



INSIGHT PAPER

# **Women on the Rise Spotlight Series: Boston Scientific's Meghan Scanlon**

A Voice for Equity

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# A Voice for Equity: Meghan Scanlon

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## Introduction

Sometimes one person's simple advice can change another person's life trajectory. For Meghan Scanlon, it was her history teacher, Mr. Parlin, at Newton South High School in Massachusetts. He pulled her aside during her senior year to ask what colleges she was considering. She told him Boston College but recalls: "He didn't think that was right because he knew I thrived with math and science. He said I should consider engineering. I didn't even know what engineering meant! If it hadn't been for him, I wouldn't have this awesome career."



That awesome career led her to her current position as senior vice president and president of Urology at Boston Scientific, the global medical technology company where she's running a \$1.8 billion business.

This is the story of how in building her unexpected career, Scanlon evolved into a vigorous advocate for women and diversity. It is the story of the evolution of an executive who combines innovative visionary leadership with virtuoso operations management. And it is the story of a compelling role model for a new generation of women leaders.

We'll explore her journey via lessons learned along the way.

## Lesson #1: Get Credentialed

Scanlon grew up just outside of Boston in Newton, Massachusetts, and although her parents did not attend college, they made sure she believed she could do anything. They encouraged her to attend Tufts University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering.

Then and now, engineering is a man-dominated field, but luck was with her in choosing Tufts, where in the early 1990s the dean of engineering (with two daughters) had a mission to increase women in the program. "Women were about 30 percent of my class, so I didn't stick out," Scanlon reports. Nationally today, women earn just 22 percent of undergraduate engineering degrees (U.S. Census Bureau) and represent only 15 percent of engineers in the US workforce (American Association of University Women).

With a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering, Scanlon was hired by Gillette as a design engineer, one of four women working alongside nearly 400 men. Her first project involved the Mach 3 razor's button ejection mechanism. Later, she joined the team that created the category of women's razors with the Venus. "We designed a new handle shape to work better in the shower—which is where women shave—and the peel pack to hold replacement blades and stick on the shower wall so you don't drip your way across the bathroom to replace a dull blade." She reports the fun they had playing with texture, shape, and colors (like "blue tumbled sea glass") and recalls being in a room with water coming out of the walls and 15 women shaving and offering feedback.

This was more than just engineering. It involved customers and marketing, and the experience got her interested in an MBA. She attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and earned a master's degree in mechanical engineering and concurrent MBA from the Sloan School, a double degree that packed a wallop in the industry.

## Lesson #2: Take Risks

In 2000, Johnson & Johnson (J&J) hired her in marketing in its orthopedic medical device division, where she spent nearly 15 years. She strengthened her risk-taking chops by asking to rotate through different functions. During eight months in finance, she learned how to establish a standard market approach and improved efficiency and then spent eight months in operations focusing on packaging.

J&J promoted Scanlon to product manager in marketing, and while there, she raised her hand for a stretch assignment during which she hired, trained, and led a specialized orthopedic sales force in hand surgery. She calls this "one of the most valuable things I've done as I got to dip my toes into the sales world. I learned how difficult and essential this work is in the medical device field." At J&J, she rose to vice president of global marketing.

Was engineering vanishing in Scanlon's rear-view mirror? "I will never completely put my engineering skills behind me. Work in medical devices is pretty technical—both the biomechanics of the medical procedures and of how the devices work. My learning curve is quick with the technical aspects of the devices and what surgeons are trying to accomplish."

With the technical foundation laid down at Gillette and experience gained on the commercial side at J&J, Scanlon found herself in the sights of Dave Pierce, now retired executive vice president, MedSurg at Boston Scientific, who ran the Endoscopy business in 2014 and offered her the perfect next career step as its vice president, global marketing. "I fought hard to get her," Pierce says, "because she is a generational talent."

# The Visionary

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When asked what she loves about her job, Scanlon says, “You get a chance to see how innovation can truly transform the way patient care is delivered.”

## Lesson #3: Innovate

Today, Scanlon is stepping up as an innovative leader in a field of medicine in crisis. According to Pierce, for every new urologist out of medical school, 10 are retiring, and as specialists decrease, kidney stones are increasing. He says that by 2030, the United States will have 32 percent fewer urologists than projected patient demand.

