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NED AWARDS

Hounaïda Lasry: a ‘quiet force’ showing that less is more in the boardroom

The Britvic director, who picked up the NED to Watch award, on its takeover by Carlsberg and why being an introvert can be an asset in business

[Oliver Gill](#), Industry and Leisure Business Editor

Sunday March 23 2025, 12.01am GMT, The Times

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Hounaïda Lasry is proof that you can reach the top without being the loudest person in the room.

“I definitely think less is more,” she says.

While others are shouting across the boardroom table, the 56-year-old is quietly scheming. “It’s about picking the points that you want to fight for,” she adds. “It’s all about picking your battles.”

Lasry, 56, left her native Morocco aged 17, bound for France and the notoriously intense *préparatoire* — or cram schools — which paves the way for successful pupils to enter into the *grandes écoles* university system that has spawned business leaders and politicians galore.

She followed an undergraduate degree in marketing and international trade from the École Supérieure de Commerce de Chambéry with an MBA from Université Pierre-Mendès-France in Grenoble, where she was wooed by Procter & Gamble during a campus careers fair.

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The first 17 years of her career with the consumer goods giant was in marketing before moving into general management for the following decade.

“Although I was in the same company for almost 30 years, the reality is I worked on businesses that are radically different,” she says. “So pet food, for example, has nothing to do with detergent, has nothing to do with skin care, has nothing to do with feminine hygiene.”

Lasry's non-executive career started in earnest in 2022 at Britvic, the Robinsons orange squash bottler.

Britvic also owns the J20 brand

BRITVIC

The Danish brewing giant [Carlsberg came knocking](#) in 2024. The value that non-executives add beyond regular board meetings waxes and wanes depending on the company and its travails — or lack thereof. But major mergers and acquisitions, whether as hunter or hunted, typically require NEDs to earn their fees. This was no different when three rounds of negotiations culminated in the board unanimously agreeing to a [£3.3 billion takeover](#).

“It was an easy fit because of my FMCG [fast-moving consumer goods] background. I thought that I could add value from day one,” she says.

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Was it a hard decision to back a deal that would take yet another well-known name from the London Stock Exchange?

“It really depends on how you look at it,” Lasry explains. “I know about the virtues of scale. Scale allows you to do a lot.

“When you have a portfolio of brands in the growth spaces, they are small and they require a lot of investment. It’s like a portfolio of bets. Small bets will work and others won’t. And when you have more scale you can afford to invest in all your bets. Because you have the size to absorb if a bet doesn’t materialise.”



REBECCA BOWRING FOR THE SUNDAY TIMES

Perhaps due to nearly three decades at P&G, Lasry does not get hung up too much on the geographical ownership of assets. For her it is all about having shareholders who believe in growing the brand.

Pantene was far from a flagship brand when it was bought as part of P&G's acquisition of Richardson-Vicks in 1985, she points out. But with the right owner it went on to be the first beauty brand to generate more than \$1 billion in revenues.

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Lasry, who is also on the board of the discounter B&M Retail, lives in Geneva with her 20-year-old son.

Her downtime is spent reading and writing. “I’m an introvert at heart,” she says. “I’ve not published and am not planning to be. It is for the love of writing.”

Back in the boardroom, being the quiet one takes courage. “We’re in a society where it is all about share of voice,” Lasry says.

“I’m not your leader who speaks a lot and is loud and all of that. But I’m efficient, I pick battles. In the boardroom I’m not the type of NED who asks all sorts of questions just to show that I’ve read the pre-reading.”

If this strategy works, the upshot is that when she speaks, people listen. It certainly did during her time at P&G where Lasry earned the nickname “the quiet force”.

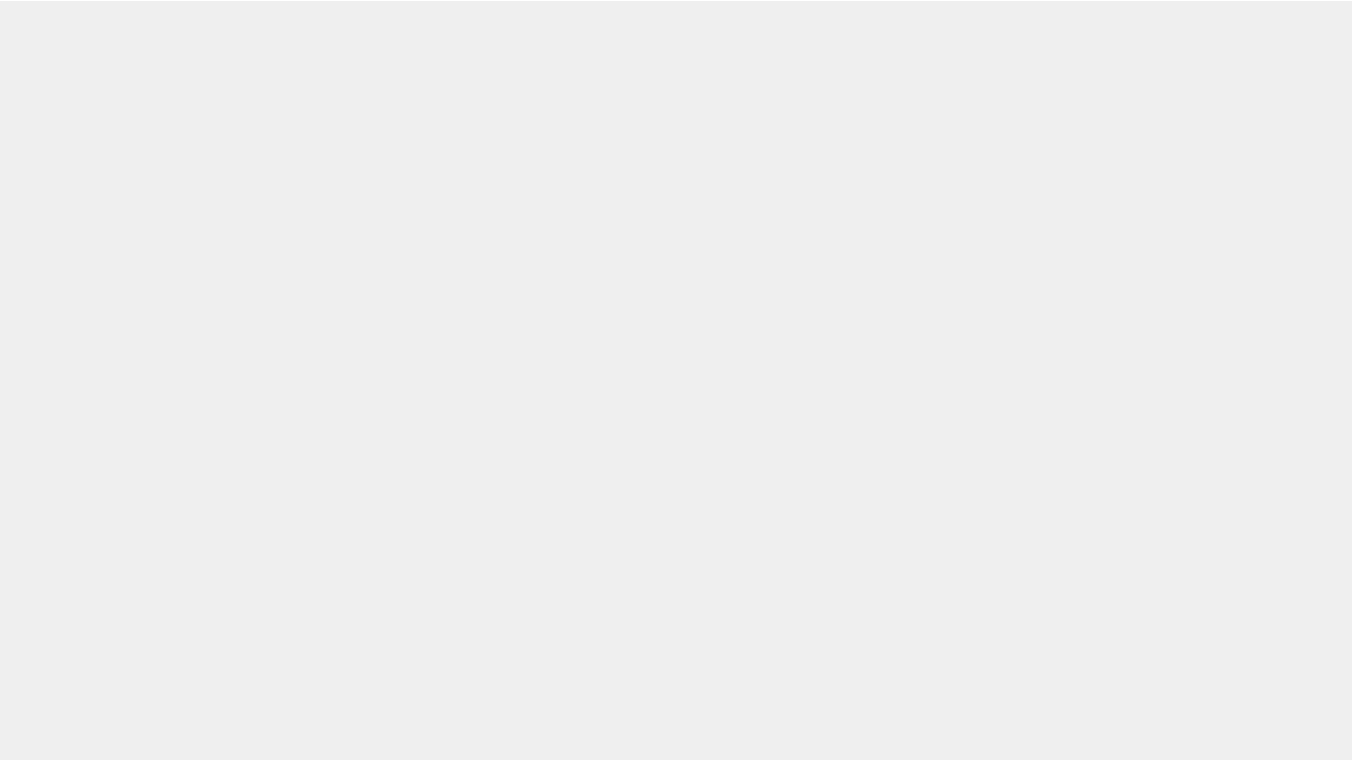
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Similarly, at Britvic her fellow board members congratulated her for “a clarity of thinking and pithiness to the discussions” during talks about the takeover by Carlsberg.

