been the most rewarding and surprising move of my life. Not only did I find an industry that needs me, but I found a community of women and men who are warm, welcoming and want to see you succeed. They are helpful, kind and giving and the sense of camaraderie — rather than competitiveness — is inspiring.

### **What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?**

What can we do next? The automotive industry practiced DEI before DEI was a thing. The effort goes back decades to a time when auto companies recognized the need to develop a diverse workforce out of the need to hire the best people for their companies. Companies like GM and Ford developed plans to recruit, hire and train women and people of diverse backgrounds and build a pathway to leadership for those who wanted it.

In recent years the DEI movement has been a popular one across most industries, but sadly, it's become politicized and now, many companies are pushing back. Pundits are saying DEI is window dressing. Detractors are saying it doesn't work. Some companies are re-framing the idea altogether. But in automotive, diversity is part of the fabric of our industry. For female leaders and those with diverse backgrounds it's business as usual, and it will continue to be how we operate. Every day we see companies recruiting and hiring women and leaders from diverse backgrounds — hiring from other industries and sectors, recruiting from schools and colleges, and promoting from within.

We know how powerful DEI is in terms of creating a dynamic workforce. While other companies dial back the focus on hiring female and diverse workers, automotive can further define best practices and set new standards. These may include efforts such as extend resources and practices to stakeholders such as suppliers and dealerships and more transparent growth, success and reward structures.

### **What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?**

Automotive still suffers from a perception by younger generations who don't see it as the industry for them; but for those who want a career with lots of potential, financial reward and a workplace filled with great people, there's hardly a better industry. You don't even need a passion for cars, you'll develop it as you grow— I did.

### **And finally, what is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders?**

**I hope leaders —women and men— will continue to see the shortcomings and opportunities in our business and continue to address them. The biggest shortcoming is the lack of women at top levels, especially in retail, which is also our biggest consumer pushback and our biggest opportunity. To have more women dealership owners, more GMs and more sales managers would send a clear signal to consumers, college students and the brightest people looking to build a career that this is the place you want to be.**



**Jennifer Morrison**  
*Leader of Vehicle Safety*  
**Mazda**

**What does International Women’s Day mean to you?**

Personally, I find it crucial to acknowledge and highlight the achievements of women in the automotive industry. Traditionally perceived as a male-dominated field,

the automotive industry is witnessing the influence of smart, strong and impactful women. International Women’s Day allows us to break free from stereotypes and recognize the diverse talents and capabilities of women making a difference in every corner of the world. This day is not just about recognition; it’s a spotlight on the incredible work that women do every single day - because that’s what we do, we get things done.

**When you began your career, did you imagine that you would become a female leader in a male-dominated industry/profession?**

From the outset of my career, I’ve maintained a laser focus on my passion for the work, and it’s this unwavering dedication that has paved the way for my success. I’ve always been determined to pursue my goals, and nothing, including my gender, has stood in my way. That’s not to say it’s been easy, there have been plenty of pain points. When I look back I see a young woman full of fire. I’m proud that I’ve not let anyone extinguish it.

**What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?**

Coming from a place of very few resources, education and pursuing my dreams required movement, and for me, that meant driving. Working in the automotive industry means more to me than just a career—it’s a profound connection to my passion for freedom and the transformative impact of having wheels beneath me.

Being a driver has always been integral to my identity. The automotive industry provided me with the means to gain the freedom I needed to move from where I was to where I aspired to be.

I strongly believe in the power of mobility and access for all, and the automotive industry truly opened up so many possibilities for me. Today, I am dedicated to advancing safety within the automotive sector. There is a lot of work to be done, but I am genuinely thrilled to be part of it.

**How can women – and men! – support other women in the automotive industry?**

Supporting women in the automotive industry, as well as fostering an inclusive environment that involves both women and men, requires creating a space where everyone has the opportunity to speak and be heard. It’s about ensuring that diverse voices are not only present but also actively engaged in the dialogue.

To achieve this, it’s crucial to establish opportunities that facilitate a broad spectrum of individuals sitting around the table. Recognizing that women make up half of the population, it becomes imperative for them to be included in decision-making processes. Sometimes, this involves a conscious effort to remind or encourage male colleagues to extend invitations to their female counterparts.

