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For me, International Women’s Day is a chance to reflect on the women who quietly shape our confidence, often long before we realise it ourselves.

One of the most influential people in my career was a previous line manager who went from colleague to boss, then to friend. She consistently showed up for me at every stage of my career and gave me unwavering support and care. She backed me in every role I stepped into, including when I covered her second maternity leave and stepped into a more senior position.

Following both my first and second maternity leaves, when I needed flexibility around part-time work and working from home, she made it possible. Even when it required creative thinking about the right roles to make it work, she always found a way.

She also encouraged me to step well outside my comfort zone, more than once, by taking on roles I would never have volunteered for. Those opportunities shaped me personally and rounded out my professional experience in ways I couldn’t have predicted. When she began thinking about her next career move, she encouraged me to increase my workdays. In hindsight, I know she was positioning me to be the best candidate to take on her role when she eventually moved on. I’ll always be grateful that she quietly believed in me and consistently had my best interests at heart.

That experience shaped how I think about leadership today. Giving in leadership looks like investing time and energy in sharing knowledge and skills within your team. It means creating new

opportunities for others and sometimes stepping back so someone else can step up. It also means not always taking centre stage but setting others up to shine and own their success.

The “Give to Gain” theme really resonates with me because I’ve experienced first-hand how powerful it is when someone invests in your potential before you fully see it yourself.

One action I’m giving in 2026 to help others gain is reviewing the gaps across my leaders and future leaders and creating opportunities for them to develop and expand, so they are ready to step into new opportunities when they arise.