



*The*  
**WOMEN  
INFLUENCERS**  
*of 2020*

By Sharon Tosto Esker

# Diversity of Thought Drives Innovation, Relevancy and Success

**N**ow, more than ever, diversity and inclusion are vital keys to success in today's evolving marketplace. It has been well-established that a diverse workplace bolsters a company's bottom line. Creating equitable opportunities for all employees, as well as ensuring the many identities of our country's diverse population are represented, fosters a sense of belonging in the workplace that can allow companies to maintain talent and boost productivity.

The Cannata Report's three Women Influencers—Ricoh's Heather Poulin, Kyocera's Natalie Cumberbatch, and LEAF Commercial Capital's Michelle Speranza—all agree that without diversity of thought, companies cannot thrive in today's world.

"If you don't have diversity of thought, you're missing a huge piece of your audience," said Poulin, vice president of commercial and industrial printing at Ricoh. "Depending on people's different experiences and different points of views, I think being open to those is really the key. It's key to bringing more women and more diversity into the industry. America, especially, is such a diverse country with so many points of view. If you're not open to diversity of thought, and you're not collaborative and trying to bring in different points of view, you're not going to be successful. You may be successful with people who think exactly like you, but you won't be successful with anyone else."

For Poulin, an open environment where people can share ideas, are listened to, and feel valued for their contributions drives innovation and propels future projects and initiatives. While every idea may not make it into a strategic plan, that free flow of ideas can spark the foundation of what comes next.

"If you don't have diversity of thought,

you're hampering your own growth and success," said Poulin.

Cumberbatch, vice president of human resources at Kyocera, believes that diversity of thought is imperative to maintain relevance in the marketplace and in the workplace.

"If you are unable to bring in different thought processes to spur innovation, you become obsolete," said Cumberbatch. "It is an interesting time. Diversity is on everyone's radar. Before, conversations that people were too afraid to have or too uncomfortable to have, they are now everywhere you turn. No matter whether it is the print industry, tech industry, or the agriculture industry—no matter what it is—you can't get away from it. As companies, things you were able to ignore before, you can't any longer. You have to be able to pivot to stay relevant and confront these changes."

Like many of the major OEMs, Kyocera takes an intentional approach to address social issues and diversity. In today's environment of social and political unrest, Kyocera has responded by creating an employee-led social responsibility committee, comprised of employees with varied backgrounds, experiences, and interests, who are creating recommendations for how the organization responds in times like these.

"That is diversity of thought," said Cumberbatch. "Here, you have a group of people who are not from the 'top' and can influence the organization as human beings. This allows them to have a voice, actively make recommendations they'd like to see, and help shape the organization."

Amplifying diverse voices is also a priority for Speranza, senior vice president and chief marketing officer at LEAF Commercial Capital. She is passionate about encouraging women to pursue leadership

positions, as well as providing platforms from which these voices can be heard. She has been instrumental in opening Philadelphia's branch of Women in Leadership, created by People's United Bank in 2015, with a mission to promote diversity and inclusion and build stronger relationships, through women and for women, by supporting collaboration, promoting personal and professional development, and partnering with communities across the Northeast and nationwide.

"You've probably heard that the best way for a company to get good ideas is to first get a lot of ideas," said Speranza. "I'd add that those ideas should be coming from people with a lot of different backgrounds. Without a broad enough perspective, you'll inevitably miss out on some of the best ideas and solutions. You just don't see them when your field of vision is too narrow. That's why it's so important to bring as many different people as possible into the conversation."

As the imaging industry looks to its future, encouraging diversity and inclusion in the workplace can solidify survival, as it's not only a feel-good initiative, but also a necessary business priority. Speranza emphasizes that diversity doesn't just happen, and it needs to be nourished in order to flourish.

"Without conscious, consistent effort to bring in new viewpoints, companies can get so focused on the way things are that they don't see the way things could be," said Speranza. "You have to consider that the marketplace itself is becoming more diverse, varied, and interesting. To meet its needs effectively, it helps if that same diversity is mirrored in your organization. Only when everyone is invited to the table do you get the breadth and depth of insight necessary to keep being the kind of company your customers need you to be."



Natalie Cumberbatch

## Kyocera's **Natalie Cumberbatch** Focuses on Growth and Evolution

Natalie Cumberbatch, vice president of human resources at Kyocera, is focused on growth not only for Kyocera but for each one of the company's employees.

"The reason I'm in this space is because I love helping people be better and tap into their potential—this is what drives me," said Cumberbatch, who joined Kyocera in May 2019 after 11 years with human resources consulting firm Beam Pines and seven years with the non-profit organization Child Mind Institute.

