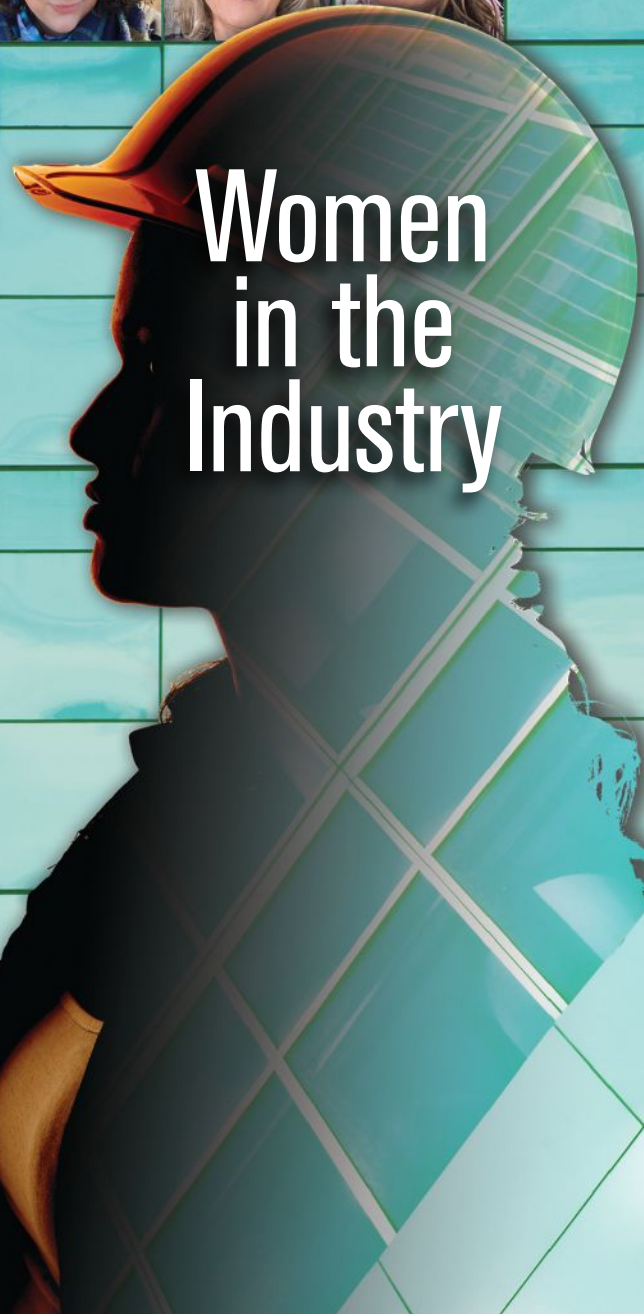


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Lessons in Leadership

Casey Anderson, marketing manager for ICD says she's lucky to work for a company with two strong women in leadership roles: CEO Kris Vockler and CFO Trisha Vockler.

Larry and Trisha Vockler established ICD in 1986, and daughter Kris took on the CEO role in 2016. Kris Vockler initially didn't want anything to do with the family business.

"I didn't want to join the family business until I needed a job. My dad said no, and I was shocked. He didn't want to deal with nepotism," she says. "I got a part-time job instead to show that I could create value."

Vockler started off working on organic glass coatings as a chemist. Eventually, she says she realized, "What better opportunity than a company like ICD to make clean, green products for the glass industry?"

She worked her way up the company with that thought in mind and got involved in the Glass Association of North America (GANA).

She says graduating college is one of her top achievements since no one thought she'd be able to go since she has dyslexia. Not only did she earn her undergraduate degree, but also an MBA. That, as well as serving as president of GANA, are major achievements.

Anderson, who joined ICD in 2017, says that while she hadn't worked as a marketing manager before, she believed that her out-of-the-box approach built from years of work in a diverse range of fields, including theater, film, project management, brand management and product design, could provide a new perspective.

"Once I met Kris Vockler, and discussed the current state



Kris Vockler, Trisha Vockler, Casey Anderson

of the company and their vision for the future, I was hooked. Thankfully, they felt similarly," she says. "I reaped the benefit of Kris growing up in the industry and being so well connected. She made sure I was entrenched from the get-go by familiarizing myself with publications, subscribing to every industry email newsletter, learning who the key players are, recounting the history of the glass industry to know how we arrived at the present and attending association meetings."

Anderson says there have been challenges, though.

"Someone had underestimated my capabilities in reviewing architectural drawings, I assumed, because I was a woman in marketing, so I let them know I learned how to draft theater sets by hand while getting my theater design degree. And that more recently, I drew the plans so well for a large shop outbuilding for our property that the engineer who reviewed them told my husband to compliment the architect—he said he always had notes to provide for revisions, but they were perfect," she says. "I'm not affected by people's limited viewpoints; I know what I'm capable of."

The Women of Giroux Glass

Giroux Glass was founded in Los Angeles in 1946, but it took on a new life in 1991 when Anne-Merelie Murrell bought the company. She had purchased several buildings around the University of Southern California, but one of the conditions was that she took the glass shop.

