



The Power of Collaboration

Linda Orlando of REB Storage Systems believes in leading by example.

By Nicole Needles

Linda Orlando, assistant executive vice president at REB Storage Systems International, was always fated to work in material handling. "As a child, I grew up playing with Lincoln Logs, Legos, Matchbox Cars and Trucks. So, it is no surprise that I somehow found my way to this industry," Orlando said.

Orlando's journey into the world of material handling began in the accounting department at Interlake Material Handling. Despite spending three years there, it wasn't until she was assigned to assist with the yearly inventory at a plant in Pontiac, Illinois, that Orlando truly witnessed the intricate operations of the manufacturing floor. Surrounded by steel coils, automatic beam welders and the orchestrated movement of a fully operational plant, she found herself captivated and hooked on the world of material handling.

Her initial role in accounting had kept her somewhat disconnected from the core of the company's operations. It was the hands-on experience with the racks and machinery that ignited her passion for the industry. Orlando recalls the company's joking mantra of "bleeding green and orange" in reference to the rack colors, emphasizing the deep connection employees felt for the products they worked with.

As a female professional in a traditionally male-dominated industry, Orlando acknowledges the evolving landscape, with more women joining the ranks. She believes that women bring a diverse perspective, challenging the status quo and often contributing

a unique skill set, such as multitasking and a keen sense of focusing on the end result. However, she emphasizes that her perspective is not about a gender battle but rather about recognizing and nurturing the most qualified individuals, irrespective of gender.

Reflecting on the early days of her career, Orlando acknowledges the challenges of being a woman in a male-dominated industry, particularly the need to prove oneself before gaining trust and credibility. She had moments of stereotyping and gender bias but notes the industry's significant changes over the years.

To other women in the industry, Orlando offers valuable advice: "Be who you are. Showcase your talent and manage your reactions. Be confident and believe in your abilities. Trust that the knowledge you hold will contribute to the company's overall success and advancement. Embrace change and adjust your mindset to continually learn," she said.

Orlando credits MHEDA for teaching her key lessons, such as "No is a complete sentence" and the principle of "assume positive intent," and encourages women at all career stages to pay it forward.

When it comes to leadership, Orlando's advice is clear. "Demonstrate the behaviors and work ethic you expect from your team to help set the standards. Be tough but fair and raise the bar a little each day. Embrace continual improvement. And finally, don't be afraid to fail. That's how you learn, grow

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and expand your knowledge. All experiences help build your path forward."

Orlando's passion for her career stems from its dynamic nature. She appreciates the ever-changing landscape, building strong relationships with colleagues, vendors and customers. Her career is marked by a sense of pride in knowing she has made a difference. She attributes her success to great mentors, both known and unknown and believes in celebrating successes while staying focused on the journey ahead.

Surrounded by talented individuals at REB Storage Systems International, Orlando considers herself fortunate to have the "best seat in the house." Her journey from the accounting department to a leadership role showcases resilience, determination and a commitment to continuous learning in the dynamic world of material handling.

"At the end of the day, I do not look at a situation as a man versus a woman. I recognize the strengths of each individual and utilize the power of collaboration," she said.