



eBay's Marie Oh Huber: Creating Opportunity and Navigating Change

Skills and Professional Development



Marie Oh Huber, SVP and general counsel at eBay Inc., loves stretch goals and finding the opportunity in change. Throughout her career, she has experienced the benefits of pushing herself out of her comfort zone, and aims to inspire others to do the same. Huber spent 15 years at Agilent Technologies before joining eBay. She excelled in her role, mastered her responsibilities, and established strong relationships with key stakeholders. She left that comfortable feeling to join eBay at a time when the company was in the process of spinning off PayPal, which split the company in two and represented the biggest change in the company's 20-year history. Below, Huber shares her insights that have helped her succeed and lead through change.

The 3 Cs: Communication, candor, and clarity

Throughout her career, Huber has gone through many transitions, including playing key roles in four major spinoffs. She believes these opportunities are great for learning new businesses, working with different people, and assuming new responsibilities. Yet she understands that change can also be unsettling and unwelcome to some. "I can't stress enough the importance of communication and transparency," Huber explains. "You have to be aware and ready to understand that some people will need to go through the different stages of 'change,' which may include some shock, anger, and resistance."

As a leader, Huber believes candor and clarity are essential to managing her team's anxiety. Even if the answers aren't available yet, she tries to be clear and upfront, and create an environment where people can ask questions and talk.

Huber also tries to accentuate the positive aspects of change. "By trying to show the members of our team how they can adapt their goals and aspirations to the changing situation, they build agility,

flexibility, and resiliency — lifelong skills,” says Huber. “I aim to be the voice of calm and positivity with our team, and I try to stay aware of what drives each of our employees, so that I can help set them up for success.”

Bring your “whole person” to work

Over the years, Huber has learned that effectively leading a team through change is helped by encouraging everyone to bring their “whole person” to work. This is particularly true when asking someone to take on a stretch or a new role. “I have learned over the course of my career to be open in talking about family and interests outside of work. I encourage people on our team to have personal passions and interests that fulfill them. Our team members are at their best when they have the opportunity to nourish all parts of their lives,” says Huber.

Huber also wants to expand this attitude beyond the legal department. For example, she organized an event for Asian History Month open to all local employees in which she brought in the author of “Breaking the Bamboo Ceiling: Career Strategies for Asians” as a speaker. As Huber explains, “This was a topic that was applicable to anybody working for the company.”

An avid road cyclist, Huber is hoping to partner with the Silicon Valley Bike Coalition to encourage more cycling in the community and to help resurrect the eBay cycling club. “As a senior leader, I feel that I have a responsibility to sponsor events that create community and foster conversations that may not happen otherwise. I have a passion for bringing people together, and it’s an opportunity for me to fulfill that part of my ‘whole self’ as well,” she notes.

Embrace risk

Huber is the first to admit that transitioning into a new role or environment can be even harder than anticipated. “When I came to eBay, I stepped into a strong culture that was experiencing major shifts,” Huber says. Yet, her approach is to take it day-by-day, and realize that some of the greatest professional and personal growth comes out of these experiences. As she explains, “One thing I realized was to respect what works well, identify what needs to adapt as the business, competition and regulatory landscape change and what can be improved upon to help the team be even more successful, effective and efficient.”

Huber focused on helping her new team understand she wasn’t questioning their capabilities or expertise, but rather trying to lead the team and help them adapt to the rapidly changing needs of the business and the company. “Change is such a loaded word. Lawyers don’t always want to admit that they don’t like it. Staying aware of the fact that I was part of the change at eBay and practicing patience really helped,” Huber adds.

Though not always intuitive in the legal profession, Huber’s insight of bridging the personal with the professional greatly increases the chances that her team will view change in the most positive light possible. What’s particularly inspiring about Huber’s approach is how holistic it is in nature. By encouraging her team to delve into the discomfort of change, shift their perspectives, and support them as they deal with transitions, Huber is encouraging adaptability — arguably, the most important skill all of us need to have in our toolkit.

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