

INSIDE

2021 Women in Distribution

These extraordinary women are taking the industry to new heights through strong leadership and mindful investments in the future.

The 19 members of MDM's 2021 class of Women in Distribution are full of company-strengthening and business-building ideas. Here you will find a sampling of how their leadership skills and keen executive insights are changing both their individual companies and the entire industry for the better. To read each winner's profile in entirety, visit MDM.com and click on the Leadership tab under Topics on the menu bar at the top of the homepage.

By Mike Robuck and Eric Smith

Nearly 150 nominations came in for MDM's Women in Distribution award, highlighting the depth of female talent in this historically male-dominated field. From chief executives to heads of innovation, family legacies to new industry entrants, the first class of Women in Distribution award winners represent some of the brightest minds in distribution.

Rosana Chaidez

President and CEO, NB Handy

After 29 years of experience in a wide range of roles at flooring distributors, Rosana Chaidez came into her role as president and CEO of metals, HVAC, commercial roofing and machinery products distributor NB Handy with experience across nearly every functional discipline in the field, from IT to supply chain to sales and marketing. That's according to Bob Rumer, executive director at American Wholesale Ltd., in his nomination of Chaidez. "The past five years under Rosana's leadership have been highly successful ones for NB Handy. Of critical importance has been [Chaidez's] philosophy that the greatest strength of a leader is the ability to attract and retain talent," said Rumer.

Case in point, Chaidez conceived of NB Handy's Future Leaders program whereby the company hires college graduates with the intent to develop them into sales or operations leaders within the company through a two-year training program. Other talent-focused initiatives under Chaidez's leadership include a commitment to reward top performers with annual merit increases and adjust compensation as often as needed, as well as funding educational opportunities for NB Handy employees such as technical certifications and work-related degrees.

Chaidez hires new employees based on the company's values and culture, all of which creates a family-like atmosphere at NB Handy, which is based in Lynchburg, Virginia. "Distribution is at its best is a partnership of trust with customers and suppliers," Chaidez says. "That is the best differentiator. People still buy from people they like and trust. My advice is simple: Culture trumps strategy. Hire employees that fit the values of the company. Create a culture of transparency and have a clear strategy for growth. Demonstrate with actions that the well-being of employees is the highest priority, followed by customers and suppliers. It is all about people. ... Surround yourself with a great team and do not stop looking for talent."

Rose Chen

Head of Innovation Partnerships and Investments, WESCO

WESCO's Rose Chen brings expertise in emerging technologies, such as IoT, artificial intelligence and digital experience, to her job as head of innovation partnerships and investments at WESCO International.

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A Technology-Driven Future is Coming, Whether You're Ready or Not

The future we're headed toward has no sympathy for resource constraints, resistance to change or incompatible legacy systems.

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Market Snapshot: Abrasives Coated

The most recent market demand for these products in the U.S. was \$2.4 billion.

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A Technology-Driven Future is Coming, Whether You're Ready or Not

This week, we launch MDM's Future of Distribution virtual event. I say 'launch' because although it's happening live on Tuesday, April 13, one of the beneficial things to come out of the last year is the pivot from producing one-off, be-there-or-you'll-miss-out events to making rich, educational content available online and on demand for registrants to watch on their own schedule. So, if April 13 is full of other obligations for you, you've got 90 days thereafter to take advantage of our speakers' expertise.

If you've been following our content in recent weeks, you already know we've got an exceptional lineup of speakers ready to address some make-or-break issues you will face in the near future — employees' mindset about heading back into the office — and longer-term objectives — Gen Z's employer expectations, to name a couple of topics. Visit mdm.com/future-of-distribution-summit to view the full agenda and sign up for yourself.

With the future in mind, we've already started looking toward our next event. MDM's Digital Distributor Summit, taking place Tuesday, June 29, will follow the same virtual live and on-demand format. In preparation, we asked respondents to our most recent quarterly MDM/Baird survey (available in the upcoming April 25 issue of Premium) about how they are using artificial and/or machine learning in their business. Of more than 300 qualitative responses, the vast majority said they are not

using AI or ML.

Typical responses included:

- "It isn't needed in our business."
- "I don't know where or how to start evaluating this."
- "The benefits are unclear."
- "Not enough time to utilize properly."

However, it's a couple of the atypical responses that I'd like to draw your attention to:

- "Hard for people to change but we know we need to change or DIE."
- "The latest tech is a must in order to survive."

Framing it in terms of life and death may be a bit dramatic, but those atypical responders have a point. Gartner Research in 2018 predicted that by this year 80% of emerging technologies would have AI foundations. And that was before the pandemic created a sudden need for digital acceleration the likes of which had not been seen before. According to a September 2020 KPMG report, 66% of U.S. CEOs say the pandemic accelerated the creation of a new workforce model with human workers augmented by automation and artificial intelligence by a matter of months or years.

The technology-driven future we're headed toward does not care about resource constraints, resistance to change or incompatible legacy systems. It's coming. And MDM is here to get you there. Stay tuned for more details about the Digital Distributor Summit. If there's a topic you'd like to hear addressed at the event, please reach out to me: elizabeth@mdm.com.