Scanlon oversaw the acquisition of Augmenix Inc., which made a product that reduces side effects of prostate cancer radiation, and she nearly doubled the product’s revenue the first year. In 2021, she helmed the acquisition of an Israeli manufacturer’s global surgical business, including their portfolio of lasers for kidney stones and prostate disorders. Her team currently is driving innovation with StoneSmart, a platform aiming to transform kidney stone care by reducing the burden on medical personnel involved in a procedure.

## Lesson #4: Seize Challenges

Scanlon’s former boss depicts her as a challenge junkie, “passionate about doing things that are hard.” Just one month after she assumed her role as president of Urology in 2020, COVID-19 hit, and “as a brand-new president, she ran the business from home,” Pierce says. “She had the poise, the accountability, the confidence. Boom! Thirty days in and she did an elegant job.” He wonders whether, even with his 10 years as Urology president, he could have done all she did remotely and with such aplomb.

The numbers tell the story: since her appointment to president of Urology, Scanlon has driven revenue growth by 25 percent.

# The Manager

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In the corporate world—and elsewhere—it is unusual to find a visionary leader who also is a top-notch manager. That’s why so many founders get replaced. Both Scanlon’s former and current bosses insist she is both. Pierce: “She has the rare ability to go up and down between the vision and managing details.” Art Butcher, executive vice president and group president, MedSurg and Asia Pacific, to whom Scanlon currently reports: “Her accountability to prioritized goals combines with how exceptionally she leads.”

## Lesson #5: It’s the People!

As Scanlon advanced as an enterprise leader, she has developed into an acclaimed people manager, both hard-driving and “respectful of the human,” in the words of her direct report Kristin LaRocca, senior vice president and head of Sales and Channel Innovation. Her managers past and present find this an uncommon combination. Pierce describes her as “very driven but very fair, never politicking or positioning, and always authentic,” while Butcher says: “Though generally the smartest person in the room, she doesn’t need to let you know that. She’s approachable and tremendously humble.”

“Human” is how colleagues and bosses alike characterize Scanlon’s people management. Several describe how she listens with empathy, including LaRocca, who points out that “Meghan sets the tone for people to be themselves. If there’s a problem in someone’s personal life, most would feel good about telling her they can’t do something.” Butcher stresses how she prioritizes the team’s well-being, wanting everyone to be their best selves. And he adds, “They know she would run through fire for them, so they’re willing to run through fire for her.”

Scanlon’s “human” quality is reflected in how she delivers feedback. Calling it the best he’s seen, Pierce explains that she captures an observation, delivers it factually and insightfully, and causes go-forward plan changes. Lisa Considine, vice president, Global Talent, and beneficiary of her spontaneous feedback, tells how “Meghan can pull me aside suddenly and coach me in the moment. She challenges me with respect and curiosity.” LaRocca underscores this forthright approach: “If she’s unhappy, she’ll let you know, doesn’t beat around the bush. And she listens.”

What spurs Scanlon’s perspicacious grace that charms and motivates the people she leads to “walk through fire?” From her seat as executive vice president, Human Resources, Wendy Carruthers states simply, “She has a genuine interest in people.” Considine dubs her a “cultural steward who takes personal responsibility for the employee experience and the culture.”



# The Influencer

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In 2018, then-president of Urology Karen Prange announced she was leaving Boston Scientific to become CEO of another company. “You can’t do this!” Scanlon protested. “Who will we women look to—to show us what’s possible? And she pointed back at me.” A light went on as Scanlon recognized she was likely to be next. “I took that seriously. It wasn’t an obligation; it was a sense of conviction.”

Scanlon started accepting more invitations to speak at women’s conferences. At one of these 2018 events, the Working Mother (now Seramount) Women’s Advancement Roundtable, she had an epiphany. Witnessing many senior executives committing to take specific actions to advance women, she recognized the power of individual action. “I saw then that it was my job to be an influencer.”

## Lesson #6: Speak Out

Now with a stellar reputation as revenue-generator and people-manager and as one of four women leaders at the company with profit-and-loss (P&L) responsibility, Scanlon began to effect culture change. When she joined the Executive Committee (EC) as the only woman business unit president, she opted “to embrace my otherness instead of trying to fit in.” Yes, she “felt uncomfortable at first, but then I had to be a bit of a pain as a working mother and to be the one to remind my colleagues that we had women and men trying to do their jobs with children at home during the height of the pandemic. I saw it was my job to amplify their voices. I saw why my representation on the team matters.”

