

Advice from Accomplished Mentors



"My advice for up-and-coming women leaders in pet is very simple: Do the right thing for the right reason. Be reliable, honest and make decisions that are mutually beneficial for everyone. Manufacturers, distributors and retailers grow and win together. That partnership and trust is essential for success."

— Heather Hickey, SVP of Sales, ZIWI



"Be bold, leverage your talents and experiences and believe in what you can achieve. You have to be your own biggest cheerleader and others will take notice. Having confidence in who you are and what makes you uniquely qualified to lead has never been more important."

— Julie Maday, CEO, Independent Pet Partners



"Don't be afraid to speak up when you have meaningful input. Ideas and solutions can come from approaching things from different angles, and the missing angle may be yours. Mistakes are going to happen along the way, and how you handle them is as important as what you learn from them. So, show others, including yourself, grace when they do. Above all, conduct yourself with integrity; others may not always notice, but you will."

— Emily Benson, Marketing Director, Starmark



"My advice to any woman stepping into leadership is to own your voice, trust your vision and don't give up. Find amazing people to work with who share your values and are committed to excellence, who are better than you at what they do and who you can learn from. Take feedback from others and yourself, just don't lose that hunger to keep learning, growing and building things. Finally, if you don't know what you're doing, fake it until you make it. Really—just do your best to figure it out—be resourceful, be relentless and you'll find a way."

— Jacqueline Prehogan, Co-Founder, Open Farm



"Stay curious, trust your gut and don't be afraid to lead with heart. This industry thrives when we focus on connection with pets, their people and each other. Collaboration over competition will always win. And remember: being underestimated can be a superpower if you know who you are and what you stand for."

— Kat Donatello, Founder, Austin and Kat



"The best marketing isn't a clever ad or a viral video—it's decency and authenticity. If you don't genuinely believe in your brand's mission or products, find a different job. We're in the pet industry. That means lives; furry, innocent lives. Their well-being should always come before profit. Yes, you'll have people in your company who only care about the bottom line. Let them. But you, as a marketer, are here to make people feel something. You can't do that without a pet-loving heart and conviction."

— Dianna Bailer, Chief Marketing Officer, EarthWise Pet