



# Women in Leadership



*Their voices, ideas and vision for the future of cheese and dairy.*

**Roseanne Crave is sales and marketing manager at Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese.**

**What do you think are the most important attributes of a leader, and how do you use your role to help direct, motivate and inspire your team and organization?**

The most important attributes of a leader are resilience, communication, attitude and confidence. Resilience is essential because it enables leaders to navigate setbacks, challenges and failures without losing sight of their goals. It helps them stay focused and maintain a forward momentum, even in difficult times. A resilient leader sets an example for their team by demonstrating that setbacks are just opportunities to learn and grow, ensuring that the team remains motivated and keeps pushing toward success.

Communication is another critical trait. A leader who communicates effectively ensures that the entire team understands their vision, goals and expectations. At Crave Brothers, we prioritize open communication within our team. We hold managerial meetings where representatives from all departments come together to share insights, discuss key issues and contribute to the organization's overall success. Open and transparent communication fosters trust and collaboration, allowing the leader to build strong relationships with team members. Moreover, it aids in resolving conflicts and addressing misunderstandings quickly and constructively, preventing potential issues from escalating. Good communication is the backbone of a positive work environment where everyone feels heard and valued.

A positive attitude is also indispensable in leadership. When leaders maintain an optimistic and solution-oriented mindset, they inspire the same approach in their team. This creates an atmosphere where challenges are viewed as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles. This encourages team members to think creatively and work together to find solutions, rather than becoming discouraged. Moreover, a leader's positive demeanor boosts morale and fosters a sense of camaraderie and mutual support within the team, even during tough times.

Confidence is another vital quality for effective leadership. A confident leader is decisive and willing to take calculated

risks, which can propel the organization forward. This instills trust and faith in the team, allowing them to follow the leader's direction with assurance. Assured leaders are also able to navigate uncertainty with poise, making difficult decisions when needed and reassuring their team through ambiguity. By projecting confidence, they inspire team members to take ownership of their roles, contribute ideas and believe in their own abilities.

**Do you feel women in the industry are well represented in trade organizations, educational content and the media? Where do you see gaps?**

Women in the cheese industry are making significant progress, with growing visibility in trade organizations, educational content and the media. While there's potential for even more diverse representation, the industry is on the right path. By enhancing mentorship and networking opportunities for women, the industry can continue to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for future growth. For example, female leaders at Crave Brothers participate in various associations, committees and outside organizations, including Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association events, American Cheese Society, University of Wisconsin-Madison Board of Visitors, Les Dames and FFA/4-H.

**Thinking of leaders and/or role models you have worked with in the past, what are some strategies you have learned from them and adopted, and what are some things you have tried to avoid?**

I've had the pleasure of working alongside many inspiring leaders, including my mother, Debbie Crave, my cousin, Beth Crave, and my previous boss, Teena Buholzer. If I've learned one thing from them, it's the importance of leading by example, as you never know who's watching or who you might inspire. Another valuable lesson I've learned is the power of active listening. By listening with empathy and understanding, communication becomes smoother, and you become more approachable to others. I try to avoid letting situations become difficult by addressing issues early on — communication is key to preventing misunderstandings and fostering collaboration.

**Do you feel women in the dairy industry have equal opportunities for advancement relative to their male counterparts?**

I believe that if you were to ask any successful person how they achieved their success, each one would likely mention someone who helped them along the way, whether in a small or big way. In the dairy industry, there are certainly opportunities for advancement, but achieving success often hinges on the strength of the support system surrounding an individual, especially for women. Whether it's a mentor, family members or colleagues, having a solid foundation of support can make all the difference in overcoming obstacles and seizing opportunities. The dairy industry, like many others, can present unique challenges, but with the right guidance, encouragement and collaboration, women can navigate these challenges more effectively.

**Why is it important for team members to see diversity and representation at the leadership level to inspire and motivate them to advance in their careers?**

Diversity and representation at the leadership level are crucial for motivating and inspiring team members because they help create an environment where everyone feels seen, valued and understood. When employees see leaders who look like them or share similar backgrounds, it fosters a sense of belonging and shows that advancement within the company is possible, no matter their identity or experiences. This can be a powerful motivator for individuals to invest in their own growth and to feel that their contributions are genuinely appreciated.

At Crave Brothers, the importance of diversity goes beyond internal representation; it also reflects the diversity of our customers and end users. When leadership demonstrates inclusion, it shows that the company understands and respects the broader societal context, not just the bottom line. This acceptance and commitment to evolving with the times helps build a more connected and unified team, which leads to better collaboration, innovation and, ultimately, business success. Inclusion at the leadership level sets the tone for the entire or-

ganization, encouraging employees to bring their authentic selves to work and contribute to the collective vision of the company.

**What is a key industry insight you'd share with yourself 10 years ago if you could?**

I would emphasize the importance of building a strong, recognizable brand early on. While private label products can provide valuable revenue streams, they are ultimately tied to someone else's brand and limit your ability to establish long-term loyalty from a wider range of customers/shoppers.

Investing time and resources into defining and promoting your company name and core values builds a foundation that helps differentiate your business in the market. This unique brand identity allows for greater customer loyalty, improved margins and resilience when private label opportunities arise. With a recognized brand, you can leverage those opportunities to further amplify your company's reach and value, making your business more scalable and sustainable in the long term.

**How do you see workplace and executive structures evolving with new generations and priorities? What strategies do you use to help promote a positive and productive company or organizational culture?**

As a member of the second generation of family at Crave Brothers, I work alongside a team that continues to honor the values of our founders while adapting to the evolving workplace environment. Family and community are at the heart of our organization, and many of our long-term employees have become like family, contributing to our conscientious work ethic and positive, productive culture. We celebrate milestones, holidays and anniversaries with our team, fostering a sense of unity and appreciation. To ensure transparent communication, we provide monthly newsletters that keep our staff informed about company goals, achievements and updates. This open communication helps everyone understand the big picture and feel connected to our success.

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