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“She is passionate about innovation with a growth mindset, focusing on accelerating digital transformation by collaborating with the innovation technology ecosystem. At WESCO, Rose fosters innovation by engaging with executive stakeholders and the venture community to share best practices of innovation in distribution and supply chain. She also drives new growth opportunities while promoting cross-collaboration with emerging technology partners in artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, and digital technology to deliver impactful business outcomes,” said WESCO Distribution Marketing Manager Emily Munk in her nomination of Chen.

Chen is also a certified coach by the Coaching & Training Institute and a chartered financial analyst via the CFA Institute. Coaching is a role that is dear to her heart. “Other than the tech skills and the finance skills that I have acquired all these years, I went through a route to get myself into the area of coaching because I do believe in the potential of people,” she says. “We do always have a human side where we want to strive to be the best. One area that is very dear to me is to be able to empower others around me to be their best.”

Along with the coaching, Chen is also active in the non-profit community by serving as an advisory board member of Stanford Women on Boards. She also served as an executive mentor at this year’s Women in Cloud Digital Summit, which was targeted at women technologists, entrepreneurs and founders that are in the cloud space. “I do see a big improvement in terms of awareness, and also there are more role models for the younger generations to follow,” Chen says. “But I think we as women still need to be more vocal about opportunities and helping each other and raising that awareness.”

Allie Copeland

VP, Global Operations, ADI Global Distribution

The two ADI Global Distribution colleagues who nominated Allie Copeland, vice president of global operations, almost ran out of room on the nomination form. As they noted in their glowing recommendations, ADI Global — a Melville, New York-based wholesale distributor of security, AV and low-voltage products — routinely relies on Copeland for her leadership,

expertise and vision. Those traits were especially needed during the past year. But Copeland viewed COVID-19 disruption as an opportunity for ADI Global, which is owned by publicly traded Resideo Technologies Inc., to become closer with its customers by offering such value-add services as curbside pickup. “We had a phenomenal back half of the year — it was fantastic,” Copeland says. “We actually grew, and not everybody can say that.”

Like a true leader, Copeland credited the teamwork at ADI Global as integral to the company’s success. “It was challenging, but my great co-workers and I are now even closer because we worked a lot of late nights and seven days a week looking at orders and thinking through things that none of us had ever dealt with before,” she says.

Eva Heller, VP of inventory management and planning, noted in her nomination of Copeland: “There is a quote that states, ‘A sign of a good leader is not how many followers you have, but how many leaders you create,’ which rings true of Allie. She not only inspires her team to be creative, innovative and courageous but also coaches her people on how to overcome obstacles and unique challenges they face.”

And Adrienne Zimoulis, director of communications at ADI Global parent Resideo, said this of her colleague: “Allie is an exceptional leader that sets an example for others, and has been recognized as a role model across the organization. She brings an enthusiastic and can-do spirit to ADI and never backs down from a challenge.”

Julie Copeland

CEO, Arbill

While Julie Copeland has been the CEO of family owned Arbill since 2005, she struck out on her own after college by creating a data warehousing startup. “I learned how to build a business from scratch,” Copeland says. “How to build sales and marketing and define a market that didn’t exist. My dad tapped me and asked if I would like to bring that type of know-how to Arbill and build a business with him.”

Arbill was founded in 1945 by Copeland’s grandfather, Robert Bickman. After her post-college startup, Copeland’s father, former CEO Barry Bickman, asked her to join Arbill. Arbill is now fully owned by Copeland.

In the personal protection business for

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76 years, 2020 was a busy year for Arbill. “A great team is everything,” says Copeland when asked what the big takeaways were from the pandemic. “I feel so grateful to my team and the teams they lead. We worked so hard. Our days went often from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m., day after day. So many opted not to take vacations. We knew we were part of the solution and the team didn’t want to stop from doing our part.”

In his nomination, Chuck Cohen, managing director, Benco Dental, said Copeland launched a consumer division of Arbill during the COVID-19 pandemic, which expanded the business by selling directly to consumers. Copeland also led the company in becoming a GSA-approved provider of safety products to government agencies.

“Julie is a dynamic CEO, having taken a family business, clarified and redefined its mission, and helped it grow successfully with some of the largest industrial customers in the U.S.,” says Fred Singer, CEO and president of Singer Equipment Company, in his nomination of Copeland. “She has created and sourced branded product for her company, built a powerful service offering, and built a consumer-facing division. She has been a leader in her industry and worked hard for women-owned businesses.”

Sarah Finlayson

President and Owner, Riverhawk Industrial Supply

Sarah Finlayson isn’t the typical second-generation distribution business owner. Her parents, who had long been small-business owners, didn’t buy a distributorship, E&W Tool and Supply, until Finlayson was in college. And after graduating from Notre Dame, Finlayson spent a few years working in “corporate America” — finance, strategy, M&A, product development — before deciding to join her parents in the family business.

About a year into working with her folks, they decided to retire, and Finlayson acquired the business from them, now rebranded as Riverhawk Industrial Supply. She quickly began deploying the business skills she honed during her undergraduate studies and her MBA pursuit at Harvard University with a simple but challenging goal: modernize the company.

Her entrepreneurial mindset has paid off.

Finlayson has taken her business savvy and brought it to the company, including new tools designed to help customers and new ideas that led the company to set new revenue records three years in a row.

