

Mestemacher Female Manager of the Year
2019

Laudatory speech for Milagros Andree



Margret Suckale
Photo credits: Thomas Fedra

Dear Prof Detmers
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I come to my actual laudation, I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to you, dear Mrs. Detmers, for your dedicated commitment in encouraging, supporting and distinguishing women in Germany for many years. This is anything but self-evident.

Today, for the 18th time, your company is awarding the Female Manager of the Year prize in a very special setting, with very special guests. I was awarded the prize in 2008, and I cannot tell you how often it has been a comfort, an incentive of encouragement, all at the same time, even during challenging phases of my professional life. Your company produces wonderful products of high quality. And this is exactly what your commitment to female managers and fathers of the year has made clear time and again. Ladies and gentlemen and dear guests, I am delighted to thank you today, dear Mrs Detmers, but also your husband and family, on behalf of everyone.

And now I come to our award winner, whom I met in 2006, when we were looking for a division manager at Deutsche Bahn, who could look after our senior executives. We were able to win Milagros Andree at that time, which was a true stroke of luck, for numerous reasons. Having come from Vossloh, an M-DAX company that knows its way around rail technology and infrastructure, she was very familiar with the rail industry. And, being a business economist with great expertise in human resource matters, she was a perfect fit for the advertised position. An excellent appearance, competence and assertiveness. And she went on to confirm what the first impression had promised!

When you then have the honour of holding a laudatory speech many years later, a great deal goes through your mind. Shared events, but - above all others - the question: "What can young talents learn from our award winner?" Is there a recipe for success that could be recommended to others?

For Milagros Andree, success did not simply fall into her lap. Quite the contrary. We are talking about a manager who set out on her professional "Camino de Santiago trail" with a great discipline, self-confidence and social intelligence, but also with humour and charm.

The famous Way of St James.... Our prizewinner was born merely an hour's drive from its destination, Santiago de Compostela, in 1962.

She is three years old when her parents decide to emigrate from Galicia and seek their fortune in Germany. Let's savour that for a short moment: How much courage it takes to move away from the warm and warm-hearted Spain to an unknown country, which was neither known for its weather, nor for its welcoming culture. Germany in 1966 was a different country to the Germany we know today.

The family settles in Neuenrade in Sauerland. Since the father falls ill and passes away far too soon, her mother has to assume the role of the breadwinner. However, not as a manager, but as a simple worker in a factory. It is about the future of her two children, and she is willing to do what it takes. By the way: In the 1960s, working conditions in German factories were also a far cry from what we know today. This may possibly be what drove Milagros Andree to dedicate her professional life; to improving job conditions and making them more humane.

The stages of her career are impressive. After graduating from high school, she trained as an industrial clerk at Vossloh AG, which is based in Werdohl. She then went on to study business administration part-time and worked her way up through the different hierarchies, to ultimately become the company's HR director in 1999. Fortunately for her, her supporters recognised the young woman's great potential. In 2006, she moved to Berlin to join Deutsche Bahn AG, where she took another important step: In 2011, she goes on to become the Chief Human Resources Officer of DB Schenker, the well-known logistics company acquired by Deutsche Bahn in 2002. Only those with a very good insight into the Deutsche Bahn Group can truly appreciate this leap.

And it could have remained that way, had it not been for the fact that a large DAX company was looking for a human resources expert at the highest management level. The Bavarian Motor Works, founded on 7 March 1916, announced during International Women's Day 2012 that Milagros Andrée would strengthen the Executive Board in the future. A woman joins the board for the first time after 96 years of corporate history:

Not a Bavarian, not an engineer and not a so-called "home-grown talent". A very good decision!

Her first working day, July 1, 2012, is a Sunday and, at the same time, an "open day". A wonderful day, with the well-known sky colours of blue and white that we know from the Bavarian flag. 90,000 people have come, both employees of BMW and their families.

A labour director could not have wished for a better reception. Our laureate can immediately sense how proud the employees are of their company and BMW's products.

But things get even better: On the same day, the final of the Football World Cup 2012 takes place in Kiev. Italy vs Spain. And Spain wins 4:0. The day could hardly end any better for our laureate, who is also really enthusiastic about football.

By the way, Milagros Andree doesn't make any compromises when it comes to her passion for football. Rumour has it that, at a board meeting in Gmund am Tegernsee, a match was watched between Bayern Munich and Dortmund. Everyone keeps their fingers crossed for Bayern Munich, with one prominent exception who is a Dortmund fan. How easy it would have been for her to score points for good behaviour from the Bavarian friends. Milagros is unimpressed, however, and is the only individual to remain loyal to Dortmund...and, believe it or not, Dortmund ends up winning!

