SIEGWERK

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Siegwerk celebrates International Women's Day

Cathleen Hansohm is responsible for Global Supplier Sustainability and Human Rights at Siegwerk and lives with her family near Bonn, Germany. She started at Siegwerk 20 years ago within a study program for Diploma Industrial Engineering and has developed her career ever since getting to know all departments of Siegwerk and working in various functions holding such roles as Supply Chain Manager for Thailand and Malaysia or Global Operational Excellence Consultant. Today she is supporting the sustainability department.



Can you introduce yourself and your role at Siegwerk?

I am Cathleen Hansohm, 40 years old and I live in Sankt Augustin near Bonn, Germany. At Siegwerk, I am responsible for Global Supplier Sustainability and Human Rights. That means engaging with our suppliers and internal stakeholders to implement and improve processes to eliminate human rights issues and have a

positive impact on the environment. I also work with suppliers to reduce their carbon footprint to have less impact on the climate change and the environment.

What type of work had you done before joining Siegwerk? How did you get to the job you have today?

I started with Siegwerk as a working student in a dual program for Diploma Industrial Engineering right after my graduation. That gave me a great overview of all departments and after my studies and a short period in Sales I moved into Supply Chain Management. I held various functions there such as a Global Operational Excellence Consultant to improve processes at our global sites or as Supply Chain Management Manager for Thailand and Malaysia. After living three years in Thailand, I came back to Germany and had two little girls and now I am working in the sustainability department, using my supply chain and production expertise to make a positive impact on the world.

What inspired you to pursue a career in the ink industry?

I was quite young when I started with Siegwerk, not really knowing anything about ink then. My reasons of starting with Siegwerk were that it seemed that the study program was strongly supported by the Board and also that it was a family-owned and global company giving me many opportunities. Throughout the last 20 years that I have been with Siegwerk, it has proven to be the right decision.

What's one leadership lesson you wish you had learned earlier?

As a young woman I received a lot of feedback that I was too outspoken, direct and not having enough patience and being too pushy. But if you really want to have a career and manage larger departments, assertiveness is a great advantage as people know that you don't play games and do what you say. And, sometimes impatience is good to push projects and finish them on time.

Who has been your biggest mentor or role model in your career?

I have had many mentors in the past 20 years, many more than I can name, some officially and some unofficially and many things which I have learned from different people. Ralf Hildenbrand, currently the President of the Americas, hired me and supported me a lot and often held a helping hand to acquire the next position. I also had some female bosses who were always very tough on targets but also showed me how female leadership can be different.. Being at Global SCM and having Christoph Schiller as a boss also was a great experience as I learned so much from him about how to push things through our global organization and processes.

If you had to describe your leadership style in three words, what would they be?

Walk the Talk

How do you balance leadership and personal life (like parenthood, friends, family, hobbies, self-care, etc.)?

I wouldn't call that balancing, I have two small girls and it is more like juggling :-D ... a big part of my support network is my husband who works part time and takes care of much of the family work involved. One example which is possible because of flexible working hours: I have three longer working days a week so that I can pick up the girls twice a week to do something fun in the afternoon. My hobbies like sports and exercise take place in the evening, when my husband takes the kids to bed. We divide the "free" evenings evenly during the week. As the week is totally full, any excursions or meetings with friends are done on the weekend, but we also try to not plan too many things giving the whole family time to rest.

What do you hope future generations of women in your industry won't have to experience?

Usually being the only woman in an organization, like the supply chain organization for me, having to perform sometimes much better than colleagues to get noticed and have the same opportunities. Being told “you are too young” or “too inexperienced” –once I was given the chance or the opportunity I was always able to manage well and often overperform.

If you could give your younger self one piece of advice as a woman, what would that be?

Being able to have a career and also being a mom at the same time is challenging, so it is important to discuss early on with your partner what your dreams and wishes are and how you can support each other if you decide to have children. Before having kids, everything is easy 😉 I would advise you to pursue your career as if you had no family and plan your family as if you had no career. Why? Nothing happens as planned and if you buckle down too early on your ambitions on either one, the other one might not happen as you wish. I have the experience that whatever happens in your life, there is always a way to achieve what is best for you.

Anything else you would like to add, especially in light of International Women’s Day?

Everyone is talking about giving women equal opportunities, etc. I fully agree with this. But we should also praise the men, especially partners or mentors, supporting women to achieve the same things in both their careers and lives as men already have. Equality can only be achieved if everyone does their share and we can only do this together.

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