When nominating Finlayson, Craig Martin explained some of those value-added solutions for customers. He noted that she has “developed a great new solution for bringing value around supply chain called ToolGuard, an app-based tool management system that delivers a solution around managing tools at the job site or any facility. She also developed a value-added solution called 3-n-1, a total supply chain management solution for construction and industrial maintenance companies.”

Nancy Goedecke

CEO and Chair, Mayer

It’s a long way from a filing cabinet to the CEO’s desk, but Mayer CEO and Chair Nancy Goedecke has made that journey with distinction. Along the way, Goedecke expanded upon the family values she learned from her father, Charles Collat, and her mom, Patsy Weil Collat.

Goedecke grew up in the company that her grandfather, Ben S. Weil, founded by working in the front office as well as serving stints in both telemarketing and inside sales. “Family has always been first. Certainly, my personal family, but also my Mayer family. We have an incredible leadership team and an incredible group of associates,” Goedecke says.

Mayer is a privately held and certified woman-owned business. Today, Mayer is one of the nation’s largest wholesale distributors of electrical products and equipment, connected solutions, lighting, digital tools, DataCom technologies, power distribution and automation & control systems. Goedecke and her three siblings are the third-generation owners of Mayer and, along with their spouses, make up what is now known as the G3 (Generation 3) Group. As part of the family’s succession plan, Goedecke was named Vice Chair of the Board in 2005 before taking on her current roles as CEO and Chair in 2008.

Goedecke is a firm believer in giving back. In 2015, she was picked to be the first woman in the 93-year history of United Way of Central Alabama (UWCA) to chair the organization’s annual fundraising campaign. She has also served in numerous other capacities across

the distributor industry and the Birmingham, Alabama, community.

Mayer gives each associate 12 paid hours to do community service and it also has a CARES Team to encourage associates to make a difference in those communities. "It's not just about giving dollars," she says. "It's about giving time. The more people that we can influence to give it a try, the better off the communities where we live and work are."

Carrie Kessel

COO, Mahar Tool Supply Company

Mahar Tool Supply Company COO Carrie Kessel's roots run deep in the company that her grandfather, James H. Mahar, founded in 1947 by selling cutting tools out of the back of his car. Kessel says she has learned the business by osmosis, as she grew up doing everything from mowing the lawn to counting inventory to filing documents. "I did anything and everything," she says. "I really learned about the business by being around my parents."

Following the passing of her father, her mother, Barbara Lincoln, became CEO of Mahar in 1978. During her 43 years at the helm of Mahar, Kessel says Lincoln has grown Mahar from being a relatively small company based in Michigan to a worldwide global leader in the industry.

During her own 25 years with Mahar, the company weathered the storm of the 2008-2009 recession, as well as the impact of the pandemic. Kessel says that while the Industrial Revolution 2.0 was well underway before the pandemic, it tipped the scales and catapulted the progress of the change to an exponential degree. "We are now living in a much more of a digital world than ever before," Kessel says. "It's extremely critical for companies like Mahar to offer expert advice and service and do it with speed and accuracy and ease. The companies that can do this will come out on top because the demands are much greater than ever before."

Kessel sees 2021 being a year whereby all of the companies will try to maximize their profits while homing in on their efficiencies. Distributors need to make decisions strategically and not be hasty as they try to make up for 2020.

"I think that relationships are still key," she says. "It's not really the death of the salesman. It's more of the rebirth of the salesman. Relationships are very critical. Now, the relationships will be built differently than

before, there still will be an opportunity for face to face to some degree, but there will also be more virtual solutions to build relationships."

Joyce Lansdale

VP of Corporate Accounts,
Vallen Distribution

Vallen Distribution's Joyce Lansdale credits numerous mentors who helped propel her to her current position of vice president of corporate accounts. Now, Lansdale is all about giving back to help others foster their careers at Vallen.

Hagemeyer North America and IDG merged in 2014 to form Vallen Distribution in 2016. The company is a subsidiary of Sonepar, based in Paris, France. Lansdale has been an employee of Vallen/Hagemeyer for more than 20 years and has been in her current role for the past six. She was nominated for the Women in Distribution award by her boss at Vallen, Will Lutz, who is senior vice president at Hagemeyer North America. "She has a proven track record of negotiating win/win partnerships on a national scale with our customers and supplier partners," said Lutz in his nomination form. "Joyce has always been an industry leader."

Lansdale says Vallen has long been an advocate of women in the industry, "Chuck Delph, the president at Vallen ... played a pivotal part in the creation of VICKIE, which is the women's organization that we created at Vallen." An acronym for "Voices Inspiring Change, Knowledge, Innovation and Empowerment," VICKIE is Vallen's employee resource group designed to recruit strong, diverse candidates from both inside and outside of the business. "As VICKIE was being created, we realized that there are a lot of younger women who want to excel in the industry, but they don't really understand what they need to do in order to get there," said Lansdale.

