



W2W: Helping women realize their potential



By Abby Sorensen,
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The W2W community, which is open to all retail technology professionals, is one of several valuable networking resources for solutions providers and vendors available through the RSPA. Several community members shared their insights on the W2W community, including Cindy J. Marcoux, W2W community chairperson and vice president of partnership development at Vantiv, Kelli Stewart, current reseller board member and operations manager at Advanced Data Systems, and Lynn Skurla-Perkins, past RSPA chairperson and owner of Skurla's POS Solutions.

WHY DID YOU GET INVOLVED IN THE W2W GROUP?

Skurla-Perkins: To help other women become engaged in the RSPA community. This organization has a history of being a primarily male dominated group. I felt W2W was a way to help other women break into the organization in leadership roles.

Stewart: Looking at old ICRDA photos, you'd be hard pressed to find a woman that wasn't a spouse. That has rapidly changed. Women in our industry are no longer an exception to the rule. I've become more active in the community because I've seen the recent women's movement become more vocal, and yet there is still a misconception that women want or deserve "special" treatment. I hope to help our entire community, men and women alike, to see the value in lifting our female peers, children and community. I believe we're still in a world where many young ladies could use a hand up and benefit from relentless encouragement.

WHAT GOALS DO YOU HAVE FOR THE W2W COMMITTEE AND WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE RSPA AS A WHOLE?

Stewart: There's no question that there is a worldwide movement to address women's issues that are a result of our real or perceived differences. My hope for the W2W group is to create initiatives that will enable females to better lead, educate and participate in their professional capacity. Our entire community benefits when females can bring their unique talents to the table without reservation about their value.

Marcoux: I would like to see this community attract more interest from women and men as well. We learned from last years' RetailNOW panel discussion that having male representation is relevant and can be helpful. After all, we all work side by side.

Skurla-Perkins: I have always said the goal should be that we wouldn't feel we needed to have the W2W because of the male dominance issue. RSPA has really evolved over the last decade — so the original needs of the W2W have changed too. I envision W2W as a group that promotes education, mentoring and networking to help women advance within this field.

HOW HAVE YOU BENEFITED FROM THE NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE W2W COMMUNITY?

Skurla-Perkins: They have given me an opportunity to connect with other women in the industry. Being on the RSPA board, I traditionally hung out with men — as the board was primarily men —

very good people to know, but it is nice to connect with women in RSPA also.

Stewart: Any opportunity to engage with a group that is looking to better our communities and work environment is rewarding. I am excited to see the group refining its focus to bring value to the entire association. All men are fathers or brothers or sons to women. It's a huge reward to lift people



W2W Networking Event at INSPIRE 2014.

up, and I appreciate the opportunities the W2W group has provided to do that.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER CHANNEL COMPANIES TO HELP THEM ELEVATE WOMEN WITHIN THEIR ORGANIZATIONS?

Marcoux: It is something we hear often, but I cannot stress this enough: It is important to conduct yourself in a professional manner and treat others with respect outside of as well as during business hours. I recommend employers offer in-house or external courses on what it means to conduct yourself in a professional manner.

Stewart: Seek out local resources helping girls realize their potential, like Girl Scouts, and support them (it wasn't hard to buy a few cases of Girl Scout cookies and put them in our break room). Bring in a summer intern to manage your social networking, or as an entry-level tech. Acknowledge, reward or match volunteer efforts. Promote or support science and technology camps. Create policies where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. Enforce them. Talk about workplace diversity. Offer training to develop sensitivity to issues typically not encountered by your staff.

WHAT IS THE BEST BUSINESS BOOK ON YOUR BOOKSHELF?

Skurla-Perkins: *Traction* by Gino Wickman.

Marcoux: *Year of Yes* by Shonda Rhimes. **c**



Cindy J. Marcoux, W2W community chairperson and vice president of partnership development at Vantiv



Kelli Stewart, current reseller board member and operations manager at Advanced Data Systems



Lynn Skurla-Perkins, past RSPA chairperson and owner of Skurla's POS Solutions