

Meijer “Top Women in Grocery” Winners Share Advice

In this year’s Progressive Grocer [Top Women in Grocery Awards](#), we had a total of 18 winners across three categories, including [Senior-Level Executives](#), [Rising Stars](#) and [Store Managers](#). We asked these leaders to share their best advice to help inspire other female leaders:

Senior Executives



Jenn Abramowski, Vice President of Finance

Following a tornado at our distribution facility, Jenn jumped into action to ensure minimal business interruption. Her process to evaluate, quantify and sort affected inventory was deemed by the insurance broker team as one of the best the members had seen. She also led the project to simplify the processing of intercompany accounting, eliminating millions of non-value-added transactions. Jenn sits on the board of the Women at Meijer committee for NextUp and volunteers at organizations, including Kids Food Basket.

Jenn’s advice for other women: *Create your own journey and story. Listen and learn from those around you, including the things you want to emulate and the things you don’t. Success is all about the people and the team, and by focusing on that and celebrating small wins along the way, we can get to new places.*

Rising Stars



Jordan Aldrich, Corporate Human Resources Director

Jordan’s passion for diversity, equity and inclusion inspired her to lead thoughtful discussions on key topics, actively support team member resource groups and mentor diverse talent. She led our return-to-work program, and the flexible new arrangement enabled us to compete for top talent while also achieving a 4 percent decrease in hybrid team member turnover and a 10 percent decrease in flex remote/remote voluntary team member turnover. In 2022, Jordan was appointed to Grand Valley State University’s HR Advisory Council to provide perspective on the institution’s HR curriculum, hiring trends and company needs.

Jordan’s advice for other women: *One of my favorite quotes is, “It’s not impossible, you just haven’t done it before. Keep going.” We face new and different challenges every day as women, both personally and professionally, trying to juggle it all. This quote is a reminder that even when things feel difficult or overwhelming, we are always capable of moving forward. Don’t be afraid to advocate for yourself and your needs, find co-workers, friends or family that can help to support you, and always remind yourself you have made it through 100% of the challenges you have faced thus far.*



Becky Bronkema, Director of Merchandising, Dairy/Frozen

Through Becky’s initiative and ideation, we became one of the few leading retailers offering discounts on produce and free delivery from Meijer.com for SNAP recipients, allowing improved access to food. She helped drive significant private label growth, resulting in Meijer brands being the top growth drivers of the business, up more than 13 percent for the year. Becky was part of the Moms at Meijer committee to help mentor associates, support events and advocate for mothers in the workplace.

Becky’s advice for other women: *You are capable of so much more than you think. Take on new challenges that feel intimidating and confidence will come as you see yourself succeed in those roles. Also, always be you!*



Kristin Brouwers, Manager of Marketing Campaigns

Kristin is responsible for storytelling across our brand portfolio. Through her marketing and creative leadership, the Frederik's by Meijer brand exceeded sales plans, bringing in incremental customers and quickly emerging as our No. 3 own brand by sales volume. As an active Meijer Campus Ambassador, she supported team member engagement, led tours, coordinated events and welcomed new team members at Snack Chat, a meet-and-mingle event at which attendees can learn more about Meijer.

Kristin's advice for other women: *Find your people – your influencers, truth-tellers, mentors, and sponsors. Each plays an important role in your development, and how you evolve personally and in your career. You don't have to do it alone! When you are able, pay it forward and fulfill these roles for others around you. You will never regret helping others reach their goals.*



Jenny Coon, Plant Manager (Fresh Assembly)

Jenny developed and successfully led a diverse workforce, while finding creative ways to ensure that team members are fully trained and stay connected with the team through ongoing communications. This helped her achieve full staffing percentages for the first time since the pandemic. She and her team developed and launched a new line of snack items containing seven finished products, and she worked closely with the product development team to conceptualize items and conduct a plant trial. Within the community, Coon has helped adult learners improve their reading skills and supported local animal shelters.

Jenny's advice for other women: *Be curious and willing to take on new challenges/experiences that make you get out of your comfort zone. Encourage and empower other fellow women that are in your sphere of influence. There are few women in supply chain roles, so it is critical that we mentor and provide support for each other in our careers.*



Kim Edsenga, Associate General Counsel

Kim's job spans legal and regulatory support for our retail operations, retail and specialty pharmacies, and real estate and store design teams. She also manages our centralized corporate compliance team. Kim took the lead on work with the USDA to obtain a waiver of equal-treatment rules for SNAP recipients, which opened the door for many healthy food offerings specifically targeting this customer base. In addition to being a member of the Michigan Retailers Association, she was appointed by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to the board of the Food Security Council for the State of Michigan, serving through 2022.