VICKIE is open to both women and men as a means for taking a guided first step onto a career ladder that could ultimately result in leadership roles at Vallen. "The industry is graying as a lot of our senior associates, regardless of the work category that they operate in, are retiring over the course of the next five to 10 years," Lansdale says. "Because of people aging out, we need to attract more younger individuals into the channel. Creating diversity, creating more inclusion in terms of not just gender but all of the other categories of

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diversity is an excellent focus for not just Vallen and not just ISA but also the entire distribution channel.”

Kathy Mazzarella

Chairman, President and CEO, Graybar

When describing Kathy Mazzarella in her nomination of the Graybar executive for MDM’s Women in Distribution award, C.H. Briggs Co. Inc. CEO Julia Klein paid Mazzarella one of the highest compliments possible. “Kathy is the ‘dean’ of women leaders in our industry,” Klein wrote. “Her leadership of Graybar speaks for itself, and her reputation as a customer- and employee-centered CEO is legendary.”

Legendary is an apt word for Mazzarella, who began her Graybar career in 1980 as a customer sales and service representative. After seven years in that role, she worked her way up to sales manager for the St. Louis-based electrical distributor. From there, Mazzarella ascended to a series of sales, marketing and product manager positions, eventually becoming a vice president of human resources and strategic planning before stepping into the C-suite as COO in 2010. Just two years after that promotion, Mazzarella was appointed president and CEO, and in 2013 she added chairman to her resume. Today, she is one of only 37 women to lead a Fortune 500 company. Graybar’s 2020 sales were \$7.3 billion.

But the titles that Mazzarella has held, and the impressive revenues that Graybar has attained, don’t begin to measure the true impact that she has made on her company and the distribution industry. In his Women in Distribution nomination of Mazzarella, Andy Hoar of Paradigm B2B said that when she spoke at B2B Next, she “really connected — not just as a CEO but as a leader, a person who truly cares about people.”

Mazzarella showed that empathy during the recent NAW Digital Summit. On a panel with other leaders, “The Distribution CEO Panel: Leading in a Time of Transition,” Mazzarella addressed the importance of diversity in both her company and the distribution industry.

“People often think about diversity through the lens of the traditional demographics, whether it’s gender, ethnicity,” she said. “I tend to look at it a little broader than that. It’s about creating an inclusive workplace that represents

the communities and the customers in which we serve. ... Diversity and inclusion are vital to the future success not only of our organizations but of our industry. To me, it’s about a cultural shift in the way that we think about how do we hire people and how do we bring them into our workforce and make sure they feel valued?”

Jayne Millard

Executive Chairman of the Board, Turtle & Hughes

Last November, Jayne Millard stepped down from her position as CEO at Turtle & Hughes, the Linden, New Jersey-based electrical distributor that her grandmother and mother before her led. While Millard handed the company’s reins over to Kathleen Shanahan, who became the first non-family CEO in the company’s almost 100-year history, that move in no way lessened the impact Millard has had — and continues to have — on the distribution industry.

Her legacy is legendary. “Turtle & Hughes is one of the largest electrical distributors and family businesses in the country,” noted Julia Klein, chairwoman and CEO of C.H. Briggs. “Jayne is a third-generation owner and one of the few mother / daughter company transfers that I know of. She has led the company through many business cycles and into new markets, and her team helped rebuild the Freedom Tower in NYC after 9/11.”

Added Jessica Miller in her nomination: “When it comes to the industrial and electrical distribution industries, her knowledge is unmatched. Jayne has been an active member of the National Association of Electrical Distributors for years. She continues to drive her company forward, staying competitive in the changing marketplace with fantastic innovations. She has also championed great causes for advancing women in the industry. Thanks to her efforts, 30% of the workforce at Turtle & Hughes are women, which is well above any other business in the industry.”

Jennifer Murphy

President, NetPlus Alliance

Jennifer Murphy garnered a total of 20 nominations for MDM’s Women in Distribution award. After starting out at NetPlus Alliance in 2005 as a part-time director of marketing,

Murphy was named president in 2013, taking over full ownership from her father, Dan Judge, in January of this year. Judge started planning the ownership handoff the same year Murphy became president. He remains involved in the company as NetPlus chairman.

“She has taken our company to heights I never imagined. We are now a buying group with 400 industrial and contractor supplies distributors and 180 suppliers. She has created a talented staff of 13, with over half being women,” Judge said in his nomination.

Judge also pointed out his daughter has given back to the industry and her community by serving an active committee role with the Industrial Supply Association’s Women Industrial Supply Executives (W.I.S.E.) program as well as locally as a board member of the YWCA of the Niagara Frontier.

Shirley Weiland, assistant vice president of member services and events at NetPlus Alliance, said in her nomination that Murphy exemplifies all of the traits of a great leader, which shone through during the pandemic. With all of the employees working from home, Murphy orchestrated virtual team happy hours and sent employees snack gifts. For the company’s Christmas party, Murphy organized a virtual murder mystery event for all of the employees, replete with costumes. “She strives to guide us to become the best versions of ourselves that we can be, and allows us to succeed, and to fail when it’s necessary so that we can learn and prosper and feel that we’re an integral part of our company’s success,” Weiland said in her nomination.

As advice she would give to women who are just starting their careers in the distribution industry, Murphy says women should know and recognize that their networks are one of the most important and valuable attributes in their careers. “Cultivate, nurture and seek opportunities to grow it,” Murphy says.