This commitment to inclusivity not only strengthens the automotive industry but also sets the stage for mentorship and allyship to flourish, fostering an environment where everyone can contribute to and benefit from the collective knowledge and expertise present in the field.

**What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?**

To foster a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization in the

automotive industry, it’s crucial to initiate efforts from the ground up. To do this, we can implement programs in schools and communities as they play a pivotal role in shaping a diverse talent pool and promoting inclusivity.

One strategy I’ve seen be effective involves engaging with school programs that encourage and expose young individuals, especially women, to opportunities within the automotive industry. Recently, I had the privilege of meeting April Caldwell, a dedicated leader within GIRLS Inc. in NYC, who tirelessly works with young women in her community. Through initiatives like STEM education and resource-sharing, these programs empower young women by showcasing various career paths, including safety engineering.

By actively participating in such programs, young women can witness firsthand what a career in the automotive industry entails, breaking down stereotypes and encouraging their pursuit of roles within the field. Promoting and investing in mentorship programs like GIRLS Inc. contributes significantly to creating a pipeline of talent from diverse backgrounds.

**What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?**

My advice to young women entering the automotive industry is rooted in the belief that confidence is cultivated through experience. Embrace opportunities, take on challenges, and say YES to the job, even if it feels daunting. Do it scared, if you must. The key is not to wait for confidence to magically appear but to build it through action.

Remember, you don’t have to be perfect or possess all-encompassing knowledge to make valuable contributions. Your unique perspective and voice are essential assets. Don’t hesitate to speak up, share your ideas, and actively participate in discussions. Your input can bring fresh insights and drive innovation within these traditionally male-dominated fields.

Stepping into unfamiliar territory can be intimidating, but that shouldn’t deter you. Every experience, even the challenging ones, contributes to your growth and expertise. Be willing to work hard, stay dedicated to your goals, and demonstrate the depth of your capabilities and you’ll go far.

**And finally, what is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders?**

I am incredibly optimistic about the abundance of upcoming female leaders in the automotive industry. It’s inspiring to witness the growth of this diverse and talented pool who will undoubtedly shape the future of our field.

As the next generation of automotive female leaders, you are poised to contribute to the creation of a remarkable era marked by better, smarter, and safer cars. Your impact will extend globally, influencing products that can make a real difference in people’s lives. My advice to them is to embrace the challenges that lie ahead, particularly in areas such as automation, electrification, and connectivity, as these are vital aspects that demand your unique insights and problem-solving abilities.

Remember the importance of collaboration and partnership. Listening to each other’s perspectives fosters an environment of collective intelligence, where diverse ideas come together to drive innovation. Together, we can tackle the challenges that lie ahead and continue to push the boundaries of what is possible in the automotive industry.

**So, suit up, think differently, and bring your unique skills and perspectives to the table! We need your brilliance, creativity, and determination to propel us into a future where automotive technology not only meets but exceeds the expectations of a rapidly evolving world. You are the driving force behind the positive changes that will define the automotive landscape for generations to come.**



**Axel Cooley**  
Board of  
Directors  
**Automotive  
Women's  
Alliance  
Foundation**

### What does International Women's Day mean to you?

As a proud Hispanic female entrepreneur in the auto industry, what International Women's Day means to me is a moment to celebrate the resilience and contributions of women

from diverse backgrounds across the globe.

International Women's Day is a time to reflect on the progress made in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, while also acknowledging the opportunity at hand to advance this conversation, here and now, to create a more equitable world for future generations.

As the Co-chair of Marketing for the Automotive Women's Alliance, International Women's Day to me is an opportunity to amplify the voices of women in the automotive sector, to advocate for greater representation and opportunities for women in leadership roles, and also to inspire the next generation of female leaders in this industry.

On this day, I am reminded of the power of collective action in driving change. It's a reminder that gender equality is not just a women's issue, but a fundamental human right that requires the involvement and support of everyone.

In essence, International Women's Day is a day of celebration, reflection, and action. It serves as a reminder of how far we've come, but also as a call to action to continue working towards a more inclusive world for all, today.

