



CONFEDERACIÓN  
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**DIRECTIVOS  
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## Leading in positive

Laura Ros

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# “A good leader cannot be content with past successes, they must always seek higher goals”



**Laura Ros** | General Manager, Volkswagen Spain

With over 25 years in the automotive industry, the General Manager of Volkswagen Spain, Laura Ros, analyses the key points to achieving positive leadership and creating a diverse and engaging environment. The role of women in management teams, confidence in the team and the importance of training are some of the key points that Ros wished to highlight, in an interview in which the great challenges of an ever-changing society were the main themes.

## **What qualities do you think are needed by and define a leader? Is there a formula for being a leader?**

A good leader has to be a visionary, has to be curious and imaginative to anticipate future scenarios and be able to prepare the organisation for that transition. Without doubt, a good leader must be honest, they have to be credible. It is very important that they never lose the excitement of undertaking new challenges. They cannot settle for past successes, they must always seek higher goals.

## **How do you attract the best talent?**

The success of companies depends on the success of people, so you have to know how to adapt to change. New generations want more engagement, more flexible work environments and more inclusive leadership styles. To this end, we promote a much more engaging leadership culture, we create safe work environments where mistakes are permitted and where we encourage people to go further in order to come up with innovative ideas.

## **How is the role of women in Spanish companies changing as far as executive positions are concerned?**

The role of women within management boards is progressing, but not at the speed that we would like. To succeed, we need companies to commit to not leaving policies to develop female talent solely to the human resources area. They must be integrated within the strategic objectives of companies, starting with the CEO, who has to promote this culture at all management levels. Having women on boards or senior executive teams is no longer an option, it is mandatory. It is proven that diversity ensures better decisions are made and this means greater profitability for the company. Therefore, promoting female talent should be on the agenda of every board of any large company in Spain.

**Given your position, you are in a role that can empower other women. Is it a role you feel comfortable in?**

Having this role is something that I am very excited about. Women today are more than prepared for promotion to any management position, we find ourselves in a very interesting time. For companies, having women on their management team is no longer an option, it is a necessity. We are gradually realising that, in a changing environment, it is necessary to have diverse management teams where a richer debate is generated and better decisions are made. We should be the reflection of the society in which we live.

**How do you think the change in fuel and car manufacturing affects society? From your point of view as CEO, how do you think the industry will evolve over the next 10 years?**

We have a tremendous social responsibility and we embrace it as a an exciting challenge. Our aim is to ensure emission free mobility, and to do so we have a strategy and an investment plan as we want this goal to become a reality in the coming years. We need a more sustainable model to achieve clean air in cities and we want to support this transition to cleaner mobility with our vehicles and our services.

**Given you international experience, what talent do you think Spain has as regards other countries such as Germany for example?**

In Spain we have extremely committed professionals, very able, open and highly engaged people. We have to showcase our ability to face up to challenges, our resilience and our imagination. The latter is essential in an environment as volatile as the one we are living in and we have to be able to capitalise on these strengths. Although we are on the right track, within our group we are pioneers of many of the initiatives that are being carried out in relation to the digitisation of vehicles. We are pioneering this process from Spain, and it is precisely that concern and curiosity that are driving us to go one step further.

“Nobody can be in control of everything, you have to surround yourself with great professionals and have confidence in the team. That is how projects become a reality”.

**Is there a leader or leadership model that you especially admire?**

I do not consider myself to be a person who puts others on a pedestal much, but it is true that I have fed off many examples from my professional and personal and even family spheres. Also, I've been lucky enough to work with highly talented teams from whom I have continuously learned. The secret is in knowing how to listen and having the humility to learn from others. That is what has enriched my career and for which I am very grateful.

**What is the most important thing that you have learnt about leadership in the course of your life? From a leader's area of activity, how do you retain the trust of teams?**

Something very important is to begin feeling comfortable in uncertain environments. Certainty does not exist in the environment of a world as volatile as the one in which we are living and we must stop being afraid. Nobody can control everything, you have to surround yourself with great professionals and have confidence in the team. That is what experience has taught me, that it is the teams that make projects a reality. That has to bring us peace of mind and the confidence to face up to new challenges.

**What advice would you give to today's executives and to young people that are just entering the labour market? What attributes will leaders of the future need?**

The best advice that I can give them is to never stop training; to do it in an ongoing way. Today, the habit of being trained and informed is almost mandatory. Knowledge is essential to be able to foresee new trends, to be able to adapt your strategy and to design measures that prepare you for a changing future. It is also important that you know how to listen, that you learn to feed off the people around you. They should foster an inclusive and engaging leadership style, creating a safe environment where people can get it wrong and learn from mistakes. Lastly, they have to be able to transmit enthusiasm, to communicate passion for a job well done. It is essential to set ever more ambitious daily goals, and to always pose yourself challenges and have the desire to improve and continue growing every day.

**As for the great ethical values that a good leader of today and tomorrow should have, which ones do you consider indispensable? How is this area developing at Volkswagen's board of directors?**

At Volkswagen we have implemented a programme called "Together for Integrity" where these types of behaviours are encouraged. We emphasise transparency and honesty as core values and we highlight the role of the board with exemplary behaviours for employees. The goal is to create open communication, where anyone can raise their hand when they see something inconsistent or when they are unsure of how to resolve certain situations.

This open, engaging, transparent and ethical leadership style creates the ideal environment conducive to making decisions, taking into account the impact that these can have both on society and the company.

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