Katie Parris

*President, CEO and Owner,
The Part Works, Inc.*

Katie Parris’ path to president and CEO of The Part Works Inc., a Seattle-based plumbing distributor, is a familiar one for second-generation business owners. But what she’s done with the company in the last six years has stood apart, and it’s why Parris is one of MDM’s 2021 Women in Distribution award winners.

Six years after joining her parents in the business — her dad was the sales guy and her mom was the bookkeeper — Parris’ father died and she eventually took over as president/CEO and owner. From there, she began putting her past business experience in other markets, plus the few years she had as manager and VP with The Part Works, to use. She added e-commerce, ERP, CRM — the tools need for the company to adapt to the current business landscape. When the pandemic hit last year, those tools enabled customers to do more on the company’s website while allowing sales reps to do more in the cloud. “I launched us into e-commerce,” she says.

That focus on digitizing the business inspired her brother, Tim Johnson, to nominate Parris for this award. “When our parents started The Part Works over 40 years ago in our garage, it was an almost exclusively outside-sales driven, pen and paper, mom and pop (literally) plumbing repair parts distributor,” he wrote. “Over the past 10 years, as Katie has taken over, The Part Works made it the top priority to keep the high-touch, customer service oriented, knowledge-driven customer experience, while at the same time modernizing our reach through technology. This has included a constant commitment to a web presence that acts in service to our people, not as a replacement for them.”

Chintan Patel

*VP, E-Commerce, Digital
Transformation, SiteOne Landscape
Supply Inc.*

Thanks to a strong background of overseeing digital transformation at well-known retail and consumer brands like Verizon and Canon, Chintan Patel brought a B2C approach to SiteOne Landscape Supply Inc. when she joined the company five years ago.

In that short time, the 20-year technology career veteran has helped transform the company’s e-commerce and digital operations. Patel leads SiteOne’s digital and e-commerce technology development and operations, including the point-of-sale system that is installed at the landscape supply distributor’s 550-plus stores and its corporate ERP system.

Bringing e-commerce to the “green” industry — as the landscape equipment distribution world is known — was challenging

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because it was so new to the vertical, says Patel, vice president of e-commerce and digital transformation. “Customers in the industry weren’t used to having to order via a website, but we knew that was changing. In their personal lives, these customers were very much in tune with ordering on Amazon and other websites, so they knew what to expect. If we had built a website for B2B customers that wasn’t like the B2C experience, that wasn’t going to fly,” she says.

Patel and her team did what they could to make SiteOne’s transactional website customer friendly. They used voice-of-customer tools and held customer-focused discussions to learn their pain points and better understand what features they wanted from a website.

In his nomination of Patel, Matt Jones praised her accomplishments and said she had “launched the first fully integrated B2B e-commerce website in the green industry on all three platforms and a mobile app; built the multimillion-dollar e-commerce business from the ground up, including customer acquisition, adoption, marketing and content strategy, analytics and technology; built the e-commerce marketing and IT department from the ground up; and modernized the technology landscape to position the company for omnichannel growth on SAP Hybris e-commerce platform on AWS and SAP cloud.”

Robyn Pollina

CEO, Palmer-Donavin

Palmer-Donavin’s Robyn Pollina took the road less traveled on the way to becoming just the sixth CEO for her company in August of last year. Pollina started out in 1995 as an assistant controller for building materials distributor Palmer-Donavin, which is based in Grove City, Ohio, before spending 23 years as the company’s CFO. All told, Pollina has been with the company for more than 25 years.

During her stint as CFO, Pollina worked with former CEO Bob Calhoun, who nominated her for the award. Calhoun cited Pollina’s “great leadership qualities that have been demonstrated in association work and non-profits as well as leading our company.”

While she was CFO, Pollina worked with Calhoun and others to convert Palmer-Donavin to an employee stock ownership plan structure.

As an ESOP company, Palmer-Donavin embraces company culture as one of its core values. Pollina says there are short-term benefits to being an ESOP company, such as bonuses, as well as the ability for employees to cash out their company shares once they retire. But the ESOP structure also enables the company and its employees to support the communities they live in.

Pollina says having a female’s perspective is an asset to companies’ teams. Women are often able to juggle multiple balls at the same time. During the pandemic, women were better able to stay connected and be flexible during the move to remote work, according to Pollina. Going forward, distributors need to find new ways to measure productivity and results when working in a hybrid model of a few days in an office and the rest at home. “We have to be flexible,” she says. “I think there’s a lot of really good life experiences that women can bring to solving some of those problems. The industry is changing and to attract new talent you’re going to need to have a flexible and workable program so people can balance everything in their lives.”

Lauren Roberts

CEO, cfm Distributors

Despite being the granddaughter of the company founder, and the daughter of the former CEO, Lauren Roberts had to earn her stripes before becoming president and CEO of cfm Distributors. Roberts, who is on the board of directors for both HARDI and Blue Hawk, became president and CEO of cfm in January of 2018. Lauren Roberts is cfm Distributors’ fourth president after her grandfather, Amos Roberts, and Bruce Huffman founded the HVACR distributor in 1969.