At Beam Pines, the various components of human resources consulting—executive coaching, team building, assessing strengths, filling gaps in knowledge and hiring within organizations, and helping people develop careers—resonated strongly with her. Though she began in a more administrative role, Cumberbatch quickly moved to interviewing and analyzing candidates. As the company and its staff evolved, Cumberbatch took the opportunity to explore the management side of HR, gaining a firm understanding of the business from the numbers to the people.

Inspired to continue her growth and knowledge in HR, Cumberbatch brought her real-world experience to New York University's human resources program

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Cumberbatch

and gained her master’s degree in 2013. This experience helped Cumberbatch expand her skills, preparing her to take on the director of human resources role at Child Mind Institute. Here, she helped build the non-profit’s HR department, developing and overseeing company policies, staffing, recruiting, hiring, compensation, benefits, training, leadership development, succession planning, payroll, and regulatory compliance.

“I was ready to bring my experience to a bigger level in a larger scale,” said Cumberbatch about moving on from Child Mind Institute. “I’m a firm believer that every position I have, I’m there for a pur-



pose. I’m there for a reason. When I feel like I’ve served my purpose, I know it’s a sign that it’s time to move on.”

Reaching out to her network of contacts, she heard about the HR position with Kyocera in 2019. The potential to build on her skills and stretch her experience into a new industry with a larger, estab-

lished, innovative company drew her in. Her interview with Kyocera President and Chief Executive Officer Oscar Sanchez, who assumed his role in September 2018, solidified her confidence in joining the Japanese-owned company.

“He spoke about his vision,” said Cumberbatch. “He is bringing a new mindset

to the company. But, the most important part was that he got it. I don't need to explain HR and the value of what HR brings to senior leadership. There was a partnership mentality."

For Cumberbatch, the most important aspect of a company is its people, but it goes beyond personnel, payroll, and a place for employees to lodge complaints. The HR role requires that she fully supports not only the company but also each employee.

"You have to be 100% for the company and 100% for the employees, but at the same time, you also have to deal with employees' biases, perspectives, values, and outlooks," said Cumberbatch. "You have to be a motivator and you have to remind people how valued they are. If you do these things right as an employer, your employees are going to give it right back to you. It's a two-way street. It's more than just a paycheck every two weeks. There's more investment beyond that."

When Cumberbatch joined Kyocera, she knew she would be working with highly experienced, tenured employees. The average tenure of Kyocera's employees is about 30 years, according to Cumberbatch, yet, many of these employees had not had the opportunity to focus on their own personal development.

"Coming in, I wanted to understand what would be possible for the staff, what they would be amenable and open to, and to show them how they could grow and educate them on what is available to them," said Cumberbatch.

At her previous role at Child Mind Institute, she elevated the company to receive the "Great Place to Work Certification" in her final three years with the organization. It is this designation, which is based directly on employee feedback given through detailed surveys, that Cumberbatch is looking to bring to Kyocera in the coming years.

"This [certification] is not something that can be contrived, you have to work

at it," said Cumberbatch. "This is going to be achieved by checking people's pain points, streamlining processes and communication, bringing more transparency about why and how things are done, and giving employees a voice to contribute to their destinies. This way people are invested and innovation can spark."

Across North America, Kyocera employs over 4,000 people. One of Cumberbatch's first actions with the company was to gather the HR team—whose 11 members are spread across the country and some who had never visited Kyocera's New Jersey headquarters—for three days to get to know each other and more importantly, to dispel any misconceptions. They shared best practices, tips, experiences, and guidance as a true "meeting of the minds." Cumberbatch now gathers the team on monthly calls to build on the foundation they established in this initial meeting.

Cumberbatch also instituted 360-degree reviews within the company to give managers and employees the ability to provide feedback on a continual basis, which gives all involved a better perspective of what is happening in the workplace.

"These evaluations allow employees and managers to have productive and regular conversations about performance," said Cumberbatch. "They provide managers with opportunities to uncover gaps and create paths for people to improve, and to determine the strength of their teams. Rather than looking at teams as individuals, they can evaluate their teams as a whole. They can see who needs to be developed, who needs to be engaged, and who may have high potential."

Every shift Cumberbatch makes keeps the growth of the employees and the company in the forefront. That said, she admits change can be daunting for employees.

"I'm looking for those employees who look at things and say that yes, things could be different," said Cumberbatch. "I want to empower those change agents, and then, I let the work speak for itself through the people. It's subtle.

