

Umran Beba

*Senior Vice President, Chief Diversity and Engagement Officer,
PepsiCo*

As Senior Vice President, Chief Diversity and Engagement Officer, Umran leads the work of executing a sustainable road map for PepsiCo's Performance with Purpose (PwP) People goals and a future-focused diverse and engaged talent agenda. PwP People goals include achieving gender parity for management roles by 2025, pay equity for all, and fostering prosperity in the global communities in which PepsiCo operates.



She is a dynamic and fearless leader whose extensive career highlights include supporting the Million Women Mentors chapters in Saudi Arabia and India; leading Water Hope, a collaborative social enterprise bringing clean drinking water to millions in poverty across the Philippines; and Litre of Light, bringing clean energy to poor communities across Asia, Africa, and South America. In Myanmar, she led a partnership with UNESCO to build a Business Skills Development Center to support women's advancement, and in her home country of Turkey, she led the opening of GAP-Cheetos Reading Rooms in South East Turkey to support kids and youth for their education beyond school hours.

Untraditional Pathway to Success

Umran is a proud STEM graduate with a degree in Industrial Engineering as well as an MBA, and she has held a wide range of roles since joining PepsiCo in 1994. While most people stick to one career track, e.g. finance, Umran has taken on cross-functional positions including Marketing, General Manager/President roles, HR and Diversity and Inclusion leadership across vastly different geographies and diverse socio-economic challenges and opportunities. Her career has taken her across the world, and she has moved internationally three times (Turkey to Hong Kong to Dubai to the United States). Umran started her PepsiCo career at Frito-Lay in Turkey, holding positions as Marketing Director, HR Director, and ultimately General Manager where she led PepsiCo's East Mediterranean business unit, comprising Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq. This was followed by President positions in South East Europe and Asia Pacific, moving up to Senior Vice President and Chief HR Officer for PepsiCo Asia, Middle East, and North Africa. Before landing in her current role, she also served as Senior Vice President and Chief HR Officer for PepsiCo Global Human Capital Management, Services and Operations. Asked how she knows it's time to pursue the next step, Umran says, "Have a reasonable goal for the future, let's say 3-5 years. If it's longer, things can change dramatically and the goal might be too far away. Do what you like and do a good job. When opportunities present themselves, test them versus your goal. I've kept my career options open and have been transparent with my managers of my interest across my various paths."

Making a Leader

“I think it’s important to balance emotion with reason to make decisions that can positively impact the organization. I like to have facts and data points, and listen to the various perspectives from my team before I form a decision. Some decisions relating to change can be challenging and unpopular, but that comes with the territory,” Umran says about her leadership style. Asked about what qualities she feels make a great leader, Umran responds, “Passion for the work. Aristotle says it perfectly— ‘Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work.’” She advises leaders to be open, respectful, and trustworthy, to listen to their team and the organization, lead with empathy, develop their people, and trust them to lead. “We race as a team towards our targets. It can be a speed race or a marathon. How successful the race is depends on how well we understand the organization.”

Leading isn’t Always Easy

“Everyone makes sacrifices. No one can be in two places or doing two things at the same time. You cannot be at the school play and at work. You cannot take a sick child to the doctor and be traveling to the airport to catch a plane for a business trip. You have to be a great organizer.”

Umran has persevered through several challenges throughout her career, including the daunting task of balancing family life with a constantly evolving vocation. Her husband, a professor, has had to uproot and find positions in new countries three times throughout his own career because of hers. “I am grateful to have a supporting family. It is not easy to adapt to this continuous change and still add value and be happy,” she says of her family. “It’s very rewarding watching my sons grow up and become young adults; develop interests in different cultures, and appreciate and respect different opinions. That’s the upside of a lot of change.” In addition to being thankful for a supportive husband and sons, Umran recognizes the value that her mentors and managers have added throughout her life. She has always been grateful to learn from her work, even through the most challenging and stressful jobs.

Advice for Future Leaders

“Keep an open mind; continue to develop digital skills, and be hungry to learn. The world is transforming rapidly through digital technology. We need to be lifelong learners to keep abreast. STEM skills can open many doors, can lead one toward different career paths, and are applicable in a variety of roles and job functions. STEM is no longer about being an Engineer or a Researcher. Careers are not limited to the traditional fields that we would typically associate with STEM. It is more than that. STEM careers can be HR, Communications, Data Analytics. Don’t limit yourself to what you think you might want to be. Just continue to always keep learning no matter what role you find yourself in and be open to the possibility for change.”

