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A moment that truly shaped how I lead was when I moved to China for work without speaking a single word of Mandarin.

It was one of the most humbling experiences of my life. I went from feeling confident and capable to feeling like I had to relearn everything. I couldn't rely on language. I couldn't rely on familiarity. I had to rely on people.

That experience completely shifted my mindset. I had to become more observant, more patient, and much more culturally aware. It forced me to develop a global, cosmopolitan lens, to listen before speaking, to understand before reacting. It made me realize leadership isn't about having all the answers; it's about being open enough to learn in every room you walk into.

One barrier I broke or maybe refused to accept was being told I wouldn't last. Before I left, a former leader said to me, "You're moving to China? You'll never last. You'll be back in six months begging for your job." That stayed with me. Not in a discouraging way, but as fuel. I was determined not to prove them wrong but to prove myself right. I lasted. I grew. I thrived. And I came back stronger.

That moment motivated me deeply. Sometimes being underestimated is the greatest gift. It forces you to define yourself instead of letting others define you.

Along the way, I've learned that leadership is less about authority and more about adaptability and resilience. I'm proud of the courage it took to step into the unknown. I'm proud that I didn't retreat when things felt uncomfortable. But most of all, I'm proud of the people I've been able to support and see grow.

For me, giving in leadership means sharing what you've learned, especially the hard lessons. It means mentoring, being honest, opening doors, and sometimes simply telling someone, "You can do this," when they're doubting themselves. Giving is helping someone else rise without feeling threatened by their growth.

The International Women's Day "Give to Gain" campaign really resonates with me because my growth came from stretching beyond comfort and from people both supporters and skeptics who pushed me. When we give our knowledge, time, and belief to others, we don't lose anything. We multiply impact. We gain stronger leaders, stronger teams, and stronger communities.

And that's what leadership is really about.

One action I'm giving in 2026 is being more intentional about creating space to share the experiences of women in leadership. I'm surrounded by incredible female leaders with powerful stories, stories of doubt, resilience, growth, and bold decisions.

I want to bring those stories forward. Because when people hear someone speak honestly about their journey, it makes the leap feel possible.

If sharing those experiences helps even one person move past self-doubt and say, "I'm going for it," then it's worth it.