



Currents..

WFF hosts entrepreneurs

Conference Entrepreneur Track features dynamic female entrepreneurs; keys to owning your own business

By Mary Jo Larson

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Building your own business, even taking that first step out on your own, can be daunting. But for many women it's worth it.

It was with that group in mind that the Women's Foodservice Forum launched the first-ever Entrepreneur Task Force. The goal is to build WFF services that will help entrepreneur members be better at what they do, and to help these WFF members network and share best practices with their entrepreneurial peers. And the WFF has targeted a second and third group, as well: those in the WFF ranks who are considering entrepreneurship and those who think and act like entrepreneurs within their jobs, otherwise known as "intrapreneurs."

Conference track and town hall meeting planned The Entrepreneur Task Force has not let moss grow under their feet: The group has planned a full afternoon of speakers at the WFF Annual Conference, Sunday afternoon, March 15, 2009.

"An entrepreneur is the type of personality who is willing to take on a new venture or enterprise and accepts full responsibility for the outcome," said Lyn Devorkin, chair of the Entrepreneur Task Force. "Does this describe you? Are you actively building an empire or thinking about building one? This session will be a 'value added' learning experience for you - discover what makes YOU this person, and the importance of knowing the niche your business operates in."

The Entrepreneur Track includes:

- Dr. Simon Mak, professor of entrepreneurship at Southern Methodist University, has assembled research and advice on creating and sustaining a niche market. His workshop will provide the necessary information for developing strategies that will help start and grow a successful niche business.
- Margaret Heffernen, author of *How She Does It: How Women Entrepreneurs Are Changing the Rules of Business Success*, will offer a session on entrepreneurial attributes: Can we predict success based on key personality attributes? How will your attributes and personality style contribute to launching and building your own business?

Attendees will not want to miss the town hall format that will feature four female entrepreneurs. "We have assembled an 'all-star' cast of entrepreneurs that will share the trials, tribulations and successes of being in both the corporate arena and building an enterprise brick by brick," said Devorkin. "This dynamic group will talk about how they built their business, challenges and successes along they way, and how they plan to bob and weave through a tenuous economy."

- Elizabeth Blau, founder and CEO of Blau and Associates, has built a successful company that offers strategic restaurant planning and development advice to hospitality businesses. In fact, she has helped Steve Wynn, owner of the Wynn Hotel in Las Vegas, create some of the most recognizable restaurant concepts in the world.
- Stephanie Shimp, owner of Blue Plate Restaurant Group, a successful restaurant company with five independent restaurants in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, has wryly described her position as including everything from janitor to chief financial officer.
- Valerie Carter-Daniels is the owner of V&J Holdings, a successful Burger King and Pizza Hut franchisee. She parlayed the ownership of one Burger King into one of the largest franchisee companies in the nation.
- Kathleen Wood, founder of Kathleen Wood Partners, has built a successful restaurant operations consultancy after years of running foodservice businesses. She helps today's foodservice leaders to help increase productivity and growth - in short, to help them build a course to success.

"It is going to be an incredible afternoon for those thinking about building their own business, or those women wanting to become more entrepreneurial within their careers," says Devorkin.

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