

# Execs address diversity, networking at WFF event

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**PARTICIPANTS:**

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Griffith Laboratories

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national vice president  
of strategic partnerships,  
Aramark Corp.

**DEB FRATRIK**  
regional vice president,  
Cracker Barrel  
Old Country Store

**PHIL FRIEDMAN**  
chairman and  
chief executive,  
McAlister's Corp.

**CINDY HALLBERLIN**  
chief ethics, diversity  
and accountability officer,  
U.S. Foodservice

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of human resources,  
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Unilever Foodsolutions

**LINDA PHARR**  
chairwoman and  
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Women's Foodservice Forum



PHOTOS: SCOTT WINIUS PHOTOGRAPHY

Industry executives gathered this fall to discuss diversity, networking and work-life balance during the annual Multi-Unit Foodservice Operators conference. The event, sponsored by the Women's Foodservice Forum, was moderated by Dina Berta, human resources editor for Nation's Restaurant News.

NATIONAL HARBOR, MD. — Mentoring, best career paths for promotion, social networking and the challenges of balancing personal life and work were among the key topics a panel of industry executives addressed in a roundtable discussion sponsored by the Women's Foodservice Forum. Founded almost 20 years ago, the WFF promotes the advancement of women in the industry through leadership development events and programs.

Nine industry executives came together at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center here during the 2008 Multi-Unit Foodservice Operators conference in October to dis-

cuss the barriers and opportunities that women face in the industry.

The participants were Vincent Berkeley, chief diversity officer of Compass Group North America; Jennifer Convery, general manager for Griffith Laboratories; Loria Danage-Scott, national vice president of strategic partnerships for Aramark Corp.; Deb Fratrik, regional vice president of Cracker Barrel Old Country Store; Phil Friedman, chairman and chief executive of McAlister's Corp.; Cindy Hallberlin, chief ethics, diversity and accountability officer for U.S. Foodservice; Rodney Morris, senior vice president of human resources for

Carino's Italian; Mary O'Broin, vice president of marketing for Unilever Foodsolutions; and Linda Pharr, chairwoman and interim president of the WFF. Dina Berta, human resources editor for Nation's Restaurant News, moderated the roundtable.

Here are excerpts from the conversation.

**DINA BERTA, NRN:** Is operations the best career path to the executive suite?

**VINCENT BERKELEY, COMPASS:** What I haven't seen much are HR people in leadership roles. In my experience [the career path] has been dominated by either op-

erations or some elements of finance, business, consulting — things of that nature.

**PHIL FRIEDMAN, McALISTER'S:** I think it depends a lot on the stage of the company. As the company gets bigger and goes through stages, the marketing and financial skills become that much more important. I think it then provides the opportunity for a person moving up from finance to get some operating experience.

**LORIA DANAGE-SCOTT, ARAMARK:** I clearly see finance and operations as being the most defined path for executive leadership, and not just in the compa-

nies that I've been in, but also the companies at large.

**RODNEY MORRIS, CARINO'S ITALIAN:** I do believe that HR people are not aggressive enough or confident enough in their ability to get a seat at the table. Are you willing to go to your president or your CEO or your board and ask to have a seat at the table?

You hear lots of companies talk about HR being included, but they really aren't. If you can't be there with your top five or 10 people of that organization and help drive strategy, then you really don't have a seat at that table.

**BERKELEY, COMPASS:** My title is chief diversity officer, which is technically HR jargon. But I'm an operator, and I was hired as a chief diversity operator because of my operations background, not because of my diversity background. This company was specifically looking for someone who understood the business and who could relate to business leaders in their own terms and who understood the business challenges of driving the diversity conclusion.

**BERTA, NRN:** Does anyone lay out a career path for employees? If you want to advance, do they say these are the steps, these are the skills you need?

**DEB FRATRIK, CRACKER BARREL:** In the short term that I've been with Cracker Barrel, they have a very highly defined career path that people can go through, right down to specific qualifications that one has to achieve before they can even apply for the next level.

It's much broader than, "This is the career path, and this is the course work." There are mentor assignments that are involved with that and special projects that are part of it. It lays out a very good path, particularly [for] midmanagers and the entry-level executive, to help them break through and get to the next level.

