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Friday, December 14, 2007

LensCrafters parent sets goal to employ more woman execs

Luxottica wants females in 30% of its top positions worldwide

Business Courier of Cincinnati - by [Lisa Biank Fasig](#) Staff Reporter

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Luxottica Group, the parent of LensCrafters, **Sunglass Hut** and other chains, is on a mission to put women in 30 percent of its top 200 jobs worldwide, as it strives to make its ranks reflect those of its market base.

The Italian eyeglass maker announced the goal, aware that its home country has a reputation for employing a disproportionately small number of high-ranking female executives. But the 30 percent goal applies to its North American retail headquarters in Mason, as

well as in Milan, the company said. By the end of 2007, Luxottica expects 23 percent of its top positions will be held by women, compared with 17 percent in 2006, said Luca Biondolillo, head of international communications for Luxottica.

"It is a companywide objective, but insofar as the participation of women as it relates to diversity, this is an even bigger focus within our operations in the United States," Biondolillo said. "It's because we are so widespread across the country. It's because our retail chains target different segments of the markets."

Luxottica operates more than 4,000 stores in the United States and Canada, plus a large wholesale operation. About 60 percent of its customers are women, the company said. Meanwhile, women make up just 38 percent of its employment in Milan.

In the United States, women are better represented. The heads of two of Luxottica's key U.S. businesses - **EyeMed Vision Care** and **Target Optical** - are both women. Worldwide, women make up 63 percent of its employees, thanks in part to its U.S. ranks.

Biondolillo could not provide specifics on what percentage of the roughly 1,600 workers in Mason are women. But Italy lags behind the rest of the European Union in terms of women representation on corporate boards, ranking second to last.

According to an annual survey by the **European Professional Women's Network**, women make up just 1.9 percent of the total number of board members at Italian companies, while the figure for all of Europe is 8.5 percent. Portugal ranked last, with no women directors among its corporations.

Luxottica has been making strides overseas. Six of its 37 worldwide country managers are women (it does business in 136 countries) and one of its eight factories - this one in Italy - is managed by a woman.

And Biondolillo said Luxottica is halfway to achieving its goal of getting women to represent 35 percent of the candidates for senior job openings.

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