

Getting out of your comfort zone

CALGARY, ALBERTA

Margot Ross-Graham provided some motivation for the women attending Western Women With Drive to reach for the stars, saying, "If you are going to always do what you've always done, you're going to be what you've always been."

Telling a story of when she was told by a colleague how she would never be more than what she was at the time, Ross-Graham said women need to be willing to try something others have not been willing to attempt before. Emphasizing the importance of listening, she said being attentive to others leads to success.

"Because I'm a good listener, I'm also a good question asker," said Ross-Graham, adding that a good approach is to take non-practical things and make them practical.

Ross-Graham, owner of Sandbar Coaching and Consulting, addressing women in leadership roles, told the audience to ask themselves if they want to be leaders in their workplace and why it is important to them.

She said people often prop leaders up on a pedestal, make it intimidating to measure themselves against those they admire, and end up scaring themselves away from an opportunity.

"Nobody is 100% ready for that next job, so step into it if it's something you really want," said Ross-Graham.

Joining Ross-Graham on stage was Wendy King, chief information officer/chief operating officer for WCB Alberta, who said some new leaders are great at solving problems, just not the right problems.

King said asking "why" is an essential step to finding the root of a problem before being able to come to a proper solution, no matter how many times you have to ask the question to pinpoint the cause.

King believes providing support to coworkers is another step in the right direction, as it is much better to lean in and support than to lean back and judge.

"I can guarantee you that people will remember that support," she said, adding that people tend to judge others for one simple reason. "Most people stand back because they are afraid."

Addressing the #MeToo movement that highlights inappropriate behavior in the workplace some men have subjected on women, both Ross-Graham and King said they were concerned the movement could have unintended consequences on relationships between men and women professionally.

Ross-Graham said the movement has at times gone to the extreme, where men are afraid to mentor or be left alone with a female col-

league for fear of being accused of inappropriate behavior.

King said it is "a shame" that some men now have fears as a result of the #MeToo movement, that the conversation around the issue needs to continue, and workplaces must be a place of mutual respect.

Angela Splinter, CEO of Trucking HR Canada, added that companies should have a system in place for how they would deal with a situation should it arise.

During another panel discussion on the importance of education in transportation, Michael Mooney, area vice-president of Alberta and N.W.T. for First Transit, said it's important to identify an employee's strengths and weaknesses in the effort to improve overall performance.

Whether an employee adheres to all the education they have received, Mooney said some may perform flawlessly when being observed, but fall short out in the field, which means it is not a training issue, but a behavioral one, and can be more difficult to remedy.

Mooney added that setting quotas for performance is not the way to go, as they do not result in employees rising up to the occasion, but rather lowers the bar for the company itself.

"You need to build things that work," he said, "and they need to be evidence based."

As for recruiting, Mooney said hiring procedures should be tailored to what a company is looking for, and with an understanding that different generations and individuals have various skill sets, who can all add to a company's growth over time.

"Everybody is an investment," he said.

Amy Richards, vice-president of people and organizational support for Trailer Wizards, echoed the opportunity for employees to work through their strengths and weaknesses, adding that when leaders provide feedback, they learn about the passions and skills of their staff.

She said training and development takes time and can be overwhelming, so a sound approach is to start with the small things and slowly work your way up.

Communication is also important.

"The reason I learned what I learned wasn't from reading a book, I talked to people," said Kathy Fenton, owner of Fenton Bus Lines. "People want to share with you...start asking the questions."

In addition to a pair of panel discussions and motivational presentations, the WWWD 2018 event included a presentation from Women Building Futures (WBF), which helps women receive the educations needed in careers traditionally dominated by men. **TW**

A brighter future

Scope and success of WBF's Class 1 driver program continues to grow

By Derek Clouthier

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

It didn't take long for the second graduating class of Women Building Futures' (WBF) Class 1 driver program to get noticed.

In fact, within one week of completing the course, all 10 students were hired into the industry.

In all, 22 women have now successfully graduated from the Class 1 drivers program, 20 of whom are currently working in the industry.

With a near 91% success rate, it's understandable that the staff at WBF is ecstatic with the results of the 10-week commercial driving program, which launched last year with the first

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WBF Class 1 training

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The second graduating class of WBF's Class 1 driver training program.

class of 12 women graduating in September.

The second group celebrated the completion of the course April 27, and along with continued success of the Class 1 program has come additional industry partners to help make it a success.

Westcan Bulk Transport and Caron Transportation Systems were first to step up and sponsor the program. And now, Trimac Transportation, Rosenau Transport, and Watt and Stewart have joined the party, with all industry partners looking to reap the benefits of a highly skilled pool of women drivers from the WBF program.

"These companies are industry leaders," said Heather Markham, brand and marketing manager, strategic communications for WBF. "They have all collaborated closely with us which has been essential to the success. Together, we have ensured there are regular debriefs and 'lessons learned' and we keep in touch far beyond graduation in the effort to gather continuous feedback.

Markham said the key to the success of the WBF Class 1 course is based on awareness, the admissions assessment process, program development, and industry partners.

"We know that women experience unique barriers when entering the trades beyond the ability to get training, including stereotypes around the type of work women can or should do, and questions about whether women are appropriate or successful in the trades," said Markham. "WBF has the ability to reach women and educate them about opportunities for training and employment in the transportation industry."

In addition to a thorough assessment process of all applicants, the program itself was developed with the assistance of industry experts, and includes more than driver training, including guest speakers, ride-alongs, a scale visit, fitness and nutrition, and an introduction to Commercial Vehicle Enforcement, among other facets.

For women looking for training that addressed the unique needs and challenges women face in male-dominated positions, Markham said WBF would be a smart choice.

"WBF is so important for women because they are trained in a supportive environment by instructors who understand the unique needs of women," said Markham. "They come to WBF because we do things differently – we pride ourselves on offering ongoing support services and boast about our high employment rate."

WBF also looks for advice from past graduates.

"We brought back a few alumni from the first program to gather their feedback now that they have been working for over six months to ensure we keep an eye on continuous improvement with the program," said Megan Bates, manager of industry relations for WBF.

Markham said interest in the Class 1 program has grown in two ways – the number of women applying to take the course, and the number of companies looking to partner with the program.

"With a new program, momentum builds with every cohort," she said. "As more women see WBF alumni being successful as professional drivers they can see themselves in that role, and as more companies see the WBF alumni succeed with industry leading companies, this attracts great interest."

The predicted driver shortage expected to impact the industry in both Canada and the U.S. could use a significant number of new drivers, and women, which are underrepresented in trucking, would certainly help alleviate the effect of that shortage.

"We know the transportation industry is one that offers long term, rewarding and stable careers," said Markham. "We are encouraged by the efforts being made to look at how to best bring diversity into the industry in a way that is successful, and we thank the industry for trusting WBF to be a partner in these efforts."

WBF will hold its first Work Proud Summit Oct. 2-4 in Edmonton. With the theme "Trade Perspective," the summit will address issues that impact businesses and best practices that create workplaces that meet the challenges of the next generation.

Visit www.workproudsommit.ca for more information. **TW**

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