

Professional Development Roundtable Draws Frank Answers from Women Executives

COMMITTEE REPORT



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Our first professional development event of 2015 brought together three successful women in the transportation industry who candidly discussed their careers.

“Having real discussions and sharing real insights makes these members-only professional development programs valuable,” said Emily Buss of Parsons Brinckerhoff, the Professional Development committee chair, who organized the event with committee member Eileen Ryder of AECOM.

“It seems that these smaller presentations in a roundtable format offer a more personal environment and support an authentic and frank conversation,” Buss added. Approximately 25 attended the event, which began at 8:30am at the Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority headquarters in downtown Los Angeles.

The panel consisted of Samantha Bricker, Chief Operating Officer, Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority; Marcy Szarama, President and Founder of Destination Enterprises; and Gwenn Williams, Director of Supply Chain Services, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (left to right).

The panel shared personal stories about how their journeys helped them reach their success, offering experiences from working in the field to working in foreign countries, and superstitions about women working in tunnels.



“We could not have picked at better panel,” Buss added. “Each woman built her career with passion, drive, determination and her own individual ‘why’ power. They shared real-life experiences and refreshingly personal and honest comments about finding balance in their lives.”

Buss was moved by an answer Szarama gave to a question regarding how she dealt with failure. Szarama replied that everyone has failures—it is how quickly you swing back from failure that defines someone.

Buss also noted that the audience asked thoughtful questions such as “What is the best advice you did and did not follow? How do you get noticed when you are just starting your career?”



“We’re focusing on leadership at all levels in our 2015 Professional Developments events,” Buss said. “We want to explore growing yourself—no matter what level you’ve attained.”

The second Friday-morning event of 2015 will focus on how to interact with elected officials, according to Buss.

“We’re going to tackle the best way to access transportation deputies for elected officials,” Buss explained. “For example, what do they care about? How do you prepare before you meet with them?”