Pierce says that even at her first EC meetings, she spoke “with such passion and logic that her voice was heard immediately.” He tells a story about a day “when unconscious bias reared its ugly head” as they debated using a certain advertiser. Scanlon and Mary Beth Moynihan, senior vice president, Market Access and chief marketing officer, “called us out for not listening to the women experts in the room. They opened my eyes to our behavior.” But did their challenge change others at the table? He believes “it forced us to be reflective...and did change our ability to hear in a less biased way.”

From then on, Scanlon has made it part of her role to call out unconscious bias wherever she sees it.

But how do you effectively get people to think differently about tough topics such as sexism and other forms of implicit bias? Carefully and thoughtfully are Scanlon’s persuasion playbook. “My job increasingly is to find a way to shake the trees, but without alienating anyone.” She totally believes that “nobody dialogues with ill intent.” So she will push candidates into processes when they’re not in the room and pull out hidden biases, then use her voice to challenge those biases. “It’s my role as a leader to stand up, to speak out for women and marginalized groups.”

People listen when she speaks, which Pierce attributes to passion for her subject, authenticity, and articulateness. “She can tell you a story and advocate for something in such a convincing way that it’s hard to ignore. It’s not magic. It’s thoughtful. It took work and time.”

Scanlon always goes into meetings prepared, having practiced the tone so she captures those moments with kindness but strength. She offers a for-instance: “You can say, ‘I just heard you talking about Steve like this, but now I hear you talking about Sally like that, and they have very similar characteristics. Help me understand

if there's something different that I'm not seeing." When asked if she ever hesitates, she articulates her mantra: "When you're sitting around the table you can use your political capital to call out bias." But as when challenging chauvinism with Moynihan at the EC table, Scanlon knows to set it up preemptively with another colleague.

## **Lesson #7: Embrace Being a Role Model**

Scanlon lives in Duxbury, Massachusetts, with her husband, Thomas, and two teenage children: 16-year-old James, "an extroverted athlete and football player," and 14-year-old Brooke, "brilliant and more introverted" and published author of children's book *Cleo's Search*. She laments a bit wistfully that as teenagers, "both kind of don't want anything to do with me anymore." Nonetheless, she times all her travel never to miss a birthday, football game, or other important event.

LaRocca, who has three children, applauds that her boss makes it a point for the team to see her as a wife and mother. She calls this role-modeling especially critical for early-career women so they see they can lead a business and have a family. Scanlon lets women know that as leaders, they don't have to do a job the way the man did who held the job previously, but instead they can figure it out so it works for them. LaRocca joined Boston Scientific nearly 30 years ago as one of the first woman regional sales managers and says she "struggled to get people to believe a woman can do this job. Today, Meghan makes it clear a woman needs to do the job by being herself, not like him."

Former boss Pierce says her message to everyone at the company is not to be all in at work to the detriment of family. "She taught me that when you're over-indexing on work, that's fine, but then you also commit to over-indexing on family. At any given time, one end of the seesaw is in the air." He started to run his life that way and made sure his team knew it. "A seesaw can be fun," observes Scanlon. "When it's been more intense at work, I will over-index at home." And she adds, "You can see in the eyes of the women who work for you that part of your job is to lead the way."

## Lesson #8: Commit to Action for Women

In June 2022, Scanlon served as a panelist at Seramount's Women's Advancement Roundtable and strategized with peers from other companies on how to increase women in the roles responsible for the profitability of lines of business—the P&L positions that lead to the top. She declared her commitment to the group: she would lead the creation of an initiative focused on accelerating women into P&L roles at Boston Scientific.

"I came out of the session and wrote Wendy Carruthers in HR to ask how we could change things so we have more women in P&L positions. Within a week, we sat in her office and brainstormed."

## Lesson #9: Create a P&L Initiative for Women

Carruthers saw the concept as a needed element in Boston Scientific succession planning: the P&L pipeline doesn't have enough women. She wants to encourage women to think differently about their careers early on and learn routes to general manager positions, having too often heard, "Oh, if only I'd known 10 years earlier about P&L jobs." The new initiative will invite women who are interested and on the path to moving up to general manager to fill in their experience gaps, receive coaching, learn financials, and increase their visibility. The goal: to accelerate readiness.



### About the P & Elle Initiative

- **Goal:** Accelerate development of female talent for P&L leadership roles.
- **Who:** Identified senior-level top talent with potential and aspiration to lead a P&L.
- **What:** On-the-job exposure, executive coaching, mentorship, learning circles.
- **Leadership support:** Career sponsorship and commitment to identify on-the-job experience immersions.
- **Partners:** HR and Global Talent.

