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WCOE 2024 Annual Conference  
A Different Conversation

Uncorking Innovation and Harvesting Growth was the theme- clever play on words but most importantly the WCOE conference committee nailed it! They definitely delivered the message. From the welcome address to the closing remarks, this conference was not what I was expecting. It catapulted me into a different conversation not only with other women, but within myself.

To be welcomed by the WCOE President, Misha Homara CEO of TriCore Panels, was special because she is a fellow NAWIC Sister. I have had the privilege of having many one-on-one conversations with Misha, and I have always walked away with not only a sense of clarity but energized by her authenticity and call to action from our conversations. She delivered that same energy for all attendees. She asked us if we were ready to be the future, looking around the room, and seeing so many women who are the trailblazers, how can we not? What I saw in that room was the support we all need, at arms length.

The next speaker Dr Parisa Zarnegar catapulted us into a different type of conversation: Leading Beyond Limits: Be a catalyst for success by navigating change, cultivating self-trust, and elevating accountability. As I let not only the topic but the material sink in, I realized, here right now, we are all having a different conversation. For me it was with myself, until I realized that all these women were willing to have this conversation out loud. To be around women who are the decision makers, whose voices are heard, and shape the direction of not only within their companies but our industry as a whole- is energizing, comforting, and motivating, and assuring that I'm on the right path. Dr. Zarnegar walked us through evolution of the limbic system- the evolution that we do everything with emotion, and when we use our intuition- we are truly using our emotional wisdom. As leaders we need emotional regulation, she gave us a simple tool to calm our amygdala- which is heightened when we are dealing with uncertainties, complexities, or ambiguities. Just breathe – deep breath.

Next topic – really sent me into having “a different conversation” with myself- Risk Management. This had been a topic that I had not given it the time it deserved... I'm just starting out, I only have a few employees, these compliances probably don't apply to my small business... wrong! Prior to the conference, this was a conversation that maybe I brushed off, not sure if I was scared, naïve, or oblivious... But at the conference, it was like a light bulb moment- I sat up straight and was listening, and realized- here I will find the resources that I didn't know I needed or existed. Feeling the sense of call to action- I was on a mission to network with the women who would help me get my Risk Management Journey started. I walked away with having conversations of my contract wording, conversations about SOPs, employee policies with an HR compliance specialist, and a meeting set up to research a company to outsource all payroll/ HR/ Benefits/ Employee Perks.

As I am having all these different conversations with other women and myself- when the topic of Succession Planning: Preparing the next generation and your exist strategy started, I was thinking – wait this doesn't apply to me, I'm just getting started with my business, and my daughter future CEO (I hope!) is only 6! I couldn't have been more wrong. To start the business with one of the most important customers in mind- the next owner. Decisions will be made differently. Asking if the decision you are about to make, be beneficial- be seen as good investment will help make better



decisions. I want Proven Connections Group to be part of my legacy, along with my children. We as founders start off wearing multiple hats, but there does come a point where that needs to stop. To hear the speakers experience of making a decision to step back either because they are selling the business or passing it on to the next generation, the importance of setting boundaries not only within existing management team but with customers as well, will help with the transition to the new leadership. Aligning your personal, financial, and business goals is the starting point of succession planning. I am working on that, even though I am just getting started.

Ending the day with a panel focused on Market Outlook- energized the attendees. Public works projects are abundant, main delivery point was to get prequalified as soon as you can. The projects that are kicking off and coming down the pipeline have already been approved years ago. The moderator, Pricilla Chavez was amazing. Her energy was contagious- she was real. I was lucky enough to have a conversation with her during the networking and sitting with her at dinner. To hear her journey, her future, her passion- was something I needed. To hear there is room for all of us- she is a true trailblazer for all women, for Latinas, for the loud, for the meek, for the go getters. To be able to have different conversations in a safe place- is what I experienced through out the conference. Dinner was great and the networking afterwards was a lot of fun.

The second day speaker, Elle Ingalls, filled us with tools on how to achieve Pressure- Free Leadership: How to boost your health and performance by reducing stress and anxiety. Her very hands on seminar was different. Started by asking us to sit away from the tables- no pen no paper- she wanted us to be present. From the way we were sitting, the position of our feet, buttocks, thighs, stomach, back, to our breathing. The small changes can and do affect our physical being, and how our brains react to situations. I have caught myself repositioning my sitting posture at my desk. It's a conscious effort, but I am seeing the difference. As the conference touched Utilizing technology and AI for your business, it was evident there are so many programs out there and also pretty much for any budget. The reasons companies sometimes don't use new or different technology can be due to lack of digital skills or simply don't like change.

Taking in the two day seminar, during the closing remarks, the message of harvesting growth was evident. Women were there to support other women. I knew that this was a time to start having different conversations- Conversations with the women who are shaping their companies, and the industry are just different, it was an honor to attend the conference. What brought you success in the 1<sup>st</sup> half, will set you back in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half... I will strive to be wise enough and know when I am entering the 2<sup>nd</sup> half.... Thankfully I am not in my 2<sup>nd</sup> half... it's only the beginning.

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