



American Crystal Sugar's  
Lisa Borgen Has

# Coffee w/ Kara

If there's one thing Allegro Group Founder and CEO **Kara Jorvig** is passionate about, it's leadership — how to spot it, how to cultivate it and how to develop it.

That's why you'll now regularly see her in *Fargo INC!* having conversations with influential local leaders that range from recruiting to hiring to the importance of women in leadership.

**NAME**

Lisa Borgen

**TITLE**

VP of Administration

**COMPANY**

American Crystal Sugar



# THE CONVERSATION

## WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

**Kara Jorvig:** Lisa, you're a highly visible leader within our market, and you've had a fascinating career journey. And one of the things I respect about you is that you believe in bringing other women along and creating opportunities for them. I, too, am passionate about that.

Women in leadership is certainly a relevant topic, and I'm curious what you think, as to why there aren't more women in leadership roles.

**Lisa Borgen:** That's an interesting question, except I think you first have to define what leadership is. In my view, leadership is more about action than about a position you hold. I think there are a lot of women leaders in our community who might not be CEOs or in the C-Suite, but they are real leaders.

**Jorvig:** I agree. And I, too, believe you can lead at any level. Regardless of the

professional or personal choices we make as women, I believe we should own what we are passionate about and drawn to.

I also think women do have the opportunity to lead; it's whether or not they want to step into it. In my experience, people are often paralyzed by fear of the unknown and may not have the courage to step out of their comfort zone. Mindset is key. I think we oftentimes put up barriers in our mind that we can't or we won't or we shouldn't ... but we can.

**Borgen:** I do think it's also about the amount of risk you're comfortable with. Are you risk-averse, or are you willing to take on risk and everything that comes with it? Because if you're going to be willing to take on risk, you have to not only hope you'll succeed; you have to be willing to fail and learn from your failures.

There are also some people who really just don't have the desire to do something different. There are a lot of folks who are content with what they're doing. They're good at their job, they're doing a fine job at it, they have good relationships with the people they work with, and they don't have any desire to do anything more. And we need people like that, too.

## TAKING THE INITIATIVE

**Jorvig:** Another thing I get asked a lot is, "If I want to take that next step toward leadership, what should I be doing to position myself?" What advice do you have for the women who have that drive?

**Borgen:** For anyone, I think you have to take your career into your own hands. You can't wait for someone to tell you what to do. You can't wait for opportunities; you have to create the opportunity.

So the first thing I would say is: You have to define what it is you want. What is your goal? Once you've done that, how are you going to get there? Because in order to get there, you have to have people who are on your side. You have to get their input, you need their advice and you need their support.

**Jorvig:** I agree with that. I think that if you really want an opportunity, it's on you. From what I've seen, the most successful people are intentional about their development, and they're intentional about what they're trying to achieve in their career — or in life. It can apply to anything.

To me, it starts with awareness and a self-discovery process.



**NAME**  
Kara Jorvig

**TITLE**  
Founder & CEO

**COMPANY**  
Allegro Group



Then, there is power in surrounding yourself with the right people, finding a mentor, reaching out to your HR team or current manager, and asking for their partnership in putting together a development plan for you. In my experience, when you take initiative and are intentional, opportunities present themselves.

**Borgen:** And you know what? The squeaky wheel gets the oil. That's all there is to it. If you know what you want and you go after it and you make the people around you know what you want, you ask for opportunities, and you volunteer for things that are outside of your normal job description, that, to me, says this is a person who has high potential and ability.

A lot of people say, "We should develop our high-potentials," and my response is, "Yes, but they should be coming to you asking for it." You can't make someone into something they don't want to be. They have to take it into their own hands and say "Give me this opportunity" or "I've seen this seminar I'd like to go to" or "Hey, there's this volunteer opportunity. Can I go do it?" To me, all those things show a person who has the drive to become something more. And that's leadership.

#### MENTORS AND CONNECTIONS

**Jorvig:** Professionals and leaders come to me and have goals: "I want to do this. I want to be this. I want to earn this." But they're not always clear about the next action steps. And I think that's where reaching out to a mentor comes in – or at least reaching out to a professional who you can relate to, who you trust and who you admire.

Ask them to help you define the path because sometimes we're not able to develop that strategy on our own. Sometimes, you need a coach or a business leader who will spend time with you, have

a cup of coffee, and talk about their own journey and some of the things they've done. And you don't just have to do it within your own organization.

Look into volunteer opportunities, or look into leading a committee or serving on a board. Those experiences can be extremely valuable for you professionally. Lisa, I know you serve on a number of boards.