Meanwhile, knowing full well that potential success at The Sunday Times NED Awards might provide a springboard for her dream job, she adds: “I did put in my LinkedIn that I’m an art lover, simply because one day maybe there will be a theatre or an opera house that might want a NED.”

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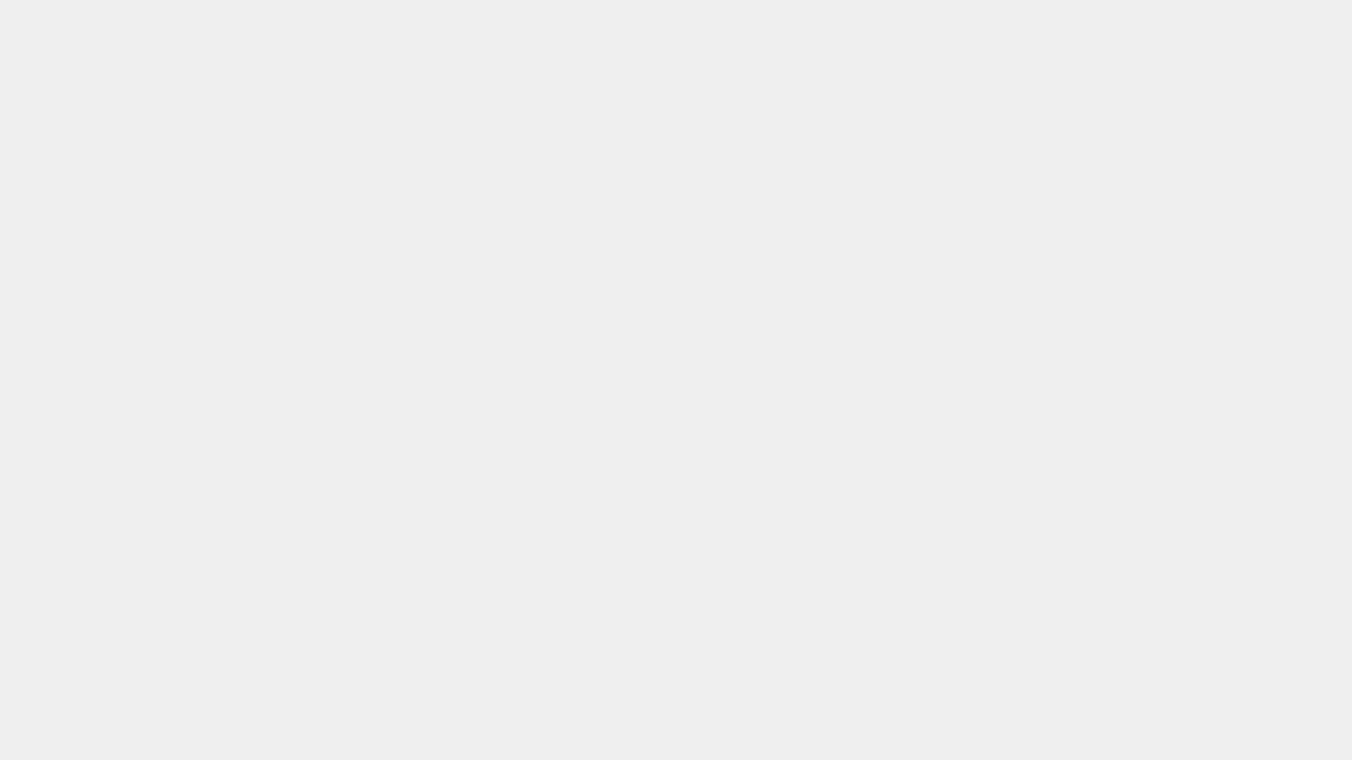
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