Claudia Keller
HPGM Professional of the month

Where are you from?
I was born and raised in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico. While going to college at Tecnológico de Monterrey – Campus Sonora, I won a scholarship to study abroad for one semester in Tucson, Arizona. That’s when I met my husband. Five years later, we got married and I moved to the US. That’s one of the hardest things I’ve ever done, move away from my family.

Current Position?
I work at Baird as a Project Analyst in our Human Capital department. I’m also the VP of Public Relations of the Toastmasters Profesionales Bilingues Club and the Community Involvement Chair of our ERG Prism.

Your responsibilities?
In my current position, I do project management for various initiatives. I work with different departments in our firm to create business cases, timelines, allocation of resources, budgets and change management plans.

What you like most about your job?
I love interacting with people and new challenges. I truly enjoy brainstorming sessions and hearing different ideas from my teammates, and their logic behind it. This gives me a new perspective and helps to plan our projects better so they resonate with associates, who are then more apt to get on board. It’s amazing to see how much is achieved and the quality of the work when people work together. Another aspect of my role that I like is to see the big picture and how each project that I work on aligns with our firm’s overall strategies and goals.

Previous Position(s) held?
My passion has always been HR. Back in Mexico, I worked for Ford Motor Co. and I loved my job! The plant in Hermosillo is amazing, the production line, the associates, the leadership team and the culture is like nothing else. I also worked as a Recruiter/HR Generalist for The Results Companies. This was a call center for Verizon Mobile in Hermosillo, where we had 200 bilingual associates. I very much enjoyed developing professional relationships and helping with creating development plants for our supervisors and managers. The last position I held before coming to Milwaukee was as a recruiter for one of the biggest growers and exporters of grapes in Mexico. They have many farms in Sonora and export their fruit to Asia, Europe, North, Central and South America – I have been excited to find one of our brands at Pick N Save!
Highest level of education completed?
I went to Tecnológico de Monterrey – Campus Sonora in Hermosillo, Sonora where I graduated with honors in earning my Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration. I also have a minor from the University of Arizona in E-Commerce.

What motivated you to get through college?
I come from a very close family and witnessing their achievements have been very motivating for me. My grandma, a lawyer and university professor that just retired last month (at age 75), has been a huge inspiration in my life. In her time, when she was done with high school, the only choice she got to keep studying was to get her secretary certification, which she did. Years later, with four children and a full time job, she decided to go back to school and become a lawyer. To fast track her story a bit, she became the first female Dean at her university in the Department of Law. She is still this intelligent, outgoing and caring human being I’ve always admired. My parents are both civil engineers and have also been very influential in my life, always encouraging me to do my best in whatever field I choose.

What do you wish you would’ve know as a student?
I would definitely encourage them to study abroad, learn a second or third language. This definitely helps to open their mind and be more appreciative of different backgrounds and points of view. Also, stay informed. Just because you are not in the “real world” doesn’t mean you don’t have to care of what’s happening around you.

Why do you feel it’s important to be involved with HPGM?
HPGM is a great organization. This is the kind of place I was looking when I first moved to Milwaukee. They have definitely helped me as an individual and our company. I have been connected with amazing individuals through this organization, it’s amazing to hear about their achievements and learn from them. Kudos to HPGM and Dr. Rodriguez on the new CLEO chapter in Milwaukee. They had their first meeting two weeks ago and I would recommend to all ERGs. Great information on how to add value!

Latina college graduation rates have increased faster than any other group of women. Why do you think this is?
We're eager, we have such a strong drive to accomplish our goals and make our parents proud..

What changes do you see in Milwaukee’s talent pool?
I’ve been in Milwaukee for only four years but I can tell you that our candidates come better prepared each time. They come to interviews and you wouldn’t believe they’re only about to graduate from college! They’re so professional and they know what they want.

What is one goal you’d like to accomplish in your lifetime?
I really like helping people doing my job. Developing associates for the path they want to take in their career through HR is very rewarding. I would definitely like to get to a leadership position in a global company.

What’s your favorite thing about working for Baird?
I love Baird, it’s an amazing company and they treat us very well. The people really care. They don’t just show up, do their tasks and leave. They care about what they’re doing, they care about the company and they care about other employees.

What do you think about mentorship?
I see that it’s very common here in the US and it’s a great way to help emerging leaders! In my case, I do have informal mentors but not a formal one yet. I am actually on the lookout for one. On the other hand, I know I am early in my career but I would love to mentor someone if he/she sees my experience could add value to his/hers.
Describe yourself in 5 words

What do you enjoy doing on your free time?
I love to play Ultimate Frisbee. Between you and me, I don’t love to run but the game is so much fun that sometimes I forget I am tired. I also enjoy playing volleyball and going for bike rides close to Lake Michigan.

Favorite place to visit?
I love to travel, that’s why I learned English and some French. I love to learn about other cultures as I feel that when you know the native language, you can truly communicate and people value the effort. I have been to amazing places, but my favorite still remains home. My family is so important to me and I love to visit them.

What’s the most thing to adjust to since moving to Milwaukee?
Start over. No friends, no family, no job, no connections… it was hard. It’s hard coming to a different place, where it’s not your native language, or the people you know. Having to prove people your value and communicate eagerness is almost impossible. On the flip side, there are a lot of opportunities here in the US. I’ve been to a lot of events, done networking, and through this I’ve met new people and new friends.

You’ve accomplished so much, how do you continue to challenge yourself to strive for more?
Hearing other success stories keeps me grounded. There are many people that have accomplished so much in their lives and that inspire me to do more. Live with a purpose and help others is my daily goal.