

# Leadership Perspectives: embracing equity on International Women's Day



[International Women's Day](#) is a global awareness day bringing attention to issues such as gender equality, reproductive rights and violence and abuse against women. We took the chance to sit down with some of Bachem's leaders to discuss their views on how companies like Bachem can tap into the potential of women in the "STEM" fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and what advice they have for young women looking to make a career in this area.

This year's International Women's Day theme is "Embrace Equity." The words equity and equality are often used interchangeably, but they are inherently different concepts:

Equality – each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities.

Equity – recognizes that each person has different circumstances, and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

So, the aim of this year's theme is to get the world talking about why equal opportunities aren't enough. People start from different places, so true inclusion and belonging require equitable action.

Women are significantly underrepresented in STEM. For example, in the United States, women make up less than a quarter of those working in STEM occupations\*. The reasons why may include both intrinsic psychological factors and external environmental variables, such as their mentorship experiences and preferences, their academic mindsets, STEM attitudes, and family background characteristics\*\*.

By 2026, [Bachem](#) wants to count a 10% higher proportion of women in its workforce, upper management and regional executive committees as compared to 2020. Our human resources team works to attract and retain women for science-based professions and in management positions. Moreover, we support initiatives to promote science-based professions to young women.

### **How long have you been working at Bachem, and what is your current role?**

Divina Peralta says:

"I have been working at Bachem for 17 years. I am currently the Vice President of Supply Chain at Bachem Americas, overseeing the end-to-end supply chain operations from strategic planning to delivery of research and API products to our customers."

Karin Wertz says:

"I started at Bachem in November 2020 as department head of API SPPS II, now called PMD II. We do large-scale purification of peptide APIs by preparative chromatography in shift."

Julie Marley says:

"I have been working at Bachem for over 34 years, and my role is Site Manager for the Bachem Centre of Excellence for the production of Research Chemicals located in St. Helens, in the United Kingdom."

Manuela Schneider says:

"I have been working at Bachem for almost three years as the Vice President of the Global Marketing Department."

Aya Ito says:

"I've been with Bachem for three and a half years. Since last October, I've been working as a Sales Manager for our Generics products in the APAC region."

### **What do you enjoy most about your work at Bachem?**

Divina Peralta says:

"I enjoy collaborating with cross-functional teams in developing and implementing effective supply plans and strategies that drive the company's and our client's success. This allows me to explore and learn new things, take on new challenges, and grow personally and professionally. Working together with teams in an innovative-driven company with a mission to help drug delivery to patients, is inspiring and fulfilling."

Karin Wertz says:

"My colleagues – a lot of honest, hard-working people working together as a team – and the license to have a positive impact for the company."

Julie Marley says:

"I enjoy the daily challenges and variability of my role, and the opportunity it offers me to work alongside motivated and inspirational colleagues to support our customers across the world in the Research & Specialties sector."

Manuela Schneider says:

"Mostly I enjoy working with the people, Bachem has people with fantastic skills and expertise, for me, it's really to get the best out of people with management and people development, supporting people to find their way in their professional life."

Aya Ito says:

"What I enjoy most is to communicate with colleagues not only in the same department but also in different departments and different sites. Everyone is so kind and cooperative and professional. I learn a lot from everyone."

## **What does equity mean to you personally, and as a leader at Bachem?**

Divina Peralta says:

“As a leader at Bachem, equity means creating an inclusive workplace where everyone can succeed regardless of their background. I believe that promoting equity is not only the right thing to do, but it’s also critical for the success of our company to retain and attract top talents, including women and other underrepresented groups.”

Manuela Schneider says:

“Personally, for me it goes back to what I said earlier. The development is really critical. You can always get the best out of people, but to make them believe that the best is in them and bring them to the right place. I am a strong believer that if people really want, have the will to be successful and to contribute, that you can always find a perfect position for them. But this is a part of the development program.”

## **What do companies like Bachem need to realize to further tap into the potential of women in stem fields?**

Divina Peralta says:

“Companies like Bachem should actively work to create an inclusive workplace culture that values diversity and provides opportunities for career growth and development for women. This includes building internal employee resource groups for career networking, offering mentorship programs, and promoting the visibility of successful women in leadership positions. This will improve fostering a workplace culture that values and empowers women at the company.”

Julie Marley says:

“We have to value diversity and acknowledge and celebrate the differences between men and women in the workplace. For women with children a more flexible approach to returning to the workplace is required to ensure a return on the investment made into developing their skills and experience over many years. If we chose not to follow this approach many women may chose alternative career paths outside of STEM...or another employer within STEM!”

Aya Ito says:

“It would be nice if a company can offer a comfortable and flexible working environment to its employees, although such is not good only for women. It would be ideal if anyone can continue to work at any stage of life in a flexible working environment (place, hours, conditions, etc.), or if they can even take long time off if needed.”

**Bachem is currently undergoing a transformation and growth process. So where is the company on its way to a more equitable workplace?**

Divina Peralta says:

“Bachem is moving in the right direction enhancing its team career development programs and hiring practices to attract talent from a broader range of communities and academic backgrounds, committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion.”

Manuela Schneider says:

“We are still at the beginning, but I see that there is a huge motivation in the whole team and a strong commitment to go through this transformation process and to make Bachem a real equitable workplace. But there is still a way ahead of us.”

**What is your advice to women today who are looking to make a career in this area?**

Divina Peralta says:

“For women aspiring in any career, my advice is to remain persistent, curious, and courageous to be outside of your comfort zones. Reach out for support and build alliances with peers and mentors. Based on my experience at Bachem, this approach has helped me to develop as a leader and continue to succeed in this field.”

Karin Wertz says:

“My advice to women who want to make a career is not specific to STEM-roles, but a general one:

1. Perform
2. Claim your space
3. Network”

Julie Marley says:

“Follow your dreams, be true to yourself, and know that slowly but surely the world is changing for the better for women, particularly in the STEM field. You can contribute to this change and achieve everything you want (and more) with determination, a positive attitude and hard work.”

Manuela Schneider says:

“My advice is to be brave, to speak up and not to give up, try to get projects where you can show what your potential is, get on stage and build a strong network.”

### **Lastly, do you have a female role model who has inspired you and why?**

Aya Ito says:

“There are two women in my mind. I really respect their confident attitude and deep consideration and knowledge. They both really enjoy their working life but at the same time are very much family oriented. I cannot believe how they manage such a busy life.”

Karin Wertz says:

“Actually, my role model is a man. He inspired me many years ago by giving me career advice in a completely altruistic manner, next to other coaching aspects that helped me develop.”

Julie Marley says:

“I would love to say that I did, but very honestly when I was growing up, and throughout my education and early working life there were very few women in science. In more recent years this has changed significantly, and I am privileged to work with and meet many great women in STEM that I am absolutely sure will be role models for the next generations of young women. It would be my dream if I could be considered a role model, and I am very proud that my daughter followed me into STEM, so maybe I have achieved that dream in a small way.”

### **References**

\*<https://www.commerce.gov/news/fact-sheets/2017/11/women-stem-2017-update>

\*\*<https://stemeducationjournal.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40594-020-00219-2%20>