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Women in the Workplace

Indianapolis Airport Authority focuses on hiring women, helping them thrive



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In this week's Thought Leadership Point of View, Rachel Stevens, Senior Director of Human Resources for the Indianapolis Airport Authority, discusses the IAA's approach to hiring women and helping them advance in their careers.

Q: How has your organization designed itself as a place that attracts female employees and helps advance them into leadership roles?

The Indianapolis Airport Authority understands the importance of building a diverse workforce that represents our community and welcomes travelers to Indianapolis International Airport, so we have strategically prioritized attracting, retaining, and developing female talent to ensure their representation in workforce and leadership roles.

We've seen success in attracting female talent by being an early adopter of the Good Wages Initiative to pay a minimum of \$18 an hour with health care benefits, advocating for the Modern Apprenticeship Program, establishing direct tuition assistance benefits, and developing in-house, talent pipeline-development programs.

Q: What percentage of employment positions and leadership roles are filled by women in your organization, and how do you strategically work toward increasing that number?

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are an intrinsic part of IAA's culture, and the organization recognizes the value of women playing a prominent role in all business activities. Of our top leadership positions, 36 percent are held by women. That includes me and Senior Director of Commercial Enterprise Marsha Wurster, Senior Director of Audit, Risk Management, Procurement Maria Wiley, and Senior Director of Equity and Opportunity Holli Harrington. Also, Barbara Glass was elected in 2017 as the IAA board's first female president. Board leadership also includes notable women, such as Olympian and former Indiana Fever star Tamika Catchings. Former board member Kathy Davis was the 48th lieutenant governor of Indiana and the first woman to serve in that office.

With 32 percent of all positions held by employees identifying as female, we intentionally support and advocate for them to advance by developing their skills through tuition

assistance, learning and development opportunities, community engagement, and civic involvement.

Q: How does your organization support young female talent?

While we are proud to have a multi-generational workforce that includes many tenured employees, nearly 62 percent are under 40. To support and develop our young talent and emerging leaders, we help them establish meaningful mentorship relationships and elevate their involvement in the community with paid volunteer hours.

The IAA's Educational Assistance Program encourages personal development by providing up to \$5,250 each year in tuition assistance for both degree and certificate programs. These funds are available on day one of employment and this direct payment removes the burden of upfront costs to the student that a traditional reimbursement program would create.

Q: What challenges do you see women facing in the workplace and how does your organization help overcome those?

One of the biggest challenges we see right now is more women are leaving the workforce to care for their children because of a lack of affordable, high-quality childcare. To help overcome this challenge, we created a competitive benefits plan to reimburse up to \$10,000 in qualifying childcare expenses per child each year, and we pay costs associated with family care resources.

Q: What types of roles and positions does your organization offer?

It takes a breadth of dedicated employees from across a broad spectrum of professional backgrounds to deliver a world-class customer experience at Indianapolis International Airport.

Most employees are part of our operations and public safety team, ensuring the safety and security of

the facility and its 24/7, year-round upkeep. This includes Terminal Services, which is responsible for the cleanliness of the terminal. The airport operates like a city within a city.

Professional support staff serve in roles such as administration, business development, finance, HR, IT, and legal—in addition to airport-focused positions such as overseeing airline management and the planning and development of critical infrastructure.

Q: How does your organization support women business enterprises?

The IAA is a recognized leader in contracting, advocating for, and supporting women-owned businesses in Indiana and beyond, as demonstrated by its continued support of the National Association of Women

Business Owners. We also contract with women-owned businesses for staff learning and engagement. Through this, we support female consultants and provide female mentors and role models for employees to foster their leadership potential.

We also support female-focused community organizations and events, such as the Indiana Conference for Women, Women's Fund, Pass the Torch for Women, and Dress for Success, among many others. ●



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