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AMPLIFYING INNOVATION

CHRISTINE SCHYVINCK
CONTINUES TO BREAK
NEW BARRIERS
IN SOUND AS CEO
AT SHURE.

CHANCES ARE THAT ANYONE WHO'S SEEN MUSICIANS PERFORM LIVE IN CONCERT OR ONLINE HAS ALSO SEEN A SHURE MICROPHONE AT WORK.

"Shure's heritage is in the performance arena," says President and CEO Christine Schyvinck (MEM '99). "Our legacy is seeing Shure microphones on stage in front of your favorite musicians as they perform your favorite songs."

Founded in 1925, Shure began selling radio parts as the Shure Radio Company and has developed more than 50,000 different electronics products over the past century. The Niles, Illinois-based company designs and manufactures professional-grade and consumer audio products that include microphones, headphones, in-ear monitors, mixers, digital signal processors, and conferencing systems.

At Shure, Schyvinck uses her Northwestern Engineering education to help customers in more than 120 countries have more productive meetings, give better performances, and create clearer recordings. She's dedicated to achieving the best audio quality possible.

"That's what we're all about," Schyvinck says. "In order to capture sound, you need a transducer that takes that sound wave and converts it into some other form of energy that can be amplified or reproduced. We use software and artificial intelligence in our solutions to make them hassle-free. But at the heart of it, you still need physical things to capture sound, so it's a great combination of technologies."

ASPIRING TO LEAD

Working with physical objects is what drew Schyvinck to mechanical engineering as an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. "I like seeing things. I like touching things. I definitely have a mechanical bent," she explains. "I had summer jobs working in manufacturing and really liked it."

In 1989, when Shure offered her a position as a manufacturing quality control engineer in the Chicago area, Schyvinck decided to give audio electronics a shot. Working with teams to problem-solve and maximize production got her thinking about leadership roles. When a management position opened in the quality group, Schyvinck applied. She didn't get the job, but the experience showed her how much she wanted to be a leader.

"It took me several days to build up courage, but I went to the vice president of quality and asked what it took to get a management job and why didn't I get that one," she says. "His reaction was interesting. He said, 'Oh, it seems like you like your job. We didn't know you wanted to be in management. Let's figure this out.'"

Her mentor suggested she pursue a master's degree that combined technical and management courses and noted that Northwestern was close to Shure's Evanston headquarters at the time. Once Schyvinck discovered the Master of Engineering Management (MEM) program, she was sold.

CLIMBING THE LADDER

One of few women to hold an executive position in the professional audio industry, Schyvinck credits her MEM degree with helping to propel her upward in the company. The program's curriculum and project-based learning prepared her for leadership roles in quality, manufacturing, and eventually sales and marketing functions at the company.

Schyvinck moved into management roles while she was in the MEM program, and shortly after became vice president of corporate quality. She found MEM's focus on business fundamentals and team dynamics incredibly valuable, but she credits the capstone simulation for helping advance her strategic thinking and ability to navigate organizational change.

"Not only did we learn how to work as a team, but we also learned how to look at the business from a comprehensive perspective," she remembers. "It brought all the courses together and gave an extensive overview that helped prepare me in many ways for the seat I sit in today."

MOVING BEYOND MICROPHONES

Schyvinck's leadership has been integral to the steady growth and profitability of Shure. Since becoming president and CEO in 2016, she reduced material costs without sacrificing product quality, dramatically improved on-time delivery, and globalized manufacturing operations. Fostering an innovative, collaborative culture and leveraging Shure's audio technology expertise is part of her focus.

She uses what she learned at Northwestern to drive the company's growth strategy into new areas, including a product that features a microphone array, video components, room controller, digital signal processors, and software in one complete package.

"Our microphone arrays are a huge growth engine for the company," she says. "The holy grail is leading us toward simplicity, with end users being able to plug and play their systems, which opens the door for Shure to go beyond microphones. You need to continually look for new things, new customers, and new ways to transfer your knowledge to other applications."

Today, Schyvinck gives back to Northwestern by sharing her expertise and serving on the MEM Advisory Board. "This program helped shape me," she says. "It's a great way to stay connected with students. I give advice, but I learn just as much from them, and it helps me understand what they're looking for in a company. You want to keep those tethers with academia so you know what's happening, and you can help shape it a little, too."

SARA LANGEN