



Job Performance Does Not Depend on Gender

Andrea Giraldo

Head of Dyeing and Finishing, CREDITEX, Peru
agiraldo@creditex.com.pe



Andrea Giraldo is a Colombian professional with a degree in Textile Engineering and Technology. She has more than 26 years of experience managing textile dyeing and finishing areas, allowing her to acquire extensive knowledge about fabric preparation, continuous dyeing, exhaustion dyeing, yarn dyeing, printing, finishing, chemical, and quality laboratories. In addition, Andrea manages continuous improvement tools, quality management systems, lean manufacturing, emphasising problem analysis, resource management, profit generation and evaluation of results, and implementation of continuous improvement projects. She is currently studying for an MBA with a specialisation in digital transformations at the University of Rioja.

Describe your professional journey, the challenges that you faced as a woman and how you resolved them?

I am a 46-year-old Colombian textile professional and I have worked for five years as Head of Dyeing in the Peruvian Textile industry. Previously, I worked for 21 years at the Textile Coltejer Company in Medellín, Colombia, starting in the Technical Division, and later I was in charge of managing the dyeing area.

It is difficult for a woman to become a working group leader in the textile industry, where most middle and top managers are older men. People often think that women are weak and motherly when making decisions, seek attention and even confuse work and personal issues. To overcome this notion, I worked hard to earn a reputation and image as a professional, with solid technical and administrative knowledge and exemplary behaviour based on respect for others.

Tell us about your main professional accomplishment.

During my tenure at Coltejer, we developed a digitised camouflage textile for the Colombian Armed Forces. The military forces and the textile industry of my country carried out this project.

Do you have any role models, and how did they inspire you?

Dr. Luis Bernardo Botero Sanin, former Technical Director of Coltejer and my boss, was my role model. His dedication and

commitment to developing the textile industry and his professional honesty inspired me.

What is your advice to other women who start their working career?

What any professionals should do is work hard every day and pursue their dreams no matter how many barriers are in the way, and in that journey, treat all people with respect, without any difference, as they would like themselves to be treated.

What is the role of women in the textile sector?

Women have significant roles in the textile sector because we have different skills than men, leading us to greater detail, organisation, management and other skills such as leadership and commitment. As a result, we are strong, resilient and persistent, and possess critical strengths that hold us in good stead in such a demanding sector.

Have you ever confronted gender bias, and how did you deal with it?

In the two companies where I have worked, I have had the opportunity to be the first woman to assume the position of Head of Dyeing. That has not been easy at the time when they evaluated the candidates to take this assignment. However, with my work, I have shown that I can do as well or better than other colleagues and that job performance does not depend on gender but goes far beyond the difference based on outdated

thoughts. Today we are in an era where we have equal rights and duties.

Are you part of the decision-making process in your workplace?

Yes, I belong to the Technical Management working group in charge of the company's manufacturing. Being part of this group implies that I have to make decisions at the technical, programming, quality, and sample development levels that directly affect the company's performance.

How have you personally contributed to correcting gender imbalance?

I pass on my personal experiences to the women I have and have had the opportunity to work with. I encourage them to grow without gender limits so that their status as excellent professionals and individuals can prevail before any other barrier comes their way.

What else do you personally want to do to improve the contribution of women in the textile sector?

I want to contribute to the Textile Industry by improving skills and promoting research in the region. Right now, my short-term goal is to complete my MBA.

Five tips for building up and supporting women at your workplace.

1. Allow household women to learn the art of clothing, and through sustainability projects, provide them with by-products of the textile industry to create different products.
2. Raise the self-esteem of women through job empowerment courses.
3. Create a transparent work environment in all companies, in which promotions depend on workers' demonstrated abilities, regardless of their gender.
4. Establish a non-harassment policy of any kind to women in their workplace.
5. Promote women's achievements in their work centres.

How did Covid-19 affect women in your sector and what has been done to mitigate the effects?

Covid-19 does not distinguish sex, race, and age. It affects us all equally. Thus, remote and digital work is an excellent option to protect ourselves from this pandemic.

What is the future of women in the textile and apparel industry?

The future is promising because we now see more female participation in the sector. Moreover, we are given the opportunity to show our mettle, who we are and what we are worth.

What policies has the Government adopted for the benefit of women employees?

Policies for gender equality and prevention of work harassment are commonplace.

What additional policies do you think the Government should implement to reduce gender imbalance?

The Government must work closely with the community, teaching fundamental values from childhood and strengthening equality and respect for all people, races and genders.

How can the cotton industry invest in creating careers for women?

Investing in education is essential. There are many programs for leadership and emotional intelligence. There is a need to create virtual working opportunities for working mothers or to provide childcare facilities at workplace.

What can an international organisation do to recognise and facilitate the reduction of gender bias?

International organisations have a vital role in reducing gender bias. Globally, progressive minds have been doing their best to remove barriers of all kinds such as gender, race and age to create equal opportunities. Opportunities are needed and it will be up to each human being, male or female, to take advantage of them and demonstrate their capabilities for societal enhancement. But in addition to opportunities, the pedagogical tools are fundamental to removing the cultural differences that were created centuries ago — and shouldn't even exist now.



Photograph: Lorena Ruiz, ICAC