

Cardinal CEO takes on glass ceiling

Mike Kaufmann, CEO of Cardinal Health's pharmaceutical segment, has been named the Healthcare Businesswomen's Association's Honorable Mentor for 2012.

The drug distribution giant boasts an employee resource group, called Women's Initiative Network, or WIN, with 4,000-plus active members—women and men. Kaufmann, executive sponsor of that group since 2009, also chairs a monthly steering committee and an initiative dubbed Women Leading Change, a three-day off-site class, taught by an outside consultant, aimed at preparing women execs for upward movement. At the end of the class, each must present a project to the company's operating committee.

"They love getting that exposure," says Kaufmann. "People get nervous, but it's a way to give them experience being in front of senior executives."

The company is expanding the program with a companion course on women's workplace issues—for men. The first group of 20 took the course, called Partners Leading Change, last month.

"If you don't get men involved, and have them have their 'Ah-hah' moments, you're never going to have the progress you want to make," says Kaufmann.

They talk about unconscious biases and the different ways in which men and women communicate and behave in the workplace. For instance, says Kaufmann, say you're posting a manager job, and list five qualifying characteristics. Women with four of those—but not the fifth—will say "I'm going to sit this one out and work on that fifth skill, and maybe I'll apply next time there's an opening." But a line of men with one of the qualifying skills will form, and they'll sell themselves fearlessly. The take-away?

"When this job opened up, I thought this would be my way of making a difference."

Mike Kaufmann

Executive sponsor, Women's Initiative Network, Cardinal Health

2009–present
CEO, pharmaceutical segment, Cardinal Health

2008–2009
Group president, pharmaceutical segment, Cardinal Health

Hiring managers must reach out to prospective women candidates proactively.

Kaufmann, who joined Cardinal Health in 1990, can list stats showing how far the company's come—three out of ten Executive Committee members are women, as are two of five division presidents, three of twelve Board of Directors members and seven execs running P&Ls of greater than a billion dollars. Turnover for women employees is now less than that for men.

Kaufmann's own "Ah-hah" moment came in part from his awareness of his wife's workplace struggles, and from his concern over how his daughter, who's now in high school, would fare when she entered the workforce. But the barriers women face in the corporate world entered his consciousness early in his career at Cardinal Health, as he watched his then-boss and mentor butt heads with male execs.

"She was a very tough, smart, opinionated woman, and men sometimes didn't like her being in their faces," says Kaufmann.

She brought Kaufmann, then an accountant, into Cardinal's sales organization—a move he sought as a necessary step on his way to general manager. She then helped him move past GM to headquarters marketing.

"She took a chance on me," says Kaufmann, "and as she became my friend, I watched her struggles and her frustrations. At the time, it didn't connect every dot for me, but I saw what she did for me and later, when this job opened up, I just thought this would be my way of making a difference."

That meant leaving his comfort zone. "If you want to learn, put yourself in a role that makes you uncomfortable," says Kaufmann. "I asked around, because I thought as much as I'm passionate and committed to it, there's so much I don't know. But I figured if I stuck with it I'd learn, and I did."
—*Mathew Arnold*

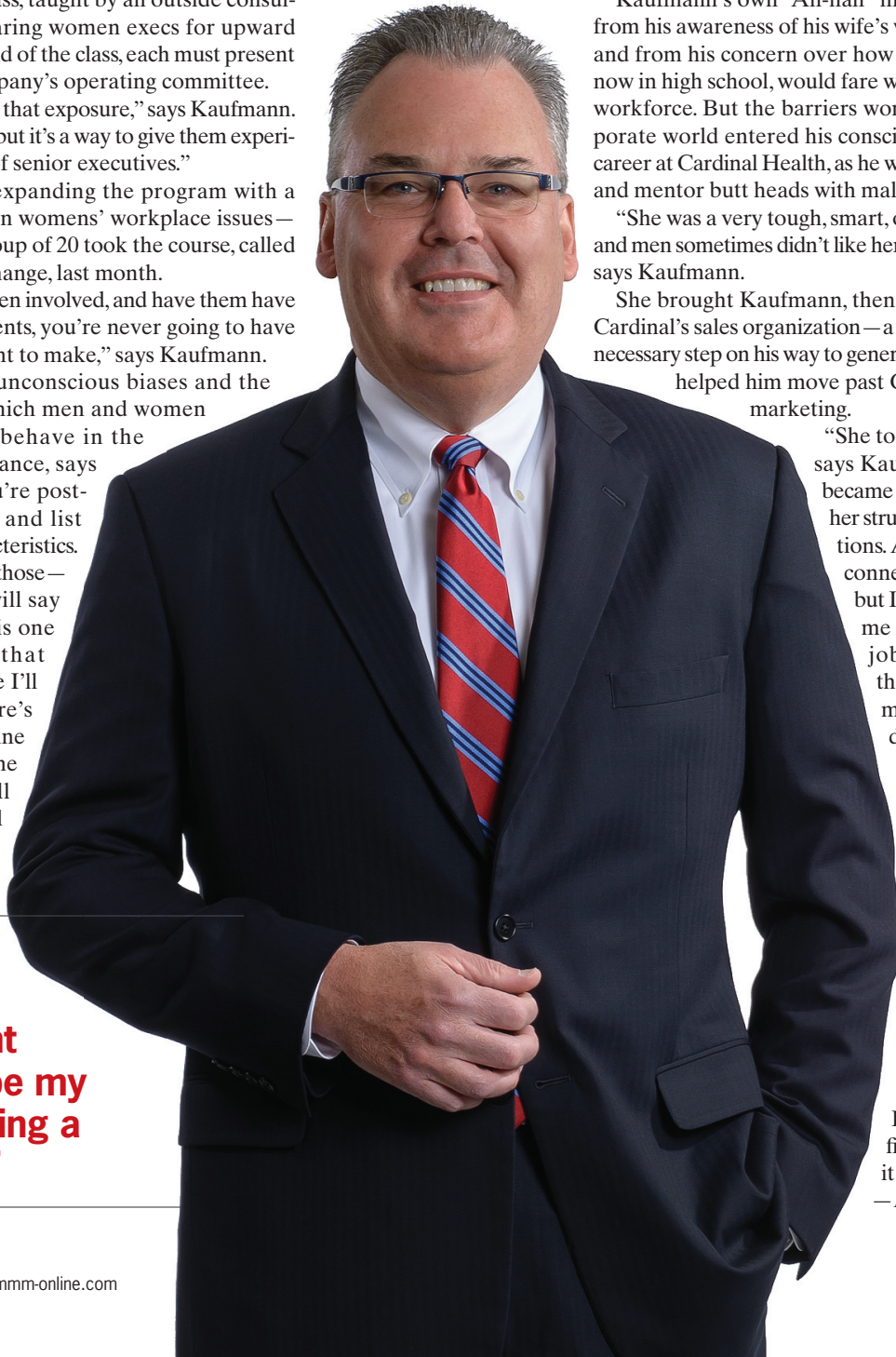


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