Kim's advice for other women: *Seize the opportunity. There is no "right time" and there will always be unknowns, but the opportunities, while uncomfortable, will open doors to your future.*

Jovana Garcia, Senior Recruiter

Jovana conducted a comprehensive analysis of the recruitment process, recommending the implementation of a centralized recruitment budget to save on hourly recruiting-related expenses. She led a successful pilot program of a recruitment automation tool that resulted in a 69 percent reduction in the time it took to schedule an interview. Jovana was a member of the Holland Museum's Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion Committee, and is also active in Women of Color Give, which helps allocate funds to community agencies that support the BIPOC population.

Jovana's advice for other women: *Believe in yourself. The power of self-belief cannot be underestimated. Embrace your unique strengths and talents and let them guide you towards your goals.*



Ask questions. Seeking guidance and support is not a sign of weakness but a testament to your willingness to learn and grow. There are countless individuals around you who are willing to help and offer valuable insights. Build and seek those relationships, those individuals who you can always go to with questions.

Be curious. Nurture your natural curiosity and never shy away from exploring new ideas, concepts, and perspectives. Be open-minded and receptive to different viewpoints, this will broaden your horizons and fuel your personal and professional development. Stay curious, keep asking questions, and always strive to learn more.



Emily Henao, Director of Customer Loyalty

Emily led the strategy and implementation of our new mPerks loyalty program, pulling off a flawless transition of customer value from the old platform into the new platform. She and her team also rolled out a new customer insights tool that allows stores to monitor real-time customer feedback and net promoter score reporting to enable real-time customer outreach and experience optimization. She is currently pursuing her MBA at the University of Michigan and was chosen to participate in a company talent development program.

Emily's advice for other women: Every day, we have a choice to be the best version of ourselves. Rather than focusing on what skills you don't have, have courage knowing that what you need, you have within. You are empowered to be the change you seek, and no one can do it better.



Nicole Kidd, Market Director

Nicole led the South Indianapolis market of nine stores through the rollout of the Flashfood initiative, as well as self-checkout deployment, offering targeted training to leaders and self-checkout team members, coaching in the moment, and explaining the why behind the technology. She worked closely with community partners, including the Chamber of Commerce, United Way, Brothers United and Girls Club of Indianapolis. Through her work on the executive board of the Women at Meijer resource group, she helped facilitate many events to drive awareness of mental health, breast cancer and heart health.

Nicole's advice for other women: Have confidence in yourself and take some chances. Be you because there is only one of you! Push away the negative thoughts and be the best you, you can be!



Irisi Tole, Manager of Information Technology

Irisi developed and maintained a set of user experience design standards and guidelines, which moved us from the 25th percentile to the 75th percentile in the dunnhumby Retail Index. As the user experience leader of the new mPerks experience, she exceeded target audiences' expectations, resulting in 88.6 percent of customers reporting high levels of satisfaction, and a 25 percent increase in loyal customer growth. Irisi played a leading role in the creation of a new resource subgroup for women in technology to help amplify their voices and offer greater support to women in this field.

Irisi's advice for other women: My heartfelt advice to women, especially those in the dynamic field of technology, is to nurture a consistent sense of curiosity that propels them forward. Embrace the power of questioning, for it paves the path to innovation and discovery. Never hesitate to seek out support and advice from those who have walked similar paths, as their wisdom and experiences can

illuminate the way. Cultivate relationships grounded in trust, fostering a network of like-minded individuals who champion your growth. Embrace the role of a driver within your organization, harnessing your unique perspective to propel positive change and push boundaries. Remember, your presence and contributions have the potential to reshape the tech landscape, and by embracing these principles, you can inspire and empower others to do the same.



Kalli Zielbauer, Internal Communications Manager

Kalli developed a communication process that enables her to support six centers of excellence and the chief human resources officer simultaneously. The process has now been universally adopted by the team, as well as shared with other teams as a model for communication support. In addition to her HR work, she worked as a product owner for Meijer365, where she identified top priorities for the development team. A two-time recipient of our Exceeding Expectations award, Kalli was a member of the Women at Meijer and YoPro team member resource groups.

Kalli's advice for other women: *Don't be afraid to try something new. Ask for an opportunity to get involved if something interests you, and don't be afraid to say yes when something unexpected comes your way. The projects that challenge you often end up being the most exciting and can help you discover your passions.*

Store Managers



Jasmine Edwards, Store Director in Rolling Meadows, Ill.

Under her leadership, Jasmine's store has experienced the lowest turnover in her market. She has improved retention by 15 points since becoming Store Director and achieved 100 percent retention during the last two periods. She worked diligently to get to know all team members on a personal level, and has personally assisted her associates with locating housing, transportation and other personal necessities. Jasmine began piloting a program that she developed, LeadHERship Journey 2023, which is geared specifically toward assisting aspiring female leaders with their career development.

Jasmine's advice for other women: *Enjoy the journey. Often, we get caught in the destination mindset of what's next and we forget to appreciate the steps you take to get there. I would tell other women to be resilient even in the whirlwind. There will always be good days and bad days no matter the circumstance, but always remember to persevere through it all. You are not defined by what happens to you, but by how you respond to it. I would challenge all women to write the story they want to see for their life. How does she talk, How does she walk, How is her mental health, How kind is she to others?*



Marla Hellings, Store Director in Gaylord, Mich.

