

## Customer-Centricity

An Interview with Tami Erwin, CEO, Verizon Business

**EDITORS' NOTE** Tami Erwin is widely recognized for her strategic impact, marketing and operations focus, technical savvy and passion for people. Prior to being named CEO of Verizon Business, she played a crucial role in the evolution and growth of Verizon's wireline and wireless business segments. She was the head of operations for Verizon Wireless, and led Verizon Fios, the nation's largest residential and commercial fiber network. Earlier in her career, she was Chief Marketing Officer of Verizon Wireless.



Tami Erwin

Erwin leads by example in advocating for women, social fairness and equal opportunity. She was the executive sponsor of Women of Wireless, the employee development program that, due to its success, broadened into the global Women of the World initiative. As the executive sponsor of Verizon's Veterans employee resource group, she provides strategic oversight of the programs and resources the company provides to its more than 10,000 veterans, active reservists and military families. She is also active in Verizon's Leadership Excellence Advancement Program and serves on the Paley Media Center Board of Trustees and the board of the Verizon Foundation. In addition, she served as the vice chairman of Chrysalis in Phoenix and vice chair of CommNexus in San Diego. Erwin is a graduate of the Executive Program at the Stanford University Graduate School of Business, and attended Pacific Union College, majoring in business administration.

**COMPANY BRIEF** Verizon (verizon.com) is one of the world's leading providers of technology, communications, information and entertainment products and services. The company offers voice, data and video services and solutions on its award-winning networks and platforms, delivering on customers' demand for mobility, reliable network connectivity, security and control.

**How do you define Verizon's purpose and how is being a purpose-driven company a part of Verizon's culture and values?**

Two years ago, we set out on a mission to create the networks that move the world forward for four key stakeholders – our customers, employees, shareholders and society at large. In the broadest sense, the notion of creating networks is at the heart of what we all do every day. It's about the connectivity, products and services we bring to our customers, but it's also about the intersection of human connections and technology. It's about discovering innovative and never before thought of experiences that will change how we consume and engage with each other. And most importantly, it's about the actions we take, together, and the impact we can have in creating a better, more accessible and inclusive world for all.

**Will you provide an overview of your role and key areas of focus?**

I lead Verizon Business, a global leader in 5G technology serving 97 percent of Fortune 500 companies with over 26,000 employees. As a team, we help businesses, governments and communities reimagine everything from their employees to end-customer experiences.

At the core of my role, I'm focused on fostering a culture of customer-centricity and ensuring my teams have the tools they need to succeed. I started my career as a customer care agent, so customer-centricity is an area I am particularly passionate about. I encourage my teams to put our customers at the center of everything we do. Start with the customer, figure out their pain points, and think about how we can add value. We're network and tech specialists, but we're also problem solvers who help customers redefine and reimagine how they want to work as nearly every industry is undergoing rapid digitization.

**How did Verizon Business adapt the way it works to address the challenges caused by the pandemic and how proud are you to see the resilience of Verizon Business' workforce during this unprecedented time?**

Since the start of the pandemic, we have seen how resilient the human spirit is. This is something the V Team has exhibited at every step of this journey. We've learned how to prevail in the face of constant uncertainty, we have dealt with an unfathomable amount of loss, and our normal routines have been uprooted.

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Yet, we have also learned to adapt, overcome and support each other along the way which is something I am immensely proud of.

In terms of the broader business, we too have had to adapt to periods of uncertainty and change. I’m incredibly proud of how we reacted and responded to serve our customers in crisis – supporting them as they moved their businesses to their home offices, ensuring that hybrid working didn’t put security or service at risk and more. And now, I’m excited to reimagine what’s possible in the future we’re embarking on today.

**How is Verizon Business revolutionizing the customer experience?**

There has never been a more critical time for mobility, broadband and cloud, and building the 21st century platform for innovation. It has become clear that reliable connectivity has become an essential part of the way we live, work and play. At Verizon, we have built a 5G network that meets the moment and provides real-world, 5G-enabled solutions. With Verizon’s 5G, businesses spanning a whole variety of industries have accelerated digitization and increased innovation across entire verticals, and we’re just getting started. Verizon has been building toward key currencies of 5G for several years now – from robust throughput to low latency to faster service deployment than ever. We are paving the way forward and our customers will be the first to benefit.

**How critical is it for Verizon Business to build a diverse and inclusive workforce?**

It’s essential. Diversity and inclusion are key tenants of any strong workforce in today’s world and it has to be about more than just representation. It’s about truly incorporating a feeling of belonging into the workplace and ensuring all employees have a seat and voice at the table. We as leaders must ask, “Did we engage everyone at the table?” and “Does everyone feel heard and seen?” If we can do that, we’ll build stronger and more engaged teams.

**Do you feel that there are strong opportunities for women to grow and lead in the industry?**

The conversation around women in the workforce is a conversation that is more critical than ever. Throughout the pandemic, women have been disproportionately affected by job losses. Income trends have revealed that women are more likely to permanently lose their jobs versus men, and women can also expect their income to fall by 50 percent more than men do. We have to recognize these disparities and take concrete action to ensure that, in this new world, inequality is stamped out. I’ve been proactive in ensuring that Verizon and Verizon Business play a key role in facilitating that change.

What I will say is that the pandemic has highlighted a new style of leadership – the compassionate, caring and curious leader. Women in particular excel at these leadership

traits, and it’s time for us to embrace our strengths. When you consider the power that empathy has had over the past two years, you start to appreciate how much impact you can have when you show up and help others achieve their goals.

**You have held a number of leadership positions with Verizon during your career with the company. What has made the experience at Verizon so special for you?**

When you spend a significant amount of time at any company, you have to feel like you belong and that you’re being challenged. At Verizon, I’ve always been able to test myself and have always felt that hard work is recognized, acknowledged and rewarded.

Crucially though, it comes back to our mission. When you look at some of the challenges the world is facing today, many of the solutions humanity is exploring come down to one thing: technology and how people can leverage technology for good to achieve a desired outcome. Verizon plays a leading role in that narrative and there’s still plenty more work to be done. From streamlining the way society manufactures cars, to exploring how low earth orbit satellites can connect people in rural communities, we are at the forefront of so many groundbreaking initiatives.

That’s why it’s special – because I have the opportunity to take this company to places no other company has been, alongside some of the best colleagues and customers in the world. ●

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