**BERTA, NRN:** What advice would you give someone about finding a mentor?

**MARY O'BROIN, UNILEVER:** I would suggest that you need to find someone who will be candid with you, someone you can trust. I don't think it really matters whether they're in a like business or in a like situation. [You want] someone who knows you and who



**DINA BERTA**  
Nation's Restaurant News  
MODERATOR



**VINCENT BERKELEY**  
Compass Group North America



**JENNIFER CONVERY**  
Griffith Laboratories

has an interest in helping you. It could be someone in your church; it could be a family member; depending on the age and level of career, [it could be] someone related to college or school or someone in your own company.

**DAMAGE-SCOTT, ARAMARK:** I'll make a plug for Women's Food Service: They get it. There's a mentorship program that's part of the organization. People who don't know how to start or what to do [should] join that program.

**MORRIS, CARINO'S ITALIAN:** I believe it's important to choose a mentor both inside and outside the organization. Inside the organization they know you too well. They know the barriers of success. Outside of the organization, they

can help you think about the "what if," [and help you] to think big, and [not to] be afraid to think outside the box.

**BERTA, NRN:** What about using social networks such as LinkedIn.com or FOHBOH.com?

**O'BROIN, UNILEVER:** When I joined LinkedIn, truthfully, I did it because I thought I'm missing something. All I got when I went on was a whole bunch of people trying to sell me stuff. I thought, "Oh, God, what have I done?" It's like I took out an ad in the Yellow Pages.

Then I talked to someone else who said, "Well, here is what you do and here are a few tips." Now that I better understand it, I've actually reconnected with people that I haven't seen for years or heard from for years.

**FRIEDMAN, McALISTER'S:** I think the tools help if you use them right. I'm not necessarily a great user of this, but the tools help. But I think the point is accessibility. Networking gives you some accessibility, and the accessibility could be used and not used.

**MORRIS, CARINO'S ITALIAN:** At our level, at the executive level, we need to clearly understand that social networking will be how future leaders use networking across the globe, not just within our borders here. If you aren't on there looking at MySpace or YouTube once a week, it will blow you away. It's pretty fascinating.

**FRATRIK, CRACKER BARREL:** But you know there are many companies that have defined policies about using websites at work. It's almost like cell-phone etiquette. There is a whole area of informational, professional etiquette that we must learn if it's going to be effective.

**LINDA PHARR, WFF:** And so I think we have to learn. But we also have to teach the appropriateness to the younger generation. [We have to explain] here is the business way and here is how this can enhance accessibility, [but] that it [also] has the potential of coming back to really work against you.

**MORRIS, CARINO'S ITALIAN:** From a company perspective, it's amazing what people say about you out there when they leave

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— MARY O'BROIN

VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING, UNILEVER

your organizations. So if you haven't gone through the blogs and found out what people are saying about our organization, it hurts sometimes to read it. But it's out there. Do you choose to respond to that or not? That's something as an organization you have to figure out. It's a never-ending vicious cycle.

**FRATRIK, CRACKER BARREL:** We were looking at a candidate and found them on MySpace, and they were mooning their previous employer. We did not pursue them.

**MORRIS, CARINO'S ITALIAN:** We use LinkedIn to verify someone's employment history because we have found that people will tell things on the résumé; yet, on their LinkedIn profile, guess what? It's not listed the same way.

**CINDY HALLBERLIN, U.S. FOODSERVICE:** That's what I'm concerned about. What is being said out there? Is that really legit-

imate? Does it have legitimacy or is it just the loudest voice going on a blog?

**BERKELEY, COMPASS:** I think it's evolving. We can no longer continue to ignore it. We can no longer continue to say, "You can't use text messaging either." We can no longer continue to block YouTube. We can no longer say, "Well, blogs don't count because it's so radical."

**HALLBERLIN, U.S. FOODSERVICE:** I think we're going to have a real challenge to fit in with the next generation because they've grown up in a different era. We were the television generation, and they're the texting generation, instant messaging constantly.

**O'BROIN, UNILEVER:** There's a positive thing that I see in my own children and their friends who are in their very late teens and 20s: There's much more acceptance of diversity, and that's a real benefit.

