

Energy Drink Wars: IS 5-HOUR TOO LITIGIOUS?

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**MARY
BARRA**

Senior Vice President,
Global Product Development,
General Motors Co.



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FROM AUTOMOTIVE TO INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, MORE FEMALE BUSINESS LEADERS ARE MAKING THEIR MARK IN THE MANAGEMENT RANKS OF MAJOR ORGANIZATIONS. OTHERS ARE FAST-RISING ENTREPRENEURS OVERSEEING DOZENS OF EMPLOYEES. JOIN US AS WE SPOTLIGHT EIGHT WOMEN BUSINESS LEADERS IN THE REGION SELECTED FROM NOMINATIONS BY OUR READERS.

Photographs by
JOE VAUGHN

If Mary Barra felt pressure and scrutiny after being named General Motors Co.'s senior vice president of global product development in early 2011, she didn't show it. She followed two legends: Tom Stephens, who held the position for two years, and Bob Lutz, who wrenched product design out of the hands of engineers.

"I worked with Bob for years and have tremendous respect for him," Barra says. "He did an excellent job of creating a culture and structuring global product development to be a design-focused organization, and I'm building on that. I still periodically talk to Bob, and he is incredibly supportive. I see it as a continuation, taking it to the next level."

The playing conditions in the auto industry are evolving, she adds, "so we have to stay attuned to what is changing. Right now (we are) continuing to enable great design and driving customer focus into the organization, down to every engineer, so they have a really good understanding of who the customers are for specific vehicle segments and brands. We have done a lot of work to have well-defined brands, and we have to make sure that we stay true to those brands and deliver on their promises, as well as doing the fundamentals right." The fundamentals, Barra says, include quality improvement and problem-solving. "I am fanatical about mass reduction and driving that through the organization, because

that causes so many positive things to happen, from performance to styling to fuel economy," she says.

Barra is a second-generation GM employee who started in a Pontiac assembly plant when she was 18 years old. Along the way, she earned an electrical engineering degree at General Motors Institute (now Kettering University) and an MBA from Stanford University. "From day one, I've had a passion for this business," she says.

Among her top priorities are ensuring integration of each vehicle to balance and optimize its attributes, and inviting participation from her entire team. "I want everyone's views on the table and spirited debates, to make sure we look at things from all angles and get the very best solutions," she says.

What advice would she offer women in business? "Whatever business you're in, whatever career you choose, love it, because you'll spend so much time at it," she says. "If you love what you do, you'll be passionate about it and do it well, and that will show in your results and what you're able to accomplish. I think you have to take on the core jobs and tough assignments so you'll understand the core of the business. And I encourage young women to give math and science a fair shake in school, because they are core to so many career opportunities."

— Gary Witzenburg



SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT of Global Product Development // General Motors Co., Detroit



MARY BARRA

REVENUE: \$150.3 billion // **EMPLOYEES:** 202,000

MANAGER of Revenue Management and Global Lifecycle Analytics // Ford Motor Co., Dearborn



REVENUE: \$128.2 billion // **EMPLOYEES:** 164,000

When Mao's Cultural Revolution turned life upside-down in China in the mid-1960s, Rose Peng's father was "re-educated" in a labor camp while her mother stayed in Beijing to raise four children. "That had a lot of influence on who we are today," Peng says. "She was a mother and an educator who worked hard and stayed strong for all of us. While my dad was going through that suffering, he never complained, and she taught us to stay positive."

Taking the high road worked. Peng graduated from Northern Jiaotong University as an engineer in 1984, worked at the Beijing Railway Bureau, then followed her husband to the United States in 1987 so he could continue his studies.

"After going through what we did during the Cultural Revolution, we were not afraid of anything," she says. "I thought it was my responsibility to come over to support my husband."

Peng worked at home, raised two

daughters, and studied computer science and management online. In 1997, Ford hired her as a business analyst. She later became a residual improvement manager and, in 2005, she was chosen to oversee the automaker's Global Lifecycle Analytics department. In 2011, her responsibilities expanded to include analytical leadership within Ford's global marketing, sales, and service organization.

The analytics department touches

every aspect of the business and influences strategic decision-making.

What advice does she offer businesswomen? "Always conduct company business as your own business, treat your employees as your own family, put your heart and soul into what you do at work every day, and always give your best effort so you will have no regrets later," she says. "I feel that we have to earn respect, not expect respect."

— Gary Witzenburg