

## **“I see leadership as a multiplier effect. When individuals grow, organisations and communities advance”**

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**For International Women’s Day, we spotlight women leaders shaping the future of healthcare across the region. Among them is Evelyn Pang, General Manager of Moderna Singapore and Hong Kong. A pharmacist by training with over 20 years of experience across vaccines and specialty care in the Japan–Asia Pacific region, she has often been the youngest in the room or the only Asian woman at the table. In an interview with BioSpectrum Asia, Evelyn reflects on the barriers she faced rising to leadership, how her leadership style has evolved, the structural changes still needed to advance women in biotech, and the advice she hopes will empower the next generation of women in science.**

**Looking back on your career, what were the most significant barriers you faced in reaching leadership roles, and how did you navigate them within the life sciences industry?**

Throughout my journey across commercial, medical, strategy and regional leadership roles in Asia Pacific, the most defining barriers were often subtle rather than visible. In highly technical and performance-driven environments, credibility must be earned repeatedly — especially when moving across functions and markets, especially in APAC where markets are extremely diverse and healthcare systems are complex.

As a pharmacist by training who stepped into sales, marketing, regional strategy and eventually general management, I was often the youngest in the room or the only Asian woman at the table. Rather than viewing this as a constraint, I saw it as a platform to prepare and network more deeply, listen more attentively and deliver consistently by building high-performance

cross functional teams because performance builds trust and trust builds influence.

Another barrier was the expectation that leadership requires a singular mould and walked the typical progression paths. However, growth itself isn't linear. Over time, I realized that sustainable leadership does not require imitation. It requires clarity of purpose and the courage to take bold steps to learn and take on unprecedented/newly created roles. When I anchored myself in patient impact, team development and long-term value creation, decisions became clearer and confidence stronger. I learned to speak with conviction while remaining curious and humble to learning. That balance has been foundational to my growth.

**How has your leadership style evolved as you've taken on greater responsibility, and what qualities do you believe are most critical for leading complex life sciences organisations today?**

Early in my career, leadership for me meant delivering outcomes through excellence in execution. As responsibilities expanded to leading cross-functional and multicultural teams, my perspective broadened. Today, leadership is about being the social architect creating the space and conditions where teams can excel.

In complex life sciences organisations, we operate at the intersection of science, regulation, public health, commercial realities and societal expectations. Decisions carry long-term implications. Clarity, courage and empathy are essential as the impact we create is deeply human.

My leadership style has evolved toward what I describe as purposeful presence. Being fully attentive in conversations. Listening beyond the surface. Aligning teams around a shared mission, especially during periods of uncertainty or rapid innovation. Science, like the mRNA platform, moves fast; and our people move at the speed of trust.

I also believe in disciplined experimentation. In biotechnology, innovation and challenging status quo is constant. Leaders must be comfortable piloting new approaches, evaluating data objectively and recalibrating quickly. That requires intellectual humility and resilience to fail fast and unlearn and relearn what we know.

Finally, developing people has become central to my leadership philosophy. Whether mentoring younger team members, supporting cross-functional growth or teaching students as an associate lecturer, I see leadership as a multiplier effect. When individuals grow, organisations and communities advance.

**Despite progress, women remain underrepresented at the top of biotech and life sciences companies. What structural changes do you believe are still needed to create more equitable leadership pathways in the industry?**

Meaningful progress requires structural intentionality.

First, equitable access to high-impact roles is critical. Stretch assignments, regional exposure, P&L responsibility and innovation-led projects often accelerate leadership readiness. Organisations benefit when these opportunities are transparently distributed and sponsored actively.

Second, leadership pipelines thrive when mentorship evolves into sponsorship. Mentors provide advice; sponsors create opportunities. Senior leaders play an important role in advocating for emerging talent in rooms where decisions are made.

Third, flexibility in career pathways supports retention of high-potential leaders across different life stages. Healthcare and biotech demand intensity and agility. Organisations that design roles with flexibility, hybrid collaboration and outcome-based performance metrics enable broader participation without compromising excellence.

Finally, representation matters. When young professionals see diverse leaders in visible roles across scientific, commercial and executive functions—it expands what they believe is possible.

Equity strengthens innovation. Diverse perspectives enhance design thinking and problem-solving, especially in life sciences where we serve diverse populations globally.

**What advice would you offer to early- and mid-career women aiming for leadership roles in science and biotechnology, and what kind of impact do you hope to leave on the next generation?**

To early- and mid-career women, I hope to offer three reflections.

First, build depth then breadth. Master your craft. Technical credibility and consistent delivery form a powerful foundation. In science-driven industries, the additional layer of breadth of experience differentiates and shines light on star performers.

Second, cultivate relationships intentionally. Leadership grows through collaboration. Learn across functions, volunteer for cross-market projects, and seek mentors. Exposure shapes perspective.

Third, define your personal purpose early. Roles evolve. Industries transform. A clear sense of why you lead provides stability amid change. For me, transforming healthcare access and innovation has guided every career transition.

I also encourage women to embrace visibility with authenticity. Share your insights and learnings (and failures) generously. Contribute in forums. Step forward for opportunities that stretch you. Growth often begins just beyond comfort.

As for the impact I hope to leave: I aspire to be remembered as a leader who built environments where people felt valued, challenged and inspired to be and contribute their best. In healthcare, our work ultimately serves individuals and families. When teams feel connected to this shared mission, dedication, resilience and excellence follows naturally.

Through mentoring networks, industry platforms and community engagement, I aim to contribute to a generation of healthcare leaders who combine scientific rigor with humanity, commercial acumen with social responsibility, and ambition with integrity.

Leadership in life sciences carries profound responsibility. The privilege lies in advancing science while shaping people and future leaders. When both advance together, progress becomes sustainable.

Ayesha Siddiqui