While her father, Tom Roberts, started the process of converting cfm into a 100% employee-owned company in 2002, he still retained majority ownership until 2012. “I actually have an interesting role being the leader of a 100% employee-owned company, and I am not the majority owner, which I think is really awesome,” Lauren Roberts says. “There are people who’ve worked here for 40-plus years, or even less than that, that own more of the company than I do. ... [O]ur structure is truly to empower the employee owners. It’s not just saying we’re employee-owned, and then having some top-heavy structure.”

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Manufacturing Sector Grows in March but Still Faces Challenges

Economic activity in the manufacturing sector improved in March, and the overall economy grew for the 10th consecutive month, according to the nation's supply executives in the latest Manufacturing ISM Report on Business. The March Manufacturing PMI registered 64.7%, an increase of 3.9% from the February reading of 60.8%. This figure indicates expansion in the overall economy for the 10th month in a row. The New Orders Index registered 68%, up 3.2% from the February reading of 64.8%.

The Production Index registered 68.1%, an increase of 4.9%. The Backlog of Orders Index registered 67.5%, 3.5% above the February reading. The Employment Index registered 59.6%, 5.2% higher. The Supplier Deliveries Index registered 76.6%, up 4.6%.

The Inventories Index registered 50.8%, 1.1% higher. The Prices Index registered 85.6%, down 0.4%. The New Export Orders Index registered 54.5%, a decrease of 2.7%. The Imports Index registered 56.7%, a 0.6-percentage point increase.

Despite the growth, "Survey Committee Members reported that their companies and suppliers continue to struggle to meet increasing rates of demand due to coronavirus impacts limiting availability of parts and materials," said Timothy R. Fiore, chair of the Institute for Supply Management Manufacturing Business Survey Committee. "Extended lead times, wide-scale shortages of critical basic materials, rising commodities prices and difficulties in transporting products are affecting all segments of the manufacturing economy. Worker absenteeism, short-term shutdowns due to part shortages, and difficulties in filling open positions continue to be issues that limit manufacturing-growth potential."

Distributor

Van Meter Inc., a 50% partner in **Werner Ventures LLC**, the legal entity that owns Minnesota-based **Werner Electric**, announced April 5 their intent to make a stock purchase of the remaining business from **MacDonald Ventures**. The sale is expected to close on April 30.

Winsupply Inc., Dayton, Ohio, has acquired **Allegheny Pipe & Supply**, a Coraopolis, Pennsylvania-based distributor of industrial pipe, valves and fittings.

SiteOne Landscape Supply Inc., Roswell, Georgia, has acquired Arizona Stone & Architectural Products Inc. and Solstice Stone Inc. — collectively known as **AZ Stone and Solstice**.

Alliance Environmental Group (AEG), a subsidiary of Bedford, Massachusetts-based **F.W. Webb Co.**, has acquired **Clean Air Duct & Vent Cleaning**, a Gloucester, Massachusetts-based vent cleaning business.

NOW Inc., Houston, has closed its acquisition of **Flex Flow**, Midland, Texas, from **GR Energy Services Holdings LP**, a portfolio company of the private equity firm **Pine Brook Partners**.

Resideo Technologies Inc. has acquired privately held **Norfolk Wire & Electronics**, based in Richmond, Virginia. Norfolk will be part of Resideo's **ADI Global Distribution** business, a wholesale distributor of security, AV and low-voltage products.

White Cap Supply Canada, the Canadian arm of Atlanta-based **White Cap Supply Holdings LLC**, will combine with **National Concrete Accessories Canada Inc.** to form a single Canadian business.

Houston Wire & Cable Co., Houston, will be acquired by West Chester, Pennsylvania-based **Omni Cable LLC** in an all-cash transaction for \$5.30 a share, or \$91 million.

Industrial distributor **MSC Industrial Supply Co.**, Melville, New York, reported sales of \$774 million for its fiscal second quarter, a 1.5% decrease compared to the year-ago period. Quarterly profit was \$18.1 million, a 67.4% decrease compared with the second quarter last year.

Paris, France-based electrical distributor **Rexel** announced that Patrick Berard is stepping down as CEO on September 1 to be succeeded on that same date by Guillaume Texier.

Builders FirstSource Inc., Dallas, announced that Dave Flitman has been appointed CEO. The planned transition of the CEO role is taking place 90 days after the merger of Builders FirstSource and **BMC Stock Holdings Inc.**, and the previously announced retirement plan of Chad Crow.

WOMEN IN DISTRIBUTION

Continued from page 8

Roberts is president this year of Women in HVACR, an industry group with a focus on attracting women as well as providing networking, mentoring and education opportunities for women who are already in the industry to help them grow their careers. Roberts says Women in HVACR is growing and has hundreds of new members every year.

"It has been a great place for women to be able to freely share their stories and their struggles and get support and mentorship from other members who've been through those things before or are going through them simultaneously," she says. "I would say that's probably the most impactful thing. We all struggle with the labor shortage as a whole in our industry. If you're not considering women as potential candidates for any role in our businesses — whether it's in the contracting side, or the distributor side, or manufacturing, or engineering or whatever — then you're missing out on about half of the workforce."