They call this the P & Elle initiative.

Carruthers knew that Scanlon's clout would inspire support across the company. She asked her to work with the talent development team to frame a proposal to take to the EC, and by September, it was ready. "Company leaders responded positively," reports Butcher. "Meghan takes the time to think things through and identify the impediments. I was instantly supportive because she identified the gap and collaborated with HR to propose the bridge over the chasm—which is that women must understand early what to do to develop the skills they need. With equality the goal, we must address the pathway."

Global Talent's Considine identifies Scanlon as a disruptive thinker who enjoys challenging the status quo, but without destruction. "Meghan creates a positive energy around being disruptive...relentlessly ensuring we are the best we can be."

The pair are partners on building out the visionary P & Elle initiative. "Together," she says, "we are disruption and creativity."

The P & Elle initiative is anchored in a clear business rationale: "It's about performance. More women in P&L roles will make us perform at a higher level financially," says Considine.

The global pilot brings together 10 women with different experiences from various business units and functions who aspire to P&L roles. Not a classroom program, the curriculum involves experience-based learning and immersion with leaders in finance and management. They conceive a multiyear approach with the anticipation that participants will fast-track their readiness to apply for and assume P&L roles. As its

proponents make clear, the P & Elle initiative will build a more gender-equitable pipeline to the top by preparing talented women for P&L opportunities.

## **Lesson #10: Listen, Learn, Advocate**

Members of the EC sponsor the company's employee resource groups (ERGs), and Scanlon leapt at the chance to serve as executive sponsor for PRIDE, the LGBTQ+ ERG. Pierce, her predecessor in the role, says, "She went and multiplied the pride in PRIDE by 100."

During COVID-19, PRIDE remained a Scanlon priority despite the extraordinary business challenges through which she was leading her organization. "She made it clear that the pandemic would not shut down our ability to connect," says PRIDE member Jared Cohen, principal downstream product manager, Neuromodulation. "She understood that these connections are crucial to maintain happiness."

When Scanlon first assumed the executive sponsor role, Jenny Lee, vice president, Global Digital Marketing and Consumer Experience and lead for PRIDE, was asked to arrange reverse mentoring meetings with PRIDE members "as she's not part of the LGBTQ+ community." (In reverse mentoring, a more junior employee mentors someone senior.) Scanlon met separately with five individuals who represented LGBTQ+ dimensions, including gay, bisexual, nonbinary, transgender, and a parent of a transgender child. She describes these one-on-one meetings: "They sat with me and gave me the gift of telling me their authentically lived stories. I got to see things as if in their shoes."

"Classic Meghan," says Carruthers, "asking questions and listening."

Lee points out that most ERG work occurs after hours, so having an executive sponsor with Scanlon's impact validates the importance of members' work that might go unnoticed. "With Meghan, you know what you're doing won't go off into some ether and not be seen." Moreover, PRIDE's vision has expanded as "she's pushed the way we think, how far our activations go," including a structured plan to impact the whole organization.

Cohen describes Scanlon's approach to ERG sponsorship. At other companies where he's worked, he's found that executives "let the queer community know 'You are welcome here.' With Meghan, you're not just welcome. She builds the stage, sets up the lighting, does the AV, and gets an audience so you can teach people to be allies." He continues: "Meghan doesn't stop where everyone else does. She doesn't do 'enough'; she elevates it."

Take LGBTQ+ Spirit Day that spotlights bullying and for which the color is purple. Cohen recounts how Scanlon supported his idea for a parade where various departments competed in creating floats. On that cold, windy October day, hundreds of people joined the festivities on the Boston Scientific Massachusetts campus. Scanlon arrived wearing a purple velour jump suit with a purple boa.

Rainbow colors hang outside Scanlon's office. "I have seen the power of putting up that flag," she says. "Employees come in and can be themselves." When PRIDE wanted to hang its flag outside not just for the customary June Pride month but also year-round, Scanlon's influence resulted in the installation of a dedicated flagstaff that flies not just the PRIDE flag but all ERG flags at the entrance to headquarters.

## Lesson #11: Operationalize DEI

Lee, working with Scanlon on PRIDE, finds that “Meghan doesn’t just believe in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI); she lives it.” Pierce calls her the right leader at the right time in the company’s DEI journey. During COVID-19 and after the May 2020 death of George Floyd, he admired her “being out front in leading the discussion, authentic and unguarded.” He tells how she then moved “to operationalize DEI in the Urology business unit, integrating it as part of the business cadence as development.”



