

2023 Annual Conference – August 9-12

Report to Chapter 99, Silicon Valley NAWIC

By: Laura Grabar, 2022-2023 Immediate Past President

Kayla Alvarado, Shawna Alvarado, Joan Bremer, Sara Fuentes, Laura Grabar, Kara Hermann, Misha Homara, Christine Martinez, Marlene O'Donnell, Amy Pacheco, Angie Ramos, Lisa Salazar, Sarah Thorvund and April Vicchilli represented Chapter 99 at the 2023 Annual Conference. With fourteen members attending, Silicon Valley was well represented this year.

Annual conference began Wednesday August 9 with a panel discussion on how to prepare for ownership. You need to know your dreams and work toward your dreams. Follow your own path. If you love what you do or do what you love you will enjoy work. You need to be comfortable in your work environment. If you don't like what you do or who you work with you may need to change your career trajectory. These ideas work for all facets of your work life whether you are interested in ownership or just want to enjoy your work day.

The Welcome Party followed the panel discussion, giving everyone an opportunity to network and mingle with members, guests and friends they haven't seen since last year. It was a fun and relaxing evening before the official start of the conference Thursday morning.

Thursday morning the conference began with NAWIC business. There was a review of what the retiring board had accomplished this past year. The National website is being migrated to a new platform and will be down for a couple weeks. It should be easier to navigate with more information once back online.

The opening keynote Speaker was Dr. Rhianna Rogers speaking on the \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. This will help to repair and create infrastructure for the future. It will also bring new laws and regulations. What we do today affects the future.

The first breakout session I attend was Transforming Others through Effective Coaching by MJ Clark. In order to be an effective coach you need to understand how to communicate, build trust and motivate others. You need to understand what truly motivates people. By understanding human behavior you can communicate and build trust. Human behavior is a product of your belief system which is created by all your life experiences. When something happens to you, your belief system causes emotions that in turn cause your behavior. When coaching you need to have an open dialogue discussing the behavior. In order to change behavior, they need to create a plan so they can own it. You then need to check in and give constructive feedback to make sure they are following the plan. When giving constructive feedback stick with your feelings don't criticize. Use I statements "I've noticed...", "I feel...", "I would ask/prefer..." to get them back on track. There are three elements of true motivation. They are autonomy, mastery and purpose. Growth happens outside our comfort zone so you need to challenge people. This is where change will occur.

The Industry Keynote speaker was Jamie McMillan, KickAss Careers. She was a very dynamic speaker. You never know where your inspiration will come from. Keep friends close but enemies closer. You never know where a break will come from. Make sure you are open to suggestions and look for what makes you happy.

The afternoon breakout session was The Value of Personal Brand by Dr. Kelly McElhaney. Your personal brand is what people say about you when you are not there. To find your personal brand

(Brand Star) start by describing yourself in 5 adjectives. Then define the adjectives with bullet points being precise. Once that is done you next need to say what these adjectives are not, I am helpful not a pushover or I am direct not rude. Once you have your adjectives share them with a friend or mentor. You can then further develop your Brand Star. Test it with 10 people in your life. Ask them to describe you in 5 adjectives. Ask questions and reflect on what they have to say. You can then fine tune but don't conform. Women tend to conform their self-perception to feedback from others. So listen to feedback, keep what works for you and disregard what does not. You are the author of your own life.

The day ended with DEI Awards followed by Happy Hour. Our region (PNW) had a get together hosted by Skanska's Portland office. Our chapter then went out to dinner.

Friday began with my first breakout session NAWIC Region Directors led by several 4 past and current Region Directors. I followed this up with Women in Leadership, Diversity, and Inclusion by Lisa Laronde, President of RGS International. Through her story we see that women have made strides in the construction industry. But even with the titles we still find biases in the industry that can hold us back. It is only through communication, education and positive advocacy that we can move our path forward. Women need to stand up for themselves and others. We need to change the narrative and create strategies to remove biases in the construction industry that hold women back from their potential.

The workforce development panel moderated by Dr. Rhianna Rogers included panelists Henry Nutt, III, Cynthia Seward, Cornell Johnson and Erin Volk. This session questions and discussions revolved around ways to get more women into the construction industry. There have been steps towards inclusion but we are fighting how business has been done for the last 100 years. We need to continue to make changes and stick with them. In time the industry will evolve but only through our continued efforts.

Installation and recognition luncheon. Time to say thank you to the retiring board and install the NAWIC 2023-2024 Board members. Followed by awards.

The last breakout session I attended on Friday was The Leader Who People Follow by Henry Nutt, III. Authentic leaders are truthful, transparent, honest and approachable. Be you not some else. There are seven principles for your journey to becoming a leader.

- Start somewhere
- Get a mentor
- Refuse to be a victim
- Try your best and work hard
- Love what you do
- Learn to follow
- Know the difference between a liability and an asset.

Where does your journey start what does it mean, what does it look like? Lead by example, don't ask unless you are willing.

Good leaders build productive environments. Experiences creates beliefs and values which in turn creates behaviors causing results. Culture is what people do when the boss is gone. The culture of a company is the beliefs, values and behaviors of its employees. If you are not getting the results your company wants, you need to make changes that affect the experiences that will shift beliefs overtime. To be a leader you need to create better experiences as that is where change will happen. If you feel

something is missing you need to speak up. Someone may need to hear what you have to say. By speaking up you will influence the experience which matters.

The evening ended with the Awards Gala Dinner followed by the after party. Silicon Valley Chapter won an award for WIC Week Marketing. Our chapter worked hard during WIC Week and it was great to receive an award and acknowledgement of the work that was put into WIC Week.

The conference concluded on Saturday with brunch and Closing Keynote speaker Shannon Vogel on empowering women. It's time for a really good pep talk that will have you feeling empowered. It's time to take care of yourself first then help others. Your journey is yours. Stop wondering if you are enough and start acting like you are. Be careful what you allow or tolerate from others. You teach people how to treat you. Stop saying I'm sorry. Instead thank them for allowing you to be who you are. Fill your cup first then give from the overflow. Do what you want for first hour of the day. If you're not happy then change your situation. Start small. Stop asking for permission now go out there and shine.

Then came the invite to next year's conference that will be in Houston Texas.

So much of this conference was about empowering women and being happy. You are in control and you need to do what makes you happy. You can't possibly give or help others when you can't give or help yourself. I enjoyed the conference and I look forward to using some of the techniques that I learned.