Even as her store underwent a remodel, Marla was able to achieve total direct contribution and profit above plan, as well as having one of the best shrink percentage totals in the company. Recognizing the importance of mentorship and showing an example of good leadership, she focused on leading by example, making meaningful connections and taking care of the team, customers and community. Following a tornado touchdown in her town, Marla and her team helped with disaster relief efforts, coordinated to get extra products on her store's shelves, and helped support local businesses with food, water and other essential needs.

Marla's advice for other women: *Set your goals, surround yourself with a strong support system and be confident in your decision-making. Hard work and patience pay off—never let an opportunity pass you by.*

Mary Kimbrough, Store Director in Lake Orion Township, Mich.



Mary began her career at Meijer as a part-time cashier 36 years ago, and last year she was personally selected to open the company's first Meijer Grocery concept store. She has collaborated with all areas of the business to influence new ideas, layouts and processes. Her location has exceeded its sales plan, has one of the busiest delis in the area, and leads the market in Shop and Scan. In Q1, the store led the entire market in store cleanliness, freshness/quality, team member friendliness and cashier friendliness. Mary and her team volunteer at a local food pantry and at other community events.

Mary's advice for other women: *I would suggest everyone have an official mentor. One of my First Assistants suggested that I get a mentor, and while I have had many mentors throughout my career, my First Assistant was talking about a*

mentor whom I would regularly touch base with on all topics, with whom thoughts and opinions could be shared confidentially.

Morgan Lackey, Store Director in Lexington, Ky.



After she took the helm at her store, Morgan's internal culture survey increased 14 points, and she helped drive further engagement through supplemental surveys that helped her execute a different action plan each quarter to address specific areas of concern. For the second year in a row, her store achieved every profit-and-loss metric, outperforming the total store shrink plan by 22 basis points. Morgan and her team supported a local nonprofit organization for children and families in the local foster care and adoption systems, as well as the Sons of the American Legion.

Morgan's advice for other women: *Practicing emotional intelligence in how you communicate with others is key. Don't be afraid to ask for and be receptive of feedback - it's one of the most powerful ways to fuel your growth.*

Robin Owczarzak, Store Director in Grand Haven, Mich.



Leading her store with the motto "one team, one dream," Robin developed a "Pick Me Up" posse with associates who bring additional cheer each day and encourages her cross-functional team to help in areas across the store. In 2022, her store led the market in digital sales, was 19th in the company in overall sales and led the market for speed of checkout; the location also received the Safety Excellence Award. Robin hosts Shop with a Sheriff, which brings in members of the Ottawa County, Mich., Sheriff's Office each year to shop for holiday gifts for local underprivileged children.

Robin's advice for other women: *Never try to be anyone but yourself. I was given this advice by one of my mentors when I first became a Store Director and I feel that that has attributed to my success. Another piece of advice is to not be afraid*

to try new things when they can seem difficult and overwhelming. There is a great reward in learning new things, and it will help build your confidence in your abilities.

Miranda Pfledderer, Store Director in Goshen, Ind.

Miranda led her store to impressive business results, including increased sales over the previous year and increased market share. She also helped reduce overall shrink and saw a 4.5 percent increase in overall customer satisfaction. She led her team to achieve the lowest overall customer wait time in her market for Meijer Pickup, improved on-shelf availability metrics and reduced turnover by 20 percent. In 2022, Miranda's store received additional donation funds through Meijer Team Gives, and donated to three local nonprofits.

Miranda's advice for other women: *When faced with competing priorities or obligations, reference the glass ball-rubber ball metaphor, whether at work, home or when balancing the two. While juggling the many*



responsibilities of the day, keep in mind that if you drop a rubber ball, it will bounce, and you can come back to it later. However, if you drop a glass ball, it will shatter and have potentially detrimental consequences. What may be considered a glass ball today can be a rubber ball tomorrow, and vice versa. The ability to clearly identify what constitutes a glass ball, while getting comfortable with letting rubber balls bounce, gives you the ability to effectively manage your time and attention, while enabling you to stay present in the moment, with confidence.



Catherine Renton, Store Director in Colerain Township, Ohio

Catherine's laser focus on training helped her team average a 99.5 percent score in omnibus training throughout the entire year, and her store was able to surpass its sales goals for the year by 102 percent. Her service team led the market and was at the top in the company on customer focus scores; internal culture survey scores also increased under her leadership, including in 12 categories last year. As the market champion for Women at Meijer, Catherine has initiated period-based recognition that spotlights an exceptional hard-working woman in every store within the market.

Catherine's advice for other women: *Find a mentor that is in your corner and is always there for you. I have been with Meijer for 10 years and my mentor still checks on me daily. I can call my mentor or my Market Director any time of the day.*

<https://meijercommunity.com/Meijer-Top-Women-in-Grocery-Winners-Share-Advice>