There are people that will be skeptical. They are used to doing things a certain way that's proven and reliable. They're concerned about change and what it will mean to them. But, that doesn't mean something new can't come in. Remember, at one point, we were all typing on typewriters. Change is not an event, it's a process."

Over the next five years, Cumberbatch is looking to position Kyocera's employees from a position of strength, enabling them to further their growth and develop their careers.

"I would love for employees to be pleasantly surprised about what we can accomplish as an organization together when we take ourselves out of our comfort zones and do things a little differently," said Cumberbatch. "I would like people to feel really good about the contributions they are making and have them know very specifically how they play a role in Kyocera's success. I want it to be a source of pride for them."

As Kyocera weathers through this COVID era, Cumberbatch is helping to guide the company and its valued employees through these unsettling and challenging times.

"Being the head of HR on any given day can be tough," said Cumberbatch. "The COVID-19 pandemic has made it especially challenging. This uncharted territory was filled with a lot of firsts, deliberations, and long days and nights. We've had to make some tough decisions regarding our employees during this time, and it weighed heavily on me. I am acutely aware of the expectations that my staff has of me, and that I have of myself. To say it was—and has been—stressful is an understatement. However, I have to admit that through it all, I learned a lot about myself and my colleagues, and have gained another point of reference for resilience."

**Photographed on July 15 by Matt Stauble at Kyocera's U.S. headquarters in Fairfield, New Jersey.**





Heather Poulin

Ricoh's  
**Heather Poulin**  
emphasizes  
collaboration and  
communication.

For Heather Poulin, vice president, commercial & industrial printing marketing at Ricoh, taking a holistic approach to marketing is vital for success. Working across her commercial and industrial print team, the company, and the industry, Poulin emphasizes tapping into all areas of expertise to develop comprehensive marketing plans for Ricoh's imaging products and services.

"I think being collaborative, being open, is so important," said Poulin. "I know it's not always top of mind in business, but it's important to have some guiding principles and be kind. At Ricoh, we have our founding principles: Love your neighbor; love your country; love your work. I'm big on promoting those both within the team and externally as well, because it gives people a sense of what it's like to do business with Ricoh. Those are the principles that guide us every day. Passionate people that care about building alliances and doing things for the greater good – whether it's the greater good for the industry, for the country, for the company – that's a driving force that's really important."

Since the start of her career in the industry with Savin in the mid-1990s, Poulin has focused on building a savvy skillset to develop her ability to work

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Poulin

collaboratively and inclusively. Her marketing assistant role at Savin gave her a high-level view of marketing, as she worked with team members from internal sales, events, public relations, and product management—a broad sampling of marketing components. Following this experience and a brief foray outside the industry in several other marketing roles, she joined the product marketing team at Océ in 2005. Here, Poulin gained a firm understanding of what it takes to pull the pieces together to launch a product, giving her a new perspective of what it takes to build messaging around technical products. Once she moved to the go-to-



market side of Canon’s production print team in 2011, she was able to leverage all her previous experience to work seamlessly with product marketing and other groups to effectively communicate product messaging.

Given the technical nature of production print, Poulin served as an important link

between the product marketing managers and the vital messaging coming from Canon, designed to ultimately target its customers.

“Some of the products, especially on the software side are more technical,” said Poulin. “You get with the product marketing manager, who is the champion

of the product, and they are excited and begin talking about all the technical elements of that project. When you're trying to communicate that to a general audience through marketing, you need a more simplified message. I was able to successfully work with them to craft go-to-market messaging."

In 2017, she joined Ricoh's commercial and industrial printing business segment group and quickly moved up in the ranks to her current title as vice president in this growing innovative area.

In her current role heading up marketing for Ricoh's production print products and services, Poulin oversees four segments within this specialized area: the go-to-market team; the product marketing group; the Boulder, Colorado-based Customer Experience Center (CEC) team; and inside sales team.

"Thinking about a holistic approach with marketing, I have that with this team," said Poulin. "Product marketing needs to interact with go-to-market. The Boulder CEC does a lot to move sales cycles forward and helps us to market. Everything that we print or produce, we can do through the Boulder CEC. They interact directly with our customers, so they capture the voice of customers and help feed it back to us, helping direct our marketing efforts. Inside sales is another piece that makes us whole. They tie in with our demand generation and marketing programs. They work closely with the go-to-market team. Having these four groups together creates that holistic approach to marketing."

Poulin's experience in these various roles over the course of her career has given her the adept ability to effectively encourage collaboration and constant communication within her own team and across the company to achieve Ricoh's goals both internally and externally.

