

Interview with Erini Michael

Erini Micheal, Founder & Manager

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Erini Michael is a board of director member at 3 Brothers company. In addition to her degree in chemical engineering, she obtained an executive management diploma from the AUC in 2009 and an MBA in marketing from Victoria College in 2016. She is currently studying for a DBA in International Business at UBIS. Moreover, she had different training in soft skills and technical skills. Erini managed different departments through the experience of studies and training courses obtained by “international business and supportive functions”. In her company, she managed the marketing team, export team, HR team, finance team and other supportive functions. Besides her interest to develop the organization, she also seeks to improve its performance to cope with the international markets. In 2016, she became a member in Business Women of Egypt 21 Association (BWE 21).

WiB: Three Brothers for Engineering and Electrical Industries consist of several companies. Can you explain to us the nature of these companies? And other than a board member, what are your roles and responsibilities?

EM: Three Brothers for Engineering and Electrical Industries consist of 2 companies: 3 Brothers & Ever Green Energy (EGE) as a sister company; 3 Brothers for lighting solutions indoor, outdoor, street lighting and electrical panels; EGE for solar solutions.

WiB: What have your contributions been to the company?

EM: I’m a deputy MD (Managing Director) who is responsible for follow up in some departments, supportive functions, quality control, export and marketing, and developing the strategic objectives for the organization.

WiB: What motivates you?

EM: I am motivated by hard success, implementing successful project, succeeding in new markets and achieving goals.

WiB: Despite the global competition, 3 Brothers exports to every corner of the globe. How do you stay ahead of the curve?

EM: 3 Brothers exports to different countries based on projects through Egyptian contractors or multinational companies, and through some distributors in different countries. The curve is affected by Corona virus.

WiB: Being a second-generation owner of one of the leading companies in Egypt and the ME adds a lot of responsibilities on your shoulders to further develop and grow the business. How does that make you feel? What’s your vision for the future of the company and how do you work to achieve it?

EM: As one member of 3 Brothers, I am keen to develop in different areas, develop systems, develop marketing and products for new markets, and try to use technology and new applications. So, my aim is developing the business.

WiB: As a board member, what are the challenges you face?

EM: I face the following challenges: Culture changes; Employees management; New markets entry; and the absence of some systems such as HRERP (Human Resource and Enterprise Resource Planning) and develop some programs in design.

WiB: Is your company taking any steps to increase the number of female employees, especially in management positions? If yes, what are they?

EM: Yes, as there are two females as board members, we are keen to promote females. When we have a [vacant] position and there are two choices, man, woman, and they have the same qualifications, we prefer to choose a woman.

WiB: Egypt mandates women on boards of publicly traded companies, but without government regulations, the road is still challenging for many.

a. How can we engage more men to support women's equal role in the work force?

EM: Maybe they receive benefits like incentives if they train women.

b. How can women grasp this opportunity to advance?

EM: To be well trained and educate themselves, and to be good planners.

WiB: Egypt has several appointed female ministers. What impact, if any, do you think this will have on the issue of women on boards?

EM: This supports (the premise) that women can act in any position and that will reflect on their performance. Women have some advantages in management more than men, they can listen well, multi-task, and the success of the female ministers will support that.

WiB: Should the government institute policies that ensure more women are given the opportunity to be senior managers and board members of companies? What could be in your opinion a useful measure? (Legal quota or recommendations, data base, more data transparency, etc.). Why?

EM: I think recommendations, more data transparency is the real success for these women, because it will highlight her duties and her success, and the developments done by her will reflect on the organization she worked at. By the way, the successful person is a referral for others.

WiB: How can companies be motivated to add women on their boards?

EM: Previous success can motivate them; give them a chance for a period of time then evaluate them. Give them responsibilities and tasks and evaluate them.

WiB: How can we prepare women in general for a board position? What are useful measures or networks?

EM: Firstly, by training her in different areas (soft skills and technical skills), coaching is also very important, and give her moral support. Also, another important factor for learning is learning by watching. Networking is very important, and to find the right place to talk about herself and her success.

WiB: Why do you think it is important to have women on boards? How could you as a board member help other women in business?

EM: As mentioned before, women are multi-taskers and listen well to others. Maybe being emotional could be good for business. Also, they are patient.

I can help other women by meeting with them and transferring my experience to them.

WiB: What are in your opinion the strengths of female leadership and the possible impact of this leadership? Can you please give us examples?

EM: Women are patient and have perseverance to achieve their goals. If they fail, they never give up. Also, they can have many tasks at same time.

WiB: Many highly educated, intelligent and motivated women are pushed aside in managerial positions. How can we put women on the radar of companies and people with power to become noticeable for these positions? Who are important players to involve, from the public and private sector, to help accomplish that?

EM: A woman can talk about herself in talk shows and conferences. Also, talk about her team who helped her. Give her the chance to meet and discuss her plans with responsible persons who can listen to her voice and give instructions to offer her a chance to apply these plans.

WiB: Women represent more than 40% of the global labor force, yet they don't have proper representation in business decision making. How can women step up to overcome the stereotype that a certain gender and profession can get on board?

EM: A policy is the key solution and when women fail to achieve the target, they give a chance to another woman. They can assign some positions for women only.

WiB: What do you advise young women who want to become entrepreneurs and reach their potential?

EM: For young woman, educate yourself well, get courses in different areas, read more, travel as you can, interact with people, and if you fail, never give up to succeed.

WiB: From the professional qualifications, what are important qualities and/or skills for success in management positions? What are useful measures or networks?

EM: Planning is important for success. Also, monitoring what you planned. Try to use technology and software as they facilitate decision making.

WiB: Is there anything else you would like to add?

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EM: I would like to say to every woman to learn how to be confident, how to speak about herself and not to be shy.