**Borgen:** I am on a lot of boards. I enjoy the work, but I also think it's important for your development. Not only do you learn about whatever business or organization you're on the board for, but you also network with the people on that board, which gives you a bigger swath of people you know and who you can have relationships with. And they can mentor you, you can mentor them, etc.

I'm a big proponent of mentoring. If you see someone out there and think, "Gosh, I wish I could be more like that person. I wonder how they got to where they are," don't be afraid to call them up.

#### INTERNAL INVESTMENT

**Jorvig:** What investments do you and the leadership team at American Crystal make in your female employees?

**Borgen:** We are a very male-centric company. We're about 75:25 men to women because we're agriculture and manufacturing. So a couple years ago, patterned after the (FMWF) Chamber's Women Connect program, we started something called Crystal Women Connect. And four times a year, we get together, have guest speakers, talk about careers, talk about development and just talk about interesting things that are going on in the community.

We also feature leaders outside of American Crystal to give a different perspective. In addition, it's a good place

#### Women-in-Leadership at a Glance\*

##### U.S. Senate

21% women

##### U.S. House

19.1% women

##### State Legislatures

24.8% women

##### Governors

8% women

##### Fortune 500 CEOs

5.4% women

##### College Presidents

26.4% women

\*Data from Pew Research Center's "The Data on Women Leaders"

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American Crystal Sugar VP of Administration **Lisa Borgen** (left) on the true value of diversity in the workplace:

"It's not just about having women in the workplace; it's about having ... people of different ages, generations, cultures, ethnicities and genders. If you have that mix of diversity within your organization, that rich fabric really enhances the work environment, enhances productivity and gives you a leg-up with your customer base and on your competitors."

for the women to connect with each other, to network and to see the opportunities. We talk about not being afraid to apply for that job. You might not think you're qualified, but I'll tell you there are a lot of other people applying for it who are less qualified than you. Don't be afraid to step out of the box and go for it. And apply for the job even if you don't think you're the top candidate. It gives you a lot of experience in interviewing, getting prepared and updating your résumé.

**Jorvig:** It's awesome to learn that local businesses are creating opportunities like this. A lot of times, these great tactics stay internal, and companies don't openly about talk about them. But for me, it's one of the most fascinating things to learn about. There are so many interesting ideas that we can share to encourage this in other business cultures.

**Borgen:** Right. Another thing we do in Crystal Women Connect is a segment called "What's My Job?" We feature people within the company, and they present information about their unique roles at Crystal. We'll have someone in from purchasing or an HR generalist. Recently, we featured a female sugar engineer who does our molasses de-sugarization. She came in and gave us a speech about that.

## Come See Kara Jorvig at the FMWF Chamber's Women Connect

### WHO

Allegro Group Founder & CEO  
Kara Jorvig

### WHAT

"Unlock Your Full Potential"

### WHY

An expert in her field, Jorvig has developed tools and strategies that help people recognize opportunities to grow in their current positions and discover paths to achieve their career goals. Jorvig will give attendees a powerful new perspective on how to make the most of their career paths while having fun and being intentional.

### WHEN

Tuesday, April 24  
3:30 - 5 p.m.

### WHERE

DoubleTree by Hilton  
825 E. Beaton Drive, West Fargo

I think it's good for our internal organization to teach the people who are already with us what we're doing and what the opportunities are, and it's been very well-received.

Also, we don't just have women presenters. We have men presenters as well, and we've started inviting some of the key men in our organization to come to our meetings because they're saying, "What is that Women Connect?" They want to be a part of it.

### BALANCE = SACRIFICE

**Jorvig:** I'll close with this: I think women constantly struggle with being the mom they want to be and the professional they want to be. Something a lot of women ask me about is work-life balance. How do you do it?

**Borgen:** In my family, I've always felt that their dad and I have modeled behavior that supports our community. We like to volunteer, and we like to be involved in things. For example, American Crystal has been involved in the (Fargo) Marathon the last couple years, and my kids have come, we have a water station and we hand out

water. And I think that's a good thing to teach your kids, that it's important to be humble and give back to your community.

If you're going to be a mom and a professional, you can't get around the fact that there is going to be a work-life balance struggle. I think some women embrace it, it's part of their character and they do better when they're really busy. And others feel like they're not giving justice to what they think is the priority, so then they choose to not go for that next job.

And while I think that as women – or just people in general – we shouldn't judge people for their choices in that area, to have a job where people look at you as a leader in business, a woman has to accept both the benefits and the challenges that come with it.



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