"In external marketing, we always say we need three touches with a prospect," said Poulin. "Internally, you also need multiple touches because everyone is

so busy. Communication is the key component there. It's important to be aware that people work differently and learn differently. You have to be able to adapt to how that person works, whether it's someone on your team or heading up another group. Understanding how they work and how they digest the information you're giving them is one key to success for anyone managing a team."

Poulin empowers her team to develop their ideas and try new approaches, based on their knowledge and research. Throughout her career, Poulin benefited from several mentors who empowered her to make educated decisions and navigate challenges with confidence. As long as these ideas align with Ricoh's overall business initiatives, Poulin wants her team to pitch new ideas, try them, learn from them, and continue to grow, as she has done in her own career.

For example, when COVID-19 forced offices to close, Poulin's CEC team worked quickly to pivot from in-person demonstrations to virtual demos for proof of concept. Collaboration across Poulin's inside sales, product management, go-to-market and CEC teams allowed Ricoh to make this shift so the company could continue delivering highly customized experiences for its customers and keep the sales process on track.

Poulin's teams also mobilized to enhance its Ricoh Business Booster, a member-only website geared toward its commercial printing business customers. Business Booster features industry white papers and research from industry experts, vertical market guides, production-ready print samples, video tutorials, webinars, and more value-added information to help its customers develop their businesses. A new COVID-19 section was added, with samples for social media, social-distancing signage, and other resources that customers can customize with their own logos and messaging.

*(Turn to Page 69 for a feature on Ricoh Business Booster).*

For Poulin, the future of print offers massive opportunities, especially given her perspective that digital and print walk hand-in-hand with each other.

"Print and digital complement each other really well," said Poulin, who still relishes holding a well-produced catalogue, magazine, or advertisement, especially those that are personalized to her interests. "As time progresses, you'll see even newer technology tie into print. We're already seeing AR [augmented reality] tie in with print. As that becomes more mainstream, you'll see that utilized even more. It's the perfect way to give someone the tactile experience of print and the digital experience through AR or email or another digital component. That will continue to evolve, but print will always be an important part of that mix."

When it comes to production and industrial print specifically, Poulin believes the applications are limitless. She views this area as a significant opportunity to connect with a lot of people and for dealers to offer customized, individualized printing for their customers. The ability to create targeted and personalized floor decals, protective equipment, signage, and everything in between can create a potent link, facilitating a strong connection between customers and end-users.

"Print and digital each make the other stronger," said Poulin. "It goes back to multiple touch points. If you're sending a printed piece, you're following up with an email and one additional touch point like a landing page, or another email with a different offer. You're reaching that person multiple times. Extending that reach of print digitally is really powerful. You get a tactile experience and a digital reminder."

**Photographed on July 23 by Richard Graulich at Poulin's home in Florida.**





*Michelle Speranza*

LEAF Commercial  
Capital's  
**Michelle Speranza**  
Accentuates Agility

Just as the imaging industry continues to evolve at a rapid clip, so does marketing, says Michelle Speranza, senior vice president and chief marketing officer at LEAF Commercial Capital, a subsidiary of People's United Bank.

"What's kept me in the field is the constant evolution," said Speranza. "I like that the grass cannot grow under your feet in a role like this. You have to get an intimate understanding of your audience and those you're trying to reach. I love that you can incorporate story-telling and so many different mediums to try to help your target audience. Instead of selling to customers, I really look at it as aligning with and helping them through the products. I love that it's fast paced, it's changing, and there are so many nuances to it."

In the 15 years since Speranza has been working for LEAF Commercial Capital, marketing has shifted quickly away from traditional avenues—like newspapers, radio, and television—to the dynamic landscape of digital.

"In the beginning, you didn't have as many digital channels to pursue your audience," said Speranza. "You didn't have many ways to target them or segment them in a very specific way."

Today, Speranza looks for a potent combination of traditional and digital levers

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I want people to speak up. I want to hear what they think, what they say. I want them to participate.”

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Speranza

to pull for effectively communicating with LEAF Commercial Capital’s clients with a concentrated effort.

“With the technology we have available to us now, we can go beyond the relatively coarse audience segmentation we’ve relied on until now and speak to each person individually using the channel best suited to the application, whether by phone, direct mail, email, social, or another route,” said Speranza. “And it’s all done in real time, so the customer receives messaging precisely targeted to his or her current position in the buyer’s journey. Compared to 15 years ago, it’s like being lightyears ahead in being able to predict and meet the needs of your cus-



tomers. When they reach any given stage of the buyer’s journey, we’re there with messaging that takes what we’ve learned from their behavior up to that point and delivers the answers and information they need to take the next step.”

