

IMEX Women's Leadership Forum Survey Results: February 2011

New IMEX survey reveals women's meetings industry leadership ambitions

As part of their research into those business performance skills that women feel they most need to develop in order to progress, Susan Sarfati, CEO of High Performance Strategies and Liz Jackson, President of Jackson Consulting Inc, recently conducted a survey of 140 women currently working in the meetings, events and incentive travel industry.

The resulting research and its detailed findings will be used to craft the content of their first ever Women's Leadership Forum to be held at IMEX in Frankfurt, May 24-26 this year, as part of the award-winning trade show's New Vision programme. The survey also gathered feedback from a small number of men.

The survey results show that many women still share concerns about how to achieve a sustainable work-life balance but they are also doing battle with other workplace issues which are specific to the 21st century. When asked "what is the major challenge you currently face in your leadership or management role?", time management, especially in an age of 'always-on' social media, was highlighted by many respondents. Others expressed a desire to understand how to be assertive in the workplace without appearing dominant or aggressive, especially in a tougher economic climate.

Although some of the issues raised by the women polled can clearly be divided along male or female lines, others are fundamental to everyone working in the meetings industry. These include how to guide clients towards more ethical and fairer business behaviour; how best to manage and motivate Generation Y employees; staff retention issues and how to achieve board level support and understanding of the real value of meetings and events.

When it comes to developing specific skills and new areas of confidence and expertise, these women said their greatest need is for improved time management, better sales and marketing skills, superior financial management as well as presentation and communication skills. Many respondents also said they would like to improve their negotiation and conflict resolution skills.

When asked which subjects they would most like to discuss during the Women's Leadership Forum, 'dealing with conflict' was the topic most requested by respondents, closely followed by 'understanding the differences in male and female leadership types' and 'selling yourself and your ideas'. Other suggestions made by the respondents themselves included multi-tasking - and how to avoid losing focus by trying to do everything - and cross-cultural training. It is clear that working in or with partners in emerging markets presents unique challenges to women, many of whom are aware of cultural and religious differences but are unsure of their impact on working relationships.

Commenting on the findings, Susan Sarfati, CEO of High Performance Strategies and co-presenter of the IMEX Women's Leadership Forum in May, says: "Now it is not so unusual to see women leading countries throughout the world. The meetings industry is reflecting the same dramatic change as it relates to key decision makers and a multitude of new opportunities. The 21st century is indeed the century for women to make a major impact and we need to maximise how we can take advantage of this to move ourselves forward, and the meetings industry overall."

Looking ahead to the live Forum, Liz Jackson, President of Jackson Consulting Inc, who will also be presenting, states: "By demonstrating how women can overcome barriers and succeed in business - and in life - feel good about themselves and reach beyond their expectations, our new Forum will show that women often have more power and potential than they realise. These results make it clear we still have a

way to go but they also demonstrate that women's desire and readiness to improve their skills and remain focused on career development is an essential component of a healthy international meetings and events industry."

140 women from a cross-section of buyers and suppliers answered the survey. They work in variety of global markets and at different levels of seniority from event planners to CEOs. They also represent markets including Asia, North America, Europe and the Middle East.

Attendance at the Women's Leadership Forum at IMEX in Frankfurt in May is completely free of charge, with no need to book. It will take place at 1600hrs on Wednesday May 25 with a second session also set to take place. All Forum sessions will be highly interactive.

Sarfati and Jackson are both accomplished meetings industry experts and achievers with many years' experience of the specific challenges presented by the industry. Sarfati is best known for her years as CEO and an innovative leader and key spokesperson in the association management profession, whilst Jackson says her greatest career achievement is her success in senior management in the airline and hotel industry.

Their jointly presented Forum will feature recent case studies as well as practical tips. More information at <http://www.imex-frankfurt.com/women.html>

The IMEX in Frankfurt New Vision programme is designed to challenge conventional industry thinking, stimulate new ideas and address key issues. There is no need to book for any of the 70 plus seminars, forums and other educational events, which are all provided free of charge.

To register as a visitor go to <http://www.imex-frankfurt.com/register.php>

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Editors Notes:

- The next IMEX takes place 24th – 26th May 2011 at Messe Frankfurt.
- All IMEX press releases can be downloaded from <http://www.imex-frankfurt.com/press.php>
- High-resolution photos are available at <http://www.imex-frankfurt.com/imexphotos.html>
- Visitor and buyer statistics can be viewed at <http://www.imex-frankfurt.com/stats.html>
- IMEX, and its Chairman Ray Bloom, were awarded the Corporate Order of Skal Merit 2010.
- In 2009 IMEX was shortlisted for the AEO Sustainable Initiative of the Year Award and the UFI (the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry) Best Innovative Web-based Application for Exhibitors Award. IMEX is a previous winner of the AEO Trade Show of the Year Award and AEO Best Visitor Experience – Trade Show Award.
- The IMEX Group has launched IMEX America - America's worldwide exhibition for incentive travel, meetings and events. It will take place at the Sands Expo and Convention Center at the Venetian/Palazzo from 11 – 13 October 2011. <http://www.imexamerica.com>

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