



The HBA

Turns 35

Laurie Cooke, CEO of the Healthcare Businesswomen's Association (HBA), discusses the organization's strategic mission for the future as it celebrates its 35th anniversary.

➔ **PV:** *The HBA was originally conceptualized 37 years ago by five women and became an official nonprofit organization in 1979 with the mission to further the advancement and impact of women in healthcare worldwide. How does the HBA plan to further this mission going forward?*

COOKE: In the near term, the HBA continues to provide what it has become known for, which is education and knowledge sharing on industry-related topics; leadership development; mentoring and coaching; network building; and access to research. The HBA's goal is to develop the skills and leadership competencies of women at all stages of their careers. In parallel, we also continue to work with companies to make sure that they have a true appreciation of the business case as to why gender diversity bolsters the bottom line.

We will continue on the trajectory that brought us to where we are today to make sure we can fulfill our value proposition and commitment we've made to both individuals and companies. There are few things that we're also doing in the near term that focus on several of our long-term strategic priorities. The association is at a point in its growth trajectory that required us to shore up the business model; to look at the brand, making sure that it is strong and consistent; and concentrate on achieving HBA @ 50K — 50,000 strong in our community.

➔ **PV:** *In terms of the business model, what changes are in the works?*

COOKE: We have three main objectives in examining the business model to help the association to have even more impact in the future. First, we are looking at the customer research we conducted earlier this year and making sure we are listening to the voice of the customer and responding to our customers' needs. We've got some excellent data about what companies need to advance their female talent. As a volunteer-based organization, the second objective is to evaluate what our volunteers are working on and create efficiencies to make sure we are optimizing their experiential skill development and reducing the workload. The third is to build the infrastructure to grow the organization, which has a dependency on the availability of strong virtual offerings. We are developing an oper-



Laurie Cooke

ating model that will allow us to open new chapters more easily around the world. Achieving alignment with a simpler model is going to help us grow, improve the volunteer experience, and increase our value to our customers.

➔ **PV:** *How does the refreshed brand reflect the HBA's current and future value proposition?*

COOKE: The new brand, which will be officially revealed at our Annual Conference and adopted in January 2015, has a freshness and reflects the association's commitment to its members to connect, share and grow.

This is more than a tagline as it is a strong reflection of the voice of the customer and an improved appreciation of our customer segmentation in terms of where our members are in their careers, what they want out of their careers, and how we can better support women at all ages and career stages. After evaluating the commonalities across our segments from our recent research, the No. 1 identified value of the association was the opportunities the HBA provides to help members connect and build a strong network.

The second commonality is that women want to share and learn from others about what they know about leadership and tackling career challenges, as well as what's going on in the industry. In essence, the HBA catchphrase — working together

gets us everywhere — becomes a reality when we provide our members with the opportunity to share.

In terms of "grow," the objective of the association is to help women at any stage of their career to cultivate their leadership skills, define and refine their career aspirations, and advance their careers. We want to make sure that women can continue to grow their leadership impact and our offerings are targeted to achieve this goal.

The value proposition, which is encapsulated by our vision, is to empower more women to be business and thought leaders throughout healthcare. By empowering more women, the HBA can have a meaningful and measurable impact on the industry.

➔ **PV:** *Why should women, and for that matter men, be members of the HBA?*

COOKE: This is a great question and there are several components to my answer. The No. 1 reason is because people need to build their network. The HBA has an unparalleled breadth and depth across industry sectors, title functions, geographies, and areas of expertise. This is the HBA's No. 1 benefit and the basis of our value proposition, and we do this with our signature radical hospitality.

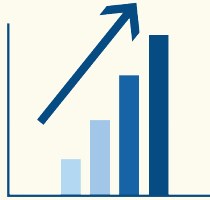
The second is — and this is back to 'working together will get us everywhere' — when a group of people comes together and works together, they can achieve so much more than they could individually. So whether we are talking about an individual member or a corporate partner, we can leverage the different resources available within the HBA and we can achieve so much more — together. There is value in the number of members that an association has, which is why one of our goals is growing our community to be 50,000 strong. The HBA serves as a convener with the ability to progress individuals, companies, and the industry through this convening.

The third reason is that there is still a basic inequality in the workforce. Women account for more than 50% on average of the talent pool in the healthcare field, but this doesn't correlate to the percentage seen along the value chain to the senior ranks. There is evidence from multiple studies that shows that three or more women at the senior decision-making level can help a company to have better financial results. Male or female, it's our duty to make sure that we are looking at why women aren't progressing to the most senior levels at rates similar to men for those who want to advance. The current reality is that there are more men in senior leadership and decision-making roles, so we need to make sure that men are aware of the business case for why there should be gender diversity on their teams and then at all levels. More than that, we're all working side by side, and understanding and optimizing the talent pool just makes sense.

Editor's Note: *PharmaVOICE is a proud corporate partner of the HBA.* PV

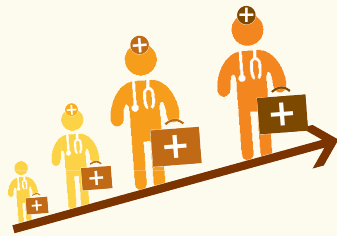
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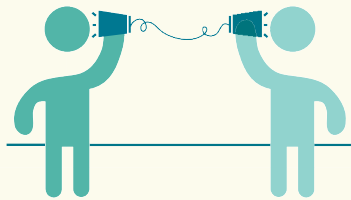
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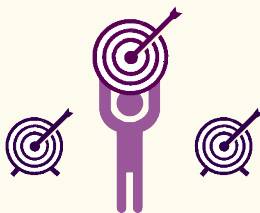
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