It’s this type of targeted marketing that Speranza is honing in on as she navigates

the constant shifts in the marketplace. She wants to establish a direct connection with LEAF Commercial Capital’s customers, based on targeted marketing rather than, for example, a wide-reaching email blast that is more likely to be deleted than read.

“In the past, no matter how good you were at analysis, segmentation, and

timing, there was always quite a bit of uncertainty you just had to live with,” said Speranza. “But now we’re able to use a wider, deeper dataset and apply AI [artificial intelligence] techniques to make sure we reach the right customer with the right information at the right time. But as powerful as this technology can be, it’s useless unless it’s backed by a talented team that knows the industry and a strategy built on years of experience.”

For Speranza, marketing comes down to developing an intimate understanding of LEAF’s target audience—what makes them tick and what challenges they are facing. Over her tenure, she has fully immersed herself in the culture of this unique, niche industry, by consuming as much information as possible about the industry, observing trends, meeting with sales people and dealers, and listening closely so her marketing team’s messaging can align with LEAF Commercial Capital’s products and services to meet the company’s clients and their needs. Speranza’s team is designed to take a holistic approach to marketing. Every facet of LEAF Commercial Capital’s marketing falls under her purview, and her team includes strategists, copywriters, creative directors, and specialists overseeing the company’s marketing automation platform, and marketing operation specialists.

Speranza is charged with determining the strategic direction of the company in all internal and external communications.

According to Speranza, her team members are hardworking, versatile, able to multi-task and shift priorities quickly without getting “too frazzled.” They are also thick-skinned and not fearful of rejection in the open environment she fosters in the workplace. Speranza views failure as an important part of the learning process. Without it, she says, you can’t learn how to do things better the next time.

“In a creative field, your idea may not always win, but it’s more the point of bring-

ing that idea because it may spark someone else’s idea,” said Speranza. “I want people to speak up. I spend a lot of my time asking. I want to hear what they think, what they say. I want them to participate.”

She encourages her team to work cross-functionally within LEAF Commercial Capital to develop coordinated strategies to communicate both internally and externally.

“So many times, communication domains get siloed and don’t support one another like they should,” said Speranza. “Just like we take an omnichannel approach to our marketing, we take a holistic, company-wide approach to communications in general, ensuring that all messaging is integrated, cohesive, and tightly focused on supporting the company’s objectives.”

With this inclusive approach in place, Speranza and her team were able to quickly pivot LEAF Commercial Capital’s marketing as COVID-19 upended the marketplace, creating confusion and triggering a financial crisis that rippled across the U.S.

The pandemic required a distinctly different direction from LEAF Commercial Capital’s original marketing plan for 2020. The evolving situation necessitated a shift in how the company was communicating with both its employees and clients. With employees working remotely, LEAF Commercial Capital’s marketing team had to re-think and shelve many of its strategies and channels in real time.

“During the onset of COVID, there was a lot of confusion,” said Speranza. “A lot of people were shell-shocked and hit by the worst financial crisis they’ve ever experienced. A lot of people just froze as the shutdowns happened and everything became constricted. For us, we went from selling to service. How can we help our customers? What do they need? How can we align with them to help them get through this time? The whole company shifted.”

All of the company’s communications pivoted from emphasizing growth to survival. LEAF Commercial Capital’s marketing team mobilized to provide resources and content to educate and help customers re-tool and reimagine their own business strategies to weather through this time where most employees are not in their offices.

Internally, Speranza clearly outlined the reasoning behind why LEAF Commercial Capital was shifting its marketing strategy, how the company was shifting, and what the company was looking to address in its communications. A unified, transparent approach to the shift in messaging was carried across the organization, as the marketing team met with sales leaders, rolled out trainings to representatives, and provided access to all emails and content for customers before they were sent to ensure all employees were on the same page.

It’s with this same type of agility, responsiveness, and adaptability that Speranza believes will carry the dealer community through these challenging times.

“I think the dealers are extremely creative, hard-working, and unstoppable leaders who have ebbed and flowed, and continually shifted and changed through the years,” said Speranza. “The key to survival is adaptability. Those that adapt will be able to come out of this in a much better place. It’s an industry I’ve seen adapt and change. Every step of the way, they know they need to plan for the future. As long as they continue to expand their product lines, expanding their reach, they’re going to continue to be just fine.”

**Photographed on July 22 by Matt Stauble at LEAF Commercial Capital’s headquarters in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.**

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### Questions About This Story?

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