### When you began your career, did you imagine that you would be a female leader in a male-dominated industry?

From an early age, I always pictured myself breaking down barriers, pushing limits to achieve the impossible, and making an impact on a global space. With a name like Axel - I can see how I ended up in this industry. You see, from the tender age of 8, I was taught the power of words. In a sense, I was always calling it into being.

I was also taught the importance of thinking without limits and the necessity of proceeding without fear. My upbringing instilled in me a sense of confidence and determination that fueled my belief in my ability to excel in any field, regardless of its male-dominated nature.

My peers can attest to the fact that growing up with a name like Axel, I learned early on to embrace uniqueness and stand out in a crowd. To create. Just like an axle drives people in the right direction, I felt a sense of responsibility to lead by example and pave my own path. My name became a symbol of strength, resilience, and determination—a constant reminder to always strive for excellence and do what was right, even in the face of adversity. This mindset has certainly helped me excel in this sector and navigate by providing one of the most unique and needed supplies in this sector - rare earth metals. To do so, I have had to shatter glass ceilings, after gaining experience in 30 countries.

### What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?

I am both humbled and proud to work in this space. You see, entering the automotive industry in 2013 as a supplier of rare earth metals was a unique and blessed opportunity that I embraced wholeheartedly. As a young female entrepreneur in this space, I saw it not only as a chance to break barriers but also as a responsibility to make a significant impact. Supplying critical materials like PGMs (Platinum Group Metals) and other metals such as copper, iron ore (and now lithium) to automotive OEMs was not just about business; it was about shaping the future of transportation and contributing to the global shift towards electric vehicles.

Being Hispanic with global connections has been a tremendous advantage for me, allowing me to forge new paths and open doors in the automotive marketplace. My diverse background has enabled me to open up important

doors in Latin America and Africa to meet the growing demand for sustainable materials in the automotive sector. This has not only created job opportunities for people in these regions but has also empowered local communities and contributed to economic development.

The responsibility of supplying critical materials to the automotive industry, particularly as it races to build electric vehicles, is immense but incredibly rewarding. It's a chance to be at the forefront of innovation and play a pivotal role in shaping the future of transportation.

However, I am also acutely aware of the challenges and volatility of the market. The automotive industry is constantly evolving, and staying ahead requires adaptability, resilience, and a deep understanding of global trends and dynamics. My commitment to providing access to essential materials like lithium while navigating these challenges is unwavering.

In essence, being a female entrepreneur in the automotive industry, especially in the supply of critical materials for electric vehicles, is not just about business success—what working in this industry means to be is about driving positive change, creating opportunities, and leaving a lasting impact on both the industry and the world.

### How can women - and men! - support women in the automotive industry?

Men and women can support women in the auto industry by championing and participating in training, leadership workshops, and other self-improvement programs. These programs aren't just about enhancing one's skills—they're transformational for everyone!

For women, they boost confidence, realize their unique talents, empower them to realize their worth, and seize opportunities. Meanwhile, for men, it's about stepping up as allies, as well as promoting and embracing diversity. As we learn to value ourselves and each other through these initiatives, we realize that we're more similar than we think. Despite our differences, we are all humans with unlimited potential. Together, these initiatives create a turbocharged workplace where everyone flourishes, driving change towards a more awesome and inclusive world!

### What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?

In the fast-paced world of automotive, diversity isn't just a buzzword—it's the fuel that propels us forward. I say this because having worked in 30 countries before coming to the United States, I've witnessed firsthand the global significance of the automotive industry. As the world's attention remains fixed on mobility, those of us privileged to operate within this fun and dynamic sector bear a pivotal responsibility to lead the charge.

Hence, to surge forward towards a future defined by equity and opportunity, the automotive industry must not just acknowledge but actively champion inclusivity.

Here's how:

**Lead with Purpose:** Install diverse leadership to steer the course towards a culture of inclusivity.

**Recruit with Intention:** Seek out talent from diverse backgrounds, fueling innovation with fresh perspectives.

**Cultivate a Culture of Belonging:** Foster an environment where every voice is valued and celebrated.

**Measure Progress:** Set clear goals and hold ourselves accountable for driving meaningful change.

**Collaborate for Impact:** Join forces with industry peers to break down barriers and drive systemic change.

I invite you to start today. Every step counts - no matter how big or small!

