

THE CLM 2012 WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP FORUM

Paying It Forward and Paying It Back

By Denise Anderson and Carol Rooney



“Inspiration to initiate improvement.” That’s what attendees can expect to take away from the CLM’s 2012 Women’s Leadership Forum, according to Mary Beth McClellan, an attorney with White & Williams and chair of the steering committee. The forum, in its third year, is intended to unite women in the insurance, corporate, and legal professions, bringing them together to share experiences and ideas to meet their unique challenges.

This year’s event will be held at the New York Broadway Theater on Oct. 4, 2012. Attendance is limited to 250-300 registrants in order to provide an environment conducive to developing meaningful, lasting connections. Attendees will experience presentations from dynamic speakers in a positive environment focused solely on the woman’s perspective.

We spoke with McClellan about what attendees can expect from the event.

Q. What makes the Women’s Leadership Forum different from the other events competing for our limited time, and why is it important to attend?

A. The forum focuses on issues that all professionals face but adds a gender-specific angle. Women need to recognize how important it is to support and help other women in the industry. The forum will provide thought-provoking commentary and constructive approaches for a variety of career-influencing decisions.

Q. Do attendees need to be of a particular status to attend, or is it open to women at any career level?

A. Women at any level in the insurance, corporate, and legal industries not only can attend but also should attend. The support and networking opportunities are cross-generational, as well. Since the speakers are diverse and have varying levels of experience and backgrounds, the end result is a dynamic forum with something for everyone.

Q. What do you think are the top challenges that women in leadership face?

A. I’d say the unrelenting internal pres-

sure that women put on themselves to do it all—or as I call it, the “white noise.”

Q. Are there any particular areas of leadership focused on in the schedule?

A. We will focus on different challenges that professional women frequently face. For example, we’ll address how to relieve some of the internal pressure by re-evaluating priorities in your professional and personal life, and how to make those priorities realistically manageable. We will also discuss how

to maximize your time and take advantage of every networking opportunity to optimize your potential.

Q. We are looking forward to hearing this year’s keynote speakers. Can you tell us more about them?

A. Nell Merlino and Lisa Martin are both inspirational women. Merlino is the founder of Take Your Daughter to Work Day, as well as the charitable organization Count Me In, which helps women turn their businesses into successful corporations. Lisa Martin is the



child's puzzle
(easy to value)



what the heck?
(hard to value)

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senior vice president for Pfizer Global Procurement and Operations and leads the development and implementation of a \$17 billion spend for Pfizer, along with leading the real estate global site portfolio and facilities management. She has worked her way up through the ranks and achieved a level in her career to which many aspire. We are excited to have them both.

This year's forum also will feature 16 diverse and inspirational speakers. We spoke with Lisa Fentress, Esq., director of specialty claims at Marriott International, Inc., and a speaker at this year's forum.

Q. How did your involvement with the Women's Leadership Forum come about?

A. I attended the first forum in 2010

and thoroughly enjoyed every presentation and having the ability to meet the speakers one-on-one. I came away with a renewed sense of inspiration and motivation regarding my ability to achieve further personal and professional growth. Additionally, the forum made me even more aware of the importance of networking with and for women. Women have come a long way, but there is still some road to travel. We should travel the road together, not alone.

Q. Why is it important for you to take part in presenting at the forum?

A. I believe that surrounding oneself with like-minded individuals on a regular basis is inspiring, motivating, and helps one achieve her goals. Additionally, my previous attendance made

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me aware of the necessity to pass along experience to the younger generation with the hope that, in so doing, they may take many more steps forward and fewer back.

Q. Women need to pay it forward and pay it back?

A. Exactly. Margaret Pruitt also is a speaker at this year's forum. She has 20 years of



"The Census also shows that in 1940, the percent of women managers was approximately 12 percent compared to 39 percent in 2009."

experience in the insurance industry and is currently a claims examiner for State Auto Insurance Company in Columbus, Ohio. She shared her thoughts on the event.

Q. What do you feel are the top challenges that women in leadership face?

A. Trying to fit into the traditional definition of corporate America. Peer pressure extends beyond the teenage years, and I think we often compromise ourselves and our values. Women have evolved beyond the traditional standards

set for them years ago, and I think our focus should be on today's woman. In 2009, women made up 43.2 percent of the workforce compared to 14.8 percent in 1967, according to the U.S. Census. The Census also shows that in 1940, the percent of women managers was approximately 12 percent compared to 39 percent in 2009.

Q. Are there any immovable blocks for women in leadership today?

A. The only blocks are the ones we create. Every test provides a testimony,

so look for positive ways to solve challenges. If you were overlooked for a job due to a lack of education, go back to school. If you seek management but have no prior experience, join the PTA or some other community or industry-related organization to help increase your leadership skills. You have control of your destiny—now is the time to take charge.

Take charge today by registering for the 2012 Women's Leadership Forum. See you in New York.



Denise Anderson and Carol Rooney are partners with Butler Pappas Weihmuller Katz Craig, LLP, a CLM member firm.



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