Petra Schindler-Carter
*Director and General Manager,
Amazon Business*

Though she began her career in academics, Petra Schindler-Carter pivoted to the business world during the dot-com era and then joined Amazon in the early 2000s. Her early experience helping serve Amazon's customers and helping the company launch into new categories made her an ideal candidate to help launch Amazon Business — the entity that grew out of the old AmazonSupply — in 2015. Schindler-Carter was thankful for the opportunity.

"It allowed me to build on the richness of my e-commerce experience, but do it fresh and take an unbiased look at a different industry," she says. "I was able to ask a lot of these great Amazon questions about how can we work backwards from customer needs, how can we solve problems differently, how can we make lives of people in the distribution industry easier? That got me very excited, and I was lucky to join Amazon Business before the first launch and I've been part of our growth since."

One of Schindler-Carter's most impressive achievements last year, according to her nominator Shireen McCleary, was the action she took in the spring when COVID-19 disrupted everything — including how customers were

able to get personal protection equipment (PPE).

"With tens of thousands of Amazon Business customers at hospitals, senior living facilities, state and city governments, and federal agencies, Petra saw that her company was uniquely positioned to help manufacturers get PPE into the hands of front-line workers — and so, she led the team at Amazon Business to create COVID-19 Supplies," McCleary wrote. "Her extraordinary leadership in the distribution industry throughout the past year has provided health care and government workers with innovative solutions to source the supplies they need to fight a global pandemic."

Deb Swambar*Chief Human Resources Officer,
Crescent Electric Supply Co.*

In 2019, after working for a few years at a manufacturer, Deb Swambar decided it was time to return to distribution. She had spent time earlier in her career at W.W. Grainger in various departments — HR, supply chain, strategic planning — and realized how much she missed the industry. When Swambar had the opportunity to join East Dubuque, Illinois-based Crescent Electric Supply Co. as its chief human resources officer, she jumped at the chance to work with a top electrical distributor.

Although she is the company's head of human resources, Swambar handles much more than HR duties for the distributor. "Her influence and accomplishments extend well beyond the human resources function," President and CEO Scott Teerlinck wrote in his nomination. "In fact, I consider Deb my true business partner when it comes to managing Crescent Electric as a corporation, as well as helping to lead the 1,800 employees spread across 25 states and 140 branch locations."

Swambar is on the front lines of Crescent Electric's war for talent. And COVID-19 has intensified that war, Swambar said, by altering workplace dynamics and intensifying the search for talent. She says the impact on women is especially pronounced. "Across distribution, and specifically in electrical distribution, there's an old-school mentality when it comes to the workplace: 'You need to be here at your desk; we have to be able to see you; we have to meet in person,'" Swambar says. "Recent statistics and data show that the people who are dropping out of the workforce at the fastest rate are women because of the challenge of everything

we have in our lives on top of the pandemic. It's causing a big drop out of women from the workforce."

Keeping women engaged in the company is critical for Swambar, for Crescent Electric, for the distribution industry. "There are so many opportunities, and we have a huge war for talent, and we need to bring in employees with different ideas, from different backgrounds," she says. "Diversity is a business imperative."

Anne Vranicic

Vice President of Marketing, Valin Corp.

Anne Vranicic is officially Valin Corp.'s vice president of marketing, but her duties extend well beyond that title. It's more of a starting point for where and how she deploys her talents at the San Jose, California-based industrial distributor. Vranicic indeed wears many hats at the company. She joined the company in 2002, soon after her father, Joseph Nettemeyer, became president and CEO. But Nettemeyer wasn't about to just hand his daughter a cushy office job, Vranicic recalled with a laugh. While she was still in college, she was required to work as an intern. And even after she graduated, Vranicic's first "real job" with the company was in the warehouse.

Since then, she's worked across Valin. One of Vranicic's recent projects has been leading Valin's e-commerce efforts. In his nomination, Nettemeyer cited her critical role in developing Valin's online business model. "Beginning with the development of our website, and the building of a direct marketing organization that utilizes the digital tools Valin has put in place to communicate effectively and efficiently with our customers and suppliers, her work in many ways is groundbreaking because we were tackling ideas and concepts that were not fully understood within our industry," he wrote.

Vranicic wants more women to see distribution as a career path, as evidenced by, among other things, her involvement with women's groups such as the Society of Women in Industrial Distribution at Texas A&M University. Whatever women want to accomplish in distribution, she knows they can find their seat at the table.

"I'm meeting many women who are whip-smart and it's encouraging to see, especially the younger women coming into the industry," Vranicic says. "I think we could all do a better job of promoting it. Wholesale distribution is still heavily sales focused. But things have been

changing within the business — including more data, more analytics, more technology, even more merchandising. I'm finding there are more women coming into those fields."

Jessica Yurgaitis

SVP, Product Management and Marketing, Industrial Supply

Jessica Yurgaitis is proud of her family's business heritage that dates back to 1916, when her great-grandfather founded Industrial Supply in Salt Lake City. Today, Industrial Supply is among the largest industrial suppliers in the Intermountain West. Yurgaitis also takes pride in the fact that both her grandmother and great-grandmother played active roles in the running the business. "When my great-grandfather passed away in 1963, he actually left the business to my great-grandmother," says Yurgaitis, who is senior vice president of product management and marketing at Industrial Supply.