**BERTA, NRN:** Do you think the next generation won't have quite the same gender and race discrimination issues?

**HALLBERLIN, U.S. FOODSERVICE:** Absolutely right.

**PHARR, WFF:** They don't.

**DAMAGE-SCOTT, ARAMARK:** And it started a while ago too.

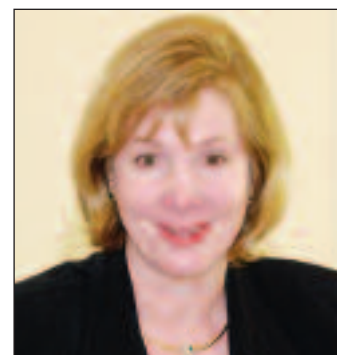
**PHARR, WFF:** From the WFF perspective, I think one of the things that we're wrestling with is that the younger women — they don't get it. They don't get it when we say, "We weren't allowed to do this." They're like, "Why not? Why don't you just do it?"

We really have to be very thoughtful about how do we capture that younger generation of women. What do we need to be for them?

I gave a young woman the opportunity to work on a [WFF] project. I thought, "This is really cool. She's going to get to work with a lot of really great executive women." I asked her, "Do you want  
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**LORIA DAMAGE-SCOTT**  
ARAMARK Corporation



**DEB FRATRIK**  
Cracker Barrel  
Old Country Store

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— DEB FRATRIK  
REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENT,  
CRACKER BARREL OLD COUNTRY STORE

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to be involved?” And her answer was, “I don't have any issues with men, so why would I want to do that?”

I was just stunned. I thought, “Really?!” There was nothing that I could say about the relationships that she might develop or the mentoring opportunities, because in her mind she didn't get why we needed to be working on this because she's never encountered any issues with men. So this particular project did not resonate with her at all.

**BERTA, NRN:** So you think in the future we won't need a WFF? We may not need diversity officers?

**DAMAGE-SCOTT, ARAMARK:** We will need them, just redefined. We need to include these up-and-comers as part of helping to redefine it. I don't know whether it ever goes away. Even if the definitions are different, maybe it's not just black and white and Hispanic. Diversity, as we define it in our company, includes thought leadership, different perspectives.

**PHARR, WFF:** At one point, I probably had some notion it would be great if we could work ourselves out of business. I think when I got into the WFF in the '90s, I probably thought that.

[But the true] value of the WFF is helping women and organizations understand that women do add value at the top. Organizations are better if women are in some leadership role. There's no doubt about that.

**HALLBERLIN, U.S. FOODSERVICE:** To me, the reason you have diversity departments and policy is because we have failed to bring women to the top; we have failed to bring people of color to the top.

**BERTA, NRN:** What is the best way for women to gain business acumen to move up to the next level?

**BERKELEY, COMPASS:** Don't allow yourself to get pigeonholed into what are seen as “women roles.” You know, HR is probably

the classic. Training is probably another classic. Marketing.

If you're going to be all that you can be, you've got to find roles that are going to help you fill out as a business person and make you at least eligible for the top slots.

**FRATRIK, CRACKER BARREL:** Ask for those cross-functional opportunities, and don't let your ego get in the way of taking a lateral position, or what on the surface appears to be a lesser title, for a period of time.



**PHIL FRIEDMAN**  
McAlister's Corp.



**CINDY HALLBERLIN**  
U.S. Foodservice



**RODNEY MORRIS**  
Carino's Italian

**O'BROIN, UNILEVER:** I think another thing that has sometimes stood in the way of women having the opportunity to do those cross-functional roles is if it requires moving. I think you find in HR or marketing, where they are very much headquarter functions, it's possible to advance or move around a little bit because it often doesn't require a move.

But something like sales or restaurant operations, a physical move is required. You're going to make that choice. That's a very personal thing for you and your family to talk about.