## **What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like automotive or tech?**

To the courageous young women stepping into male-dominated industries like automotive, I offer these words as a guiding beacon on their journey:

As you embark on this exhilarating adventure, remember this: You possess the extraordinary power to shape your reality. Your thoughts are the architects of your destiny, and with unwavering determination, you can achieve anything you set your mind to. Believe in the limitless potential that resides within you - there are no boundaries to what you can accomplish.

In a world where words have the power to build bridges or erect barriers, choose them with intention and conviction. Let your voice resonate with confidence, for it is a catalyst for change and a force to be reckoned with. Never ever fear challenges that may lie ahead, these are just stepping stones on the path to greatness!

In fact, I encourage you to stand tall in the face of adversity, believe in yourself. No obstacle can beat you when fueled by the fire of passion and purpose. Don't let other's opinions or doubt imposed by others dim the brilliance of your dreams. Trust in the wisdom of your inner voice, as this is the compass guiding you towards your life's purpose.

And remember, you are not alone on this journey. Seek out mentors, allies, and colleagues who will uplift and empower you along the way. Surround yourself with those who believe in your potential and champion your aspirations. Be mindful of who you spend your time with.

Above all, dare to dream boldly and unapologetically. Embrace the challenges, celebrate the victories, and never lose sight of the incredible impact you have the power to make.

## **Finally, what is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders?**

To the next generation of female leaders, I extend an impassioned call out, inviting them to step boldly onto the stage of history and claim their rightful place at the helm of this sector.

Books like "Think and Grow Rich" tell us that Henry Ford lived by the principle of thinking without limits. He challenged his employees to make the impossible possible. And that's exactly what they did.

So, to the next generation of trailblazers, I offer a roadmap illuminated by the principles of resilience, authenticity, and determination. Proceed without fear. The world is beaming with possibility. No need to compete with others - you can create your own path.

My advice is simple yet profound: Know yourself. There are no limits to what you can achieve.

Embrace the depths of your unique talents, passions, and aspiration, because here lies the key to unlocking your true potential. Let your voice ring out with clarity and your conviction will light the way for others to follow.

And yes, along the journey, you will encounter obstacles and setbacks, and even moments of uncertainty. But know that it is in these moments that your strength is truly tested, and your chance to persevere.

Let your actions speak louder than words. Let your accomplishments and work ethic speak for itself. Lead with integrity, empathy, and humility, because true leadership is not about command and control, but about inspiring others to greatness. And in doing so, you will forge bonds of collaboration that transcend boundaries and unite people in a shared pursuit of excellence.

**So, as you navigate the twists and turns of your journey, remember the wisdom of the axle: steady and reliable, driving progress. Embrace the power of action, and let it be your guiding force as you chart a course towards leadership excellence in the automotive industry—and beyond.**



**Sandy Zannino**  
Executive Advisory  
Board Ally Partner  
**WOCAN & DEI  
Champion**

## **What does International Women's Day mean to you?**

March 8th—International Women's Day for me is a day to celebrate women on a large and reaching scale. I especially pay attention to and love learning about women

in other cultures and countries. It is a day to acknowledge each other's challenges and CELEBRATE our triumphs!

## **When you first began your career, did you imagine that you would become a female leader in a male-dominated industry/profession?**

Like many women, I fell into automotive quite by accident. No, I did not imagine that I would become a leading voice in such a predominantly male industry. It took a lot of personal growth and learning to find that voice and often courage to stand up and be heard.

## **What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?**

I love the auto industry! Since 1998 I have certainly never been bored! I am a person that sees possibility and there is so much POSSIBILITY for greatness within automotive. If we, as an industry, can come to understand inclusion and create a collective culture that reflects that understanding, we can lead other industries! I am excited and determined to help our industry embrace inclusion and realize that greatness.