Yurgaitis says her great-grandmother and grandmother maintained the vision of her great-grandfather.

Yurgaitis worked part time at Industrial Supply in the warehouse and other jobs when she was in college. When she eventually went full-time at Industrial Supply, her father, Phil Thompson III, was the CEO. "I never told anybody I was Phil's daughter," she says. "There were people that were surprised years later to realize that I was related to him."

Yurgaitis cites her father, who is now chairman of the board for Industrial Supply, as her primary mentor along with General Industrial Tool & Supply CEO Kathleen Durbin. Durbin was instrumental in founding the Industrial Supply Association's successful Women Industrial Supply Executives (W.I.S.E.). "She really took me by the hand," Yurgaitis says of Durbin. "When I first started going to industry conventions, she nudged me to participate, volunteer and to get involved. I would say she's been one of the most impactful people for my enjoyment of being in the industry."

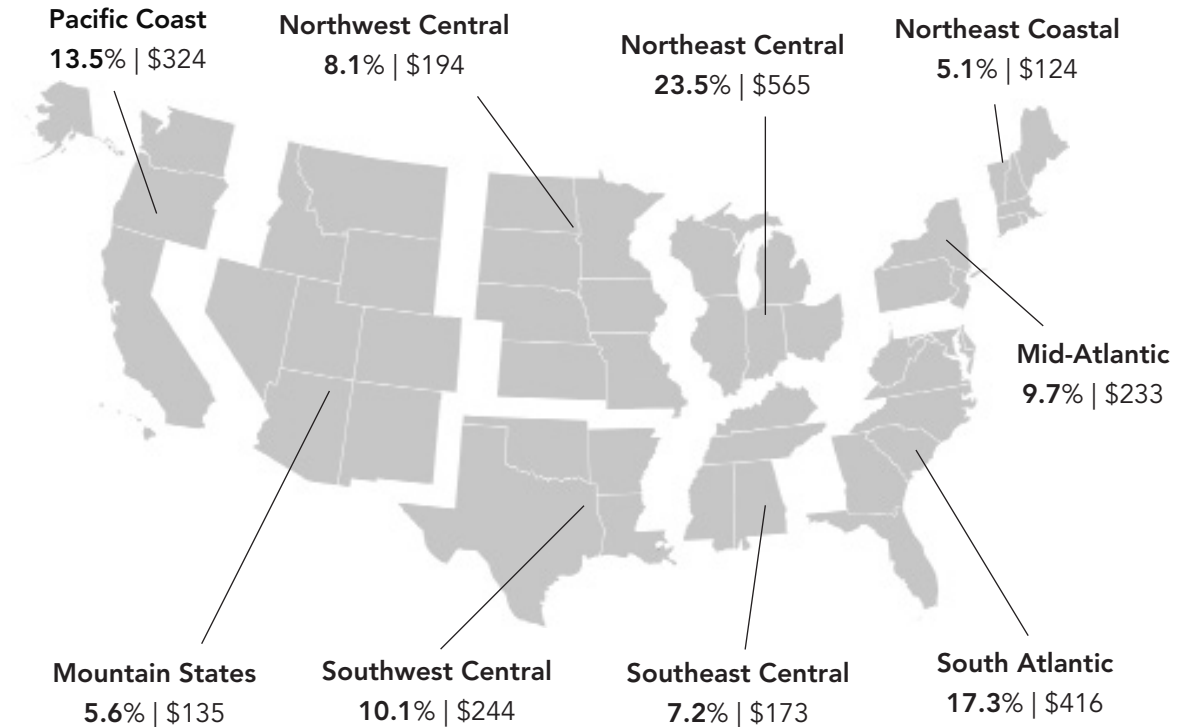
Yurgaitis's advice for bringing more women into the field, "The challenge for women is, it's not a very sexy industry, and it doesn't have a lot of appeal for people who are in college. My advice is give it a chance. You'll realize that there's some wonderful people and a lot of growth opportunity in distribution. ... You're never going to meet people as good as the people in the industrial distribution world."

Abrasives Coated | Market Snapshot

U.S. Total: \$2.4 billion

Market demand for abrasives coated in the U.S. was \$2.4 billion as of March 2021, according to data from MDM Analytics. All estimates are 2021 end-user demand, in U.S. dollars, including distributor margin.

U.S. End-User Market Demand for abrasives coated by Region, \$Millions (2021)



U.S. End-User Market Demand for abrasives coated: Top 10 End Markets

Top 10 end markets in \$ volume, by SIC code, consuming abrasives coated (2021 est.)

End User	Estimated Consumption
2431 Millwork	\$148,974,703
2434 Wood Kitchen Cabinets	\$121,454,020
7532 Top, Body and Upholstery Repair Shops and Paint Shops	\$109,353,955
3724 Aircraft Engines and Engine Parts	\$90,415,375
3714 Motor Vehicle Parts and Accessories	\$80,867,181
3711 Motor Vehicles and Passenger Car Bodies	\$73,770,191
2511 Wood Household Furniture, Except Upholstered	\$51,295,047
1711 Plumbing, Heating and Air-Conditioning	\$48,795,569
3732 Boat Building and Repairing	\$46,340,127
3448 Prefabricated Metal Buildings and Components	\$44,961,386

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