### Operationalizing DEI

#### *Create a DEI Council for Urology Business Unit*

- Goal: Be global champions of a diverse, inclusive employee culture.
- Who: Leaders from all functions and constituencies.
- What: Work with sponsors from Urology management board to reveal gaps, outline a plan, rally support and resources, review hiring data.
- Why: Create accountability to HR business partners and management board.

#### *Focused Recruitment*

- Partner with colleges and universities, including HBCUs, to accelerate hiring women and people of color.
- Expand RISE (Ready, Inspire, Support, Evolve – which develops diverse associate-level field sales professionals) from sales function to all of Urology business.

#### *Diverse talent development*

- Conduct special talent reviews for emerging and high-potential talent.
- Assign sponsors from management boards to diverse talent.
- Assign each management board member to an ERG as liaison.
- Encourage ERG leadership roles in talent development plans.
- Design early-stage rotation programs to increase exposure and expertise.

#### *Informal actions for leaders*

- Embed DEI conversations in town halls.
- Ensure inclusive speakers at town halls, and other forums.
- Participate actively in ERG meetings and forge relationships with ERG heads.
- Reach out regularly to diverse talent to learn aspirations.
- Stay alert to disturbing social and political events; convene listening sessions.
- Engage in reverse mentoring with diverse employees.

Scanlon began by implementing programmatic elements. She oversaw the creation of a DEI Council for the business unit that includes leaders from all functions and constituencies, including White men, whom she calls “an important part of the journey and the team.” She stresses enlisting pragmatic thinkers who “can lay out priorities and practical steps to move the DEI needle over time in a thoughtful way.” The council works with sponsors from Urology’s management board to identify gaps, create a plan, and rally support and resources. It also reviews hiring data and works with talent acquisition to provide resources, tools, and education to managers.



## Mentor and Support

PRIDE members know Scanlon has their backs as she mentors and advocates for them, and Lee underscores the importance of underrepresented people having someone at her level speak up for them. “She’s got a spidey sense of when to amplify the voices of those not heard. She pulls people’s voices into a conversation, and that’s empowering,” notes Butcher.

Pierce shares an area where Scanlon might have needed to grow. He says: “One huge area of growth came with time and responsibility. She’s much more empathetic now.” He adds that “she’s not a pushover, doesn’t get bamboozled—but does it in a way that’s more empathetic. That’s helped her be more beloved.”

Scanlon mentors dozens of individuals across Boston Scientific and is known for taking the time to talk with anyone at any level, as well as for the empathy and honesty that inform her counsel. As one of her mentees, Lee finds “there’s never any sugar-coating. She gives you more belief in yourself, brings your career vision into clarity. And connects you with the right people.” She then tops it off: “Meghan inspires you to be a better person, a better employee, and to fight for good in the world.”

When a disheartened Cohen recently failed to land a new position he was trying for, he first took to tissues and ice cream, then called Scanlon. “You heard no” she told him, “but that doesn’t mean it’s no in the future. A door has opened, and now you need to follow up on it. Then you set up a call with X, and another call with Y—until you hear yes.” She was totally prescriptive with details about what steps he should take. After the conversation, Cohen says, “I felt like I had drunk an elixir.”

Programs alone won’t bring about the cultural shift she seeks. Conscious always of the need “to understand the perspectives and lived realities of our employees,” she identifies leaders “comfortable with having uncomfortable discussions” and with leading DEI journeys. She embeds DEI conversations in her global business unit town halls. She stresses connecting regularly with underrepresented talent and urgently when crises occur, such as mass shootings.

And Scanlon doesn’t forget the seeming “small stuff, like the people you give the opportunity to present at events, and the little decisions along the way.” She tells about Dina Shehata, leadership communications manager, MedSurg, who is Egyptian and who partnered with Scanlon in mounting a 2022 global town hall webcast from Dubai. “Dina is Egyptian and had the cool idea that we play an Arabic pop song as we opened. Afterward, I got an email from a US woman saying how much that gesture meant. She’d never thought a global business would honor the Arabic community.”

Pierce reports that Scanlon was among the first—and most demonstrative—leaders at Boston Scientific to advocate for operationalizing DEI, with other businesses adopting much of what she initiated. “Because she’s inspirational, people follow her,” says Carruthers, to which Pierce adds, “Meghan was a rock around which the organization was saying, ‘We can and will make change.’ ”