



A Community Uprising: W2W Meets at RetailNOW® 2016

By Ashley Naggy, with Amber Murdock

Year after year, the W2W Committee strives to take its community meeting at RetailNOW to a new level, and this year's session did not disappoint. Earlier in the year, **W2W Community chair, Cindy Marcoux** and a planning committee met and decided to center the annual gathering at RetailNOW 2016 around a panel discussion focusing on the concept of "Rising."

In choosing this theme, the Community sought to not only acknowledge that there are many issues facing women, but take action, and show how women in the industry can both raise awareness and "rise above" them, instead of either ignoring, or, dwelling on these issues. The W2W Event was held on the first full day of RetailNOW 2016, as a part of the education schedule, and was open to all attendees.

Speaking in front of an audience of more than 60 attendees, the panel was moderated by Abby Sorensen of Business Solutions Magazine, and focused on key areas, centered around the "rising" theme: Raising Above, Raising Awareness, Raising the Bar, and Raising Families. The panel included four industry experts from RSPA membership: **Debi Besmer**, Managing Partner, Archelon Enclosures; **Lora Coggins**, Channel Sales Executive, Toshiba Global Commerce Solutions; and **Andrea Roberts**, Vice President, Sales and Marketing, Teltec Systems. As a clear indicator that the event was open to the entire RetailNOW audience, the panel also featured a male participant: **Mark Olson**, President and CEO, APG Cash Drawer, a first for the Community.

Each panelist shared their own personal experiences during the panel discussion, and provided their perspective on how they were able to rise above and overcome challenges that were placed in front of them during their careers:

- Besmer shared her personal experience of an uncomfortable business meeting. Rather than walking away, she instead approached it as a challenge, and proved that, as a woman, she could handle the discomfort of the meeting and rise above.
- Roberts recalled a business owner who refused to meet with her, simply because she is a woman. She stood up to him, and ended up overcoming the situation to build a stronger business relationship with that client.
- Coggins reflected on the important of taking time to recharge, and how her colleagues help her by covering the office so that she can truly enjoy her vacations.
- Olson emphasized that the same (often adverse) issues that women face have an impact on men as well. He remarked that, oftentimes, men do not intentionally leave women out—instead, women do not speak up as often as men do to take on new responsibilities, or to advance their careers. He also pointed out that businesses should make it a practice to be more inclusive and seek out individuals with the potential to advance.

After a 40 minute discussion along with Q&A, the session was opened up for networking between attendees.

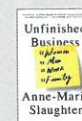
The W2W Community is always focused on having lively discussions and to not only raise awareness for women in the industry but raise the industry as a whole. While RetailNOW 2016 is now in the books, the W2W Community plans to grow and expand over the next year. We encourage you to get involved and help make a difference because together we can Rise Above! If you're interested in finding out more about the W2W Community, email Education@GoRSPA.org.

Throughout the session Abby Sorensen shared with the group a recommended reading list that can help keep the conversation going.

W2W Panel Recommended Reading List:



Lean In
Sheryl Sandberg



Unfinished Business
Anne-Marie Slaughter



The Second Shift
Arlie Hochschild



NUTS!
Herb Kelleher,
retired CEO of SW Airlines



Taking People With You
David Novak



ALL IN
Adrian Gostick



Good Boss, Bad Boss
Robert Sutton



Great By Choice
Jim Collins



Creating Competitive Advantage
Jaynie L. Smith

Other resources:



"Why Women Still Can't Have It All" by Anne-Marie Slaughter (from The Atlantic, 2012)



"What Are Gender Barriers Made Of?" – Freakonomics podcast, July 20, 2016

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