## **How can women—And MEN! Support other women in the automotive industry?**

Allyship is one of my favorite topics to talk about. It can be easy to say, "I'm an Ally". For me, it is important to remember that Allyship is an action and not a designation. There are many ways, big and small, that aspiring allies

can support women in our industry. Joining various groups like Women in Automotive and WOCAN is one way. Join and BE ACTIVE. I am on the Executive Advisory Board for WOCAN (Women of Color Automotive Network) and am also the Ally Chair for our Ally Members. Continuous learning is also important in supporting women in our industry and is vital in taking intentional ACTIONS to support women. Always remember Allyship starts with A, which stand for ACTION.

## **What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?**

I believe that the "I" (inclusion) should come before the "D" in DEI. Inclusion is the glue that holds it all together. Creating space where people feel welcomed, celebrated and able to bring their full selves to work is a journey and paramount to successful DEI efforts. I do not believe in hiring quotas, but DO believe in ensuring a diverse candidate slate. This ensure that hiring managers are indeed looking at the full talent pool in order to hire the highest & best! That takes some effort but pays off in the end. And we must create an inclusive culture where diverse candidates will want to stay.

## **What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech ?**

Do not let anything stop you. Learn, Learn, Learn: and begin that learning with self-discovery. Dig deep and find out where your strengths and weaknesses are. Make the most of your strengths and work hard on your weaknesses.

**What is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders? Every day, remember who you are. Every day, look in the mirror and believe in YOU. Find a mentor and a sponsor (someone who talks about you when you are NOT in the room)**



**Fleming Ford**  
*Director,  
 Business Talent  
 Solutions*  
**NCM  
 Associates**

**What does International Women's Day mean to you?**

International Women's Day holds profound significance for me as it serves as a powerful reminder of the countless achievements, resilience, and contributions of women worldwide. It is

a great day to reflect on the strides made in the pursuit of gender equality and celebrate the remarkable women who have paved the way for progress.

**When you began your career, did you imagine that you would become a female leader in a male dominated industry/profession?**

I did not set out to be in a male-dominated industry, but with a last name like Ford, I guess it was meant to be. Being in a male-dominated industry has presented both challenges and opportunities. It has meant facing a different kind of scrutiny and resistance, which inspired me to dedicate time to ongoing learning, so I had the credibility to be in the conversation. There have been a lot of breakthroughs with gender norms, but I still find we must continue to challenge traditional leadership biases facing automotive. The best part about being a leader now is that I get to work with dealerships to redefine workplace cultures, promote inclusivity, and create a path where gender doesn't limit potential but instead is seen to add valuable dimensions to our team dynamics.

**What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?**

Working in the automotive industry holds profound significance for me, as it allows me to be part of an exciting and dynamic field, where every day presents new challenges and opportunities for growth. Moreover, the people I have the privilege to work with in this industry are truly remarkable. From dealers and OEMs to leaders and sales professionals, I am constantly inspired by their dedication, expertise, and collaborative spirit.

**How can women – and men! – support other women in the automotive industry?**

Both men and women alike play pivotal roles in creating an environment where women thrive. Firstly, mentoring programs can be established, where experienced individuals, regardless of gender, guide and empower aspiring women in the field. Men can use their positions of influence to push for policies

that promote gender diversity within the industry. addressing unconscious biases in the hiring and promotion process ensures an inclusive atmosphere for women to excel. Both men and women can actively support networking initiatives or employee resource groups, providing platforms for women to connect, learn, and support one another.

**What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?**

Firstly, there should be a commitment from leadership to promote diversity at all levels, setting measurable goals and tracking progress. Implementing unbiased recruitment and promotion practices ensures that hiring decisions are based on skills and potential rather than gender or ethnicity. We are working with our dealerships to create a workplace culture that actively values diversity and inclusion involves training programs, awareness campaigns, and open dialogues to address unconscious biases. Lastly, fostering diversity in leadership positions can inspire change from the top-down, we are seeing more women in our executive coaching program which not only accelerates women in leadership is signals a commitment to inclusivity throughout the organization.