**BERTA, NRN:** As hospitable as the hospitality industry is, is it not very family-friendly?

**FRIEDMAN, McALISTER'S:** It's a very intense working life, no matter what you [do].

**DAMAGE-SCOTT, ARAMARK:** No, it's not family-friendly.

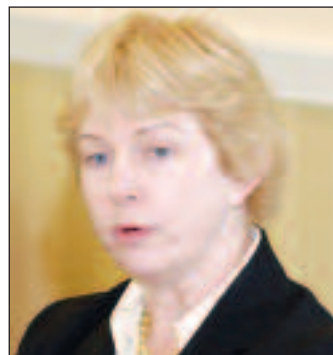
**O'BROIN, UNILEVER:** I think it comes down to personal choices. Someone said to me, “What have you had to sacrifice to get where you are?”

I don't think of it as sacrifice. I mean, are there things that I regret? Absolutely. I moved from Ireland 23 years ago. I miss my family. [But] I don't look back and say, “I had to make a sacrifice.” I benefited enormously from having made that decision and working. My husband has always worked. When the kids were little, he shared and did whatever, and you can always find a practical answer if that's the choice you make.

**DAMAGE-SCOTT, ARAMARK:** But it's not family-friendly. I agree with you. I agree you make sacrifices. I agree if you want to do it, you figure it out. Her question was, is it family-friendly? And no, it's not.

**FRATRIK, CRACKER BARREL:** Any industry at the level we're talking about is not going to be family-friendly. You can take banking; you can take construction; you can take real estate; you can take the communication industry — at this level, with the commitment that has to be made to drive business forward, it's not going to be family-friendly as I think we're trying to define it.

**DAMAGE-SCOTT, ARAMARK:** I've been in HR, operations, and I am in this position now where I have



**MARY O'BROIN**  
Unilever  
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**LINDA PHARR**  
Women's  
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more flexibility. I still work the hours, but I can control where I go, when I go, who I see, when I see them. In operations, you do not have that flexibility.

**JENNIFER CONVERY, GRIFFITH:** You can take it from a supplier standpoint too, though. [From] a supplier standpoint, there's many different routes you can take.

I work for a company that's very family-friendly, and I wouldn't change it for the world. It's probably one of the reasons why I've stayed there. So you make decisions about what you want and where you want to be.

Whether you're a lawyer or a doctor or in the restaurant industry, if you have a couple that's both working — partners that are working — that's where it gets more difficult, and I think it's that way whether you have children or not.

**HALLBERLIN, U.S. FOODSERVICE:** There was a reason that model came up. It made sense. Somebody stayed at home and somebody went to work.

**MORRIS, CARINO'S ITALIAN:** From the middle-level manager and up, it is much easier for them to manage their lives. They can alter their schedules.

If you get down to our restaurant manager levels, what I hear them say in our focus groups and our surveys is that it's very difficult. If you're working from open to 4 p.m. or from open to 6 p.m., you've got to be there. Somebody has to cover the shift.

**FRATRIK, CRACKER BARREL:** Our industry potentially is on the edge of looking at how we define the job description of managers in our restaurants.

I have worked on a project with a part-time manager because this was an individual — a male, as a matter of fact — [whose] wife had the more lucrative job. He was a manager for the company, and he left to take care of the family and the children. He wanted to get back in, but couldn't commit to the 50-to-55-hour workweek, and we structured a 30-hour management position for him, and it was working.

Now, could that be a general manager position? Not in today's world.

But most restaurants have associates or assistant managers. As the industry continues to evolve, I think we're going to have to take a look at more of those types of things.

**HALLBERLIN, U.S. FOODSERVICE:** Did you get somebody to do the other half of the job? Was it a job sharing?

**FRATRIK, CRACKER BARREL:** In that particular restaurant, there were five managers: a general manager and four associate managers. Because of the volume — because it's not a one-size-fits-all in the restaurants — it was easy to accommodate that. And it had to fit in the financial matrix of management salary, [but] it worked.

**DAMAGE-SCOTT, ARAMARK:** So his role was of one of the associates, not the general manager?

**FRATRIK, CRACKER BARREL:** You could not have a part-time general manager. That's like a part-time CEO.

**PHARR, WFF:** I think there will be more creativity out there. Who knows 10 years from now what we might be doing as an industry to accommodate all this? I mean, I think it will be fascinating to see where we end up. ■