Her enthusiasm for football is great, but her passion for cars is even greater. Even before her time at BMW, she was an enthusiastic BMW driver who enjoyed participating in the German Touring Championship at the weekend. During the so-called exploratory board drives, where new vehicles are tested on test tracks, her voice has a special weight - after all, half of all car drivers in Germany are female!

Our prize-winner does not only know a lot about football and cars, though, she also knows her trade. She is responsible for 135,000 people worldwide. A highly motivated, passionate team. Yet her passion is also put to the test time and again. Even if BMW is not affected by the exhaust scandal, the demands coming from politicians and the general public are challenging: People want to have more climate-friendly and autonomous cars, and have clear expectations when it comes to the drive system of

the future. But those who come from the railways are tried-and-tested when it comes to tough discussions, and they survive any obstacle.

Milagros Andree also enjoys discussing, and often, with the BMW employees. She speaks with pleasure and pride of the large number of intelligent people that unite BMW. The inventors and researchers who are always looking for an even better, even more comfortable and even safer, but also more economical, car.

Her area of responsibility on the BMW management board goes far beyond human resources and also includes the Group's intensive construction activities, infrastructure, facility management, and Group security.

When BMW plans a new plant in Mexico, Milagros Andree is the perfect person to manage this mega project. As a Spaniard, she understands the language and culture of the country better than some other colleagues. They are extremely demanding: Starting from the selection of the right location, which should not only have a good infrastructure, but also be attractive for employees and Group delegates, and right up to the execution; everything is in her hands.

In June 2019 everything is completed, and the new location is opened. 2,500 employees, 350 of whom are trained on the foundation of the German apprenticeship model. In Mexico, receiving an excellent training, and getting paid for it- does not come around too often. 100 persons had already successfully completed their training before opening, and they are personally honoured for this achievement by Milagros Andree. These are moments one never forgets.

Unfortunately, I wasn't present in Mexico, but I was able to see in person how skilfully Milagros Andree acts in the political arena. I remember when Andrea Nahles was federal employment minister. And as the title already suggests, she ensured that we had plenty to do. Temporary work, work contracts, women's quotas, and minimum wages, those were the topics. Milagros Andree brought together the responsible board members of the DAX 30 companies in a working group and ensured that we could bundle our energy. With Andrea Nahles, we had a minister who was willing to listen and get a picture of the situation on the ground. Not only in dialogue with her, but also with politics in general, Milagros always finds the right tone, which is firm but clear regarding the matter.

Apart from this, our laureate also has her sights firmly focussed on the issues of the future: Plenty of additional training is required to master the challenges posed by digitalisation. BMW is very attractive as an employer,

but Google, IBM and Microsoft are also vying for the best talents on the Munich job market. New forms of work, the so-called agile work, are being tested. Real expert career is introduced. New job descriptions have to be created for many activities, and almost everyone is affected by digitisation.

Under Milagro's direction, the share of women is also increasing. As is the case with many companies, BMW still has plenty of catching up to do, especially in Germany. Today, 17% of the world's women are in real management positions, and the figure is growing. It is said that "Generation X and Y look for their managers", and, specifically, they are looking for managers like Milagros Andree, who always emphasise the team's performance and never the own. And this even if everyone does know full well that it is her leadership that makes this performance possible in the first place.

Our laureate has a remarkable career to show for herself, and she lives up to the Mestemacher Award. What, however, characterises Milagros Andree in private? Where does she get her source of strength for these successes?

First of all, it comes from her family: her husband, her mother and her brother, with his family. They all go on holiday together at least once a year. But aunts and uncles are also regularly visited in Spain. Family plays a very special role in her life. She has always remained faithful to the Sauerland region, and this despite her professional moves. She didn't want her mother, who lives in an apartment next door to her and her husband in the house, to be uprooted. And at home in the Sauerland, she enjoys not being the BMW management board member, but simply the good neighbour, who is sometimes friendly enough to be told that the hedge should please be cut back again.

There, in her little town, Milagros can, for example, go to Rewe to buy the good Mestemacher bread, and nobody even knows she is a VIP, let alone treats her like one. Since she doesn't like personality cult at all, she loves the impartiality of her Sauerland community.

Milagros is a proud Spaniard, even though she has been living in Germany for a long time. When a British colleague once told her, tongue in cheek, to watch herself, since it was after all the English who ultimately sank the Spanish Armada, she buys him a book in English, correctly presenting the history. Once he had read it, she would also go to dinner with him again, was her disarming answer.

I recently read something in an article: "The narcissistic guy who is used to using his elbows, is becoming extinct. If you want to climb the career ladder in these disruptive times, you should be able to tackle tasks yourself - and listen." This is exactly Milagros' recipe for success!

Dear Milagros, congratulations on winning the Mestemacher "Female Manager of the Year 2019" prize!