**What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?**

Firstly, embrace continuous learning, staying updated on industry trends and developments to enhance your knowledge and credibility– it is amazing to see the women that come through NCM's Institute courses, they leave with much more confidence in their abilities and expertise. Seek out mentors, both male and female, who can provide guidance and support as you navigate the industry landscape. Actively network on LinkedIn or industry events to build relationships and seek out opportunities to collaborate with colleagues.

**And finally, what is your advice to the next generation of automotive female leaders?**

Be assertive in expressing your ideas and opinions while remaining open to feedback. Develop a strong support system, both professionally and personally, to help navigate challenges and celebrate achievements. Don't be afraid to negotiate for fair compensation and promotions. Finally, remember that your unique perspective and skills contribute to the diversity that enriches the industry.



**Michelle Gee**  
*President*  
**Women in Automotive Technology**

### **What does International Women's Day mean to you?**

International Women's Day is a deeply significant occasion, encapsulating celebration, introspection, and activism. It's a day to honor the courageous women of the past, acknowledge

the ongoing journey towards gender equality today, and inspire future generations. This day amplifies women's voices, advocates for our inclusion in society and the products and services we create, and serves as a beacon of hope for a more equitable world. It celebrates women as a community, illuminating their potential and empowering them to pursue their dreams without limitation. Most importantly, International Women's Day is about amplifying women's voices to shape the future of technology and beyond.

### **When you began your career, did you imagine that you become a female leader in a male-dominated industry/profession?**

Starting my career in aerospace at NASA, I was aware of the prevailing male leadership, but I also observed numerous women quietly driving the organization forward, which gave me confidence that breaking through in a male-dominated industry was attainable. Witnessing women in influential roles behind the scenes instilled in me the belief that it was not a matter of if, but when, women could rise to prominence in such an environment. Additionally, the groundbreaking appointment of Mary Barra as CEO of GM during my transition into the automotive technology industry served as a powerful inspiration, proving that gender was not a barrier to success in our field.

### **What does it mean to you to work in the automotive industry?**

Working in the automotive industry is deeply meaningful, especially in a society where cars are a primary mode of transportation for many Americans.

As stewards of technology shaping daily commutes and lifestyles, we wield considerable influence over people's lives. Given the escalating concerns about climate change, our innovations and decisions today carry significant consequences for future generations. It's essential for women to have a central role in shaping these technologies and systems, ensuring that our visions for the future of transportation are both inclusive and sustainable.

### **How can women-and men!-support other women in the automotive industry?**

It's crucial for both women and men to actively support and elevate female voices within the automotive industry. Mentorship programs can provide invaluable guidance and empowerment to aspiring women professionals, offering insights and opportunities for growth. At Women in AutoTech we merged with Women in Autonomy that brought in their much lauded mentorship program.

Additionally, fostering a culture of allyship where men actively advocate for gender diversity and inclusion is essential for creating a more equitable workplace environment.

### **What steps can the automotive industry take to continue to grow into a more diverse (equitable and inclusive) organization?**

To foster a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive automotive industry, it's crucial to prioritize initiatives that embrace diversity of thought and opinion, ensuring that everyone feels welcome to share their perspectives. Cultivating a supportive and inclusive environment where female employees feel valued and happy is not only essential for retention but also serves as a powerful recruiting tool to attract more women into the organization. Recognizing that every company is unique, actively listening to and valuing the opinions of all employees is imperative.

### **What advice can you share to young women coming into a male dominated industry like Automotive or Tech?**

To young women entering male-dominated industries like Automotive or Tech, my advice is to seek out a supportive community and mentors. Being the only woman in an organization can be challenging, so having a network of peers and mentors can provide invaluable support and guidance. While it may feel daunting, don't hesitate to push yourself outside your comfort zone and take calculated risks, no matter how small they may seem. Embrace opportunities for growth and advocate for yourself, knowing that your unique perspective and contributions are valuable.

### **And finally what is your advice to the next generation of automotive leaders?**

As the automotive industry undergoes rapid transformation, my advice to the next generation of leaders is to seize the opportunity and shape the future according to their vision. While understanding the industry's fundamentals and history is crucial, it's equally important not to be bound by them. Embrace change, challenge conventions, and lead with courage and conviction toward a more sustainable and inclusive automotive landscape.