

# Rewriting the Playbook

In the age of high tech, **KPMG**'s industrial manufacturing pioneer Claudia Saran helps clients lead with intent.



Claudia Saran, Principal, National Sector Leader for Industrial Manufacturing.

**M**any manufacturers have long, proud legacies with solid foundations. But from a talent perspective, they can sometimes perceive technology as a “people replacer.” To overcome this, Claudia Saran, National Sector Leader for Industrial Manufacturing at global professional services firm KPMG, shows clients across the industrial manufacturing landscape that technology and people can, and should, productively coexist.

“A challenging economic climate marked by sluggish growth and increasing capital costs means manufacturers can’t depend on traditional revenue sources,” says Saran. “Overcoming disruption—whether from electrification, mass customization, resurgence of after-market services or evolving employee expectations—calls for a highly deliberate strategy enabled by increasingly intuitive digital services.”

## Making Manufacturing Smart

How does it work? Take the analytical space. Companies investing in data science and technological tools could go all in, but Saran’s approach has businesses first asking and determining what problems they’re trying to solve, such as where to divest vs. acquire, or where to prioritize cost takeout efforts.

“It’s too simplistic to think about transitioning from traditional to smart manufacturing as a solely technical path,” she says. “Beginning with strategy, including a fresh look at a company’s portfolio, elements such as business model, enterprise risk management, and talent strategy all serve as key enablers to a company’s evolution to an ever-smarter industrial entity.”

Saran encourages cross-functional leadership teams to together draft their strategic priorities, as the interdependencies in today’s manufacturing environment are everywhere. For example, a human

resource-designed talent strategy to leverage tenured employees while acquiring expertise from other industries requires alignment from functions such as supply chain and marketing that must execute on such a strategy.

As an innovator helping companies face challenges head-on, she brings with her specialists on topics from cybersecurity to new tax regulations, and from ESG strategy to portfolio management and more. In helping KPMG clients leapfrog the competition, Saran encourages cultural mindfulness, helping leadership teams to examine their organization’s values and leverage them to accelerate their evolutions to a “smarter industrial.”

With more than 30 years of experience advising clients on five continents before becoming a new mom at age 49, Saran’s greatest success stories involve helping leadership teams see new possibilities by leveraging their strengths and learning from their history of change. “Change is daunting, both personally and professionally,” she notes. “So we help leaders tap into insight and architect a path forward, which allows them to more naturally lead with the confidence and optimism required in this increasingly complex world of industrial manufacturing.”

As for the future, Saran is eager to help women in manufacturing elevate the industry by bringing the most qualified talent, information, and engineering to the factory floor.

“Organizations that thoughtfully execute their playbook evolve quickly,” she concludes, “and ideally, in the process, their leadership team and the broader organization get smarter.”



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