Nataline Lomedico, CEO and president of Giroux Glass, joined the company in November 2000 when Murrell was looking to expand the business into Nevada. Lomedico started as a controller but was essentially doing the work of a chief financial officer for half the pay.

"It was tough doing the job for half the pay. I had to work hard and prove myself," she says. "I felt like I had to run circles around the men to get noticed by Anne-Merelie."

Lomedico became CEO in January 2015. She was terrified on day one but quickly realized that she had already been doing 75% of the job. Since taking on the leadership role, Lomedico says her biggest accomplishments are converting the company to a 100% employee-owned business and "opening the doors for diverse thinkers to come together and bring out the best in each other."



Barbara Kotsos, director of marketing at Giroux, says Lomedico has had much to do with the company's growth.

"We recognize the benefit of her leadership style and how well it works with the company. That's why we have so many women on our board of directors, which contributes to our success," says Kotsos. "It's so different being at a company led by women ... It's why I've been here so long. It's an invigorating and stimulating environment."

Lynda Nishimoto Lax, President, Pulp Studio

Lynda Nishimoto Lax founded Pulp Studio with her late husband, Bernard Lax, in 1996. The company started in the basement of their home after 15 years of leading a garment business with more than 400 employees.

"When we were building our home years ago, we wanted some of our doors to look like traditional Japanese shoji screens. We found a glass we wanted, but to purchase it we had to buy a container of 15 square feet. There was no way! We moved onto plan B," she says. "We tested Japanese washi to laminate. It took three years to get the glass we wanted, and we still have the lites in our home today."

Pulp Studio started with eight decorative laminated glass samples, but demand grew fast thanks to Lax's salesmanship.

"Bernard would come back from a trip, and I'd have to figure out how to make what he'd sold. My team and I would test this and that," she says. "That was the beauty of building the business. We were constantly pushing and trying new things. So many people said you can't. However, we weren't glass people but design people, and we didn't have restraints."

behavioral style categories," she explains.

Sanders says that the people who say the most aren't always the ones with the best ideas. She's learned that the people with the best ideas are usually involved in the work and process. Being a good leader involves figuring out how to bring out those voices to find the best way forward.

"I think the best leaders, male or female, are empathetic. It's important to understand the people you work with and not jump to conclusions," says Sanders. "I think most people are coming from a position of goodness. If they're missing things or messing things up, it's our job to find out why and how we can help them."

Good leaders also build diverse teams, according to Sanders, who says diversity is essential to creativity and problem-solving. "If people have different perspectives, histories or situations, they think differently. Without diversity of thought, you don't get the best solutions," she says.

Women Supporting Women

Vockler says at ICD Coatings she encourages both men and women to go for promotions when she feels they need more encouragement, so they don't miss out on opportunities. She recommends that women adopt a growth mindset to advance their careers. One way to do so is by joining peer-to-peer groups inside or outside the industry. One can become a better leader by understanding other industries and learning from others.

Oanono recommends young women in the industry find a mentor who they respect and find inspiring.

"We have mostly women in our office and women on our production floor. We give women the opportunity to work wherever they want. If they think they can do it they can go for it," says Oanono. "It's important to help someone find their niche early on and give them the freedom and confidence to try something new."



Lynda Nishimoto Lax

Running the business with her husband was a positive experience. Still, Nishimoto Lax says she went by only her maiden name, Nishimoto, for more than 40 years.

"Although Bernard and I ran the business together, I always felt that people had less respect if it was the 'wife' working in the business. As we grew, even many of our employees did not know we were married," she says. "We handled our business as partners that were good at different aspects of the business."

Nishimoto Lax advises women entering leadership roles to forget gender and do what needs to be done.

"If you are put in the role of leadership, surround yourself with the right people. With the right tools and people around, you will succeed," she says. "Sometimes you'll make mistakes—acknowledge them and figure out how to proceed. If it were easy, the world would be perfect, and that isn't going to happen."

Lomedico started her career in the construction industry nearly 30 years ago, when women mentors were hard to come by. While she was hired by former Giroux Glass CEO Anne-Merelie Murrell, who had purchased the company from Louis Giroux in 1991, Lomedico says Murrell was hesitant to hire her because she thought the experience of being a woman in a predominantly male industry would be difficult.

"As we've hired more women over the years, we've created that environment. Now I have women and men around me who come from different backgrounds and perspectives," she says. "We recently had a strategy meeting where the management team included 30% women, and our board is 50% women," she says. "I want people who are driven, work hard and roll up their sleeves. A lot of those people are women."

While Lomedico says women need to support other women in a male-dominated industry, men must also be comfortable mentoring women. "Men could make a difference in getting more women to join the industry," she says.

Sanders says she had the benefit of amazing mentors and industry colleagues, both men and women, who have supported her through her 24 years in the glass industry in the U.S. She believes women in the industry need to continue to support each other, especially as the younger cadre of women professionals join the industry.

"We need to be purposeful in how we support our newer female members of the industry. We must help connect them with people to build their network and confidence. We need to give them opportunities outside of their organizations to help position them even better within their organization by demonstrating leadership," says Sanders. "That's our job and role as women veterans of the industry."

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➔ **Jordan Scott** is a contributing writer for **USGlass** magazine. **Ellen Rogers** also contributed to this article.