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With 2017 coming to a close, we'd like to leave you with some insightful leadership lessons from a few of this year's heavy hitters, including WICT's *Women of the Year* and *Women to Watch*, as well as a panel of top executives and change agents featured during the Leadership Conference.

As your partner in professional development, we hope the wisdom gleaned from these accomplished women will motivate and inspire you through the holidays and into the new year, leaving you refreshed and ready to take 2018 by storm!

Insights from the 2017 Women of the Year & Women to Watch

Each year we ask our honorees to share some of the secrets of their success with our members. Below are highlights of what we learned from the recipients of our 2017 *Woman of the Year* and *Woman to Watch* awards.



What is the one aspect of doing business you hope that every person you work with will take away with them to incorporate in their everyday work?

D'Arcy Rudnay, WICT's 2017 *Woman of the Year (Operator)*, firmly believes in the value of "creating a culture that enables talented people to succeed." Developing a team takes precious time but "we are only as strong as our team, and as leaders, it is so important to help others by sharing our knowledge, experience, and advice." Providing access to senior executives is critical to fostering an open and respectful business environment, D'Arcy says. Leaders at the top need to "take the time to identify individuals who have that certain spark, enthusiasm and creative energy, and then help them to develop to their full potential." Not only does this approach benefit the individual employees, it also helps build a pipeline of talent from within which makes "our businesses so much stronger, more efficient, and strategic."

Tina Thornton, honored as a 2017 *Woman to Watch (Programmer)*, will tell you that collaboration is king (or queen, in this instance). It is "the most important aspect of our business and something I emphasize to my team regularly." But what happens when various departments have goals that don't align? When a consensus needs to be met, it's important to see the bigger picture. "It's in those instances that you must look at what's best for the company -- not for any individual group," notes Tina. Another useful tactic when collaborating with colleagues is to maintain a positive outlook. Rather than shooting an idea down, think of ways you can work together to come up with a solution. A little optimism goes a long way. Adds Tina, "Just saying the word "no" gets people on edge. What if instead you approached it as a "Yes...if"? It means exactly the same thing, but reinforces a positive approach."

When you started your career, what impact did mentoring have on where you are today in the business?

"I would not be where I am today if it had not been for mentoring. My formal education has taught me what and why; mentoring taught me when and how." says **Charlene Keys**, WICT's 2017 *Woman to Watch* in the Operator category. Those are very powerful statements and Charlene can certainly attest to the power of having a "diverse village to nurture and propel a career." Embracing the learning opportunities around you and soaking up the wisdom of others can have a huge impact on one's career trajectory. Adds Charlene, "I have been incredibly fortunate to have very strong and successful male and female mentors who challenge me, and who affirm me...and I am better because of it."

What significance will mentoring have with regard to building new employees' commitment to a company and the cable industry?

After battling a case of "Imposter Syndrome," **Samira Panah Bakhtiar**, WICT's first *Woman to Watch* in the Technology category, realized that "we have the power to lead, inspire, and most importantly, build the teams we always wished we could have been a part of!" In an industry that is rapidly changing in both demographics and skill set, "it is more important than ever that each of us paves the way for others." Instilling a sense of community and courage with team members is paramount to Samira in this innovative industry. "By leading by example, and supporting the talent around me, I have realized we are able to build bridges to the talent the industry needs to survive and thrive."

Leading by example is something that **Sarah Barnett**, WICT's 2017 *Woman of the Year (Programmer)*, has mastered. Lamenting the negative stereotypes that women in business face, Sarah points out, "Data resoundingly shows that the more successful a woman is, the less she's liked. The qualities needed to be a successful leader contradict shared expectations of how women should act." Changing the way women leaders are perceived starts from the top. "More people -- including leaders of organizations -- are realizing that good intentions aren't enough. It requires a dismantling of beliefs we didn't even know we held." Says an impassioned Sarah, "Let's change the way we see the world, because that will change what we get to see in the world."

We thank these exceptional women for sharing their insights and experiences. From all of us at WICT, congratulations!

View photos of the honorees receiving their awards [on our website](#).

Make Disruption Work for You -- and Thrive



The *Changing Lanes* session at the [2017 WICT Leadership Conference](#) brought together a group of leaders who have taken advantage of career pivots to shift gears, learn new things and expand their influence. Each panelist provided invaluable insights to those seeking to switch business units, move laterally, or navigate a new culture post-merger.

Resiliency, perseverance and adaptability were all common themes that arose during the conversation, which was moderated by **Kathleen O'Reilly**, Senior Managing Director, Accenture, and member of the WICT Global Board of Directors.

Daisy Auger-Dominguez, SVP, Talent Acquisition, Viacom, is driven by an innate curiosity to explore new opportunities and acquire new skills. She believes that with every new role, you have to adapt to a completely different landscape. You're hired for what you know, but you have to learn to put certain notions behind you. "If you lean too heavily on what worked for you before, you may be doing yourself a disservice. You have to be open to learning something new to deepen your impact." People will observe this and it will help you build credibility among your new peers. And give yourself time to adjust when making significant career shifts. It will likely take you 3-6 months to learn enough about the business to ask the right questions and understand the new culture.

According to **Rhonda Crichlow**, SVP, Chief Diversity Officer, Charter Communications, "Corporate America changes constantly -- nothing stays the same any more. As leaders, we need to be more resilient so that we can successfully navigate change." Trained as a lawyer, volunteering for non-profits helped expand her skill set and gave her the confidence she needed to move into the diversity and inclusion space, first in the pharmaceutical industry and now with Charter. As your look to expand your network, ensure you're reaching out to people from outside your immediate circle. Take advantage of their diverse opinions and points of view to confirm that you have realistic picture of yourself. Above all, Rhonda adds, believe in yourself and your capacity to succeed when faced with difficult choices. "Sometimes opportunity knocks and you have to answer, even if you have doubts about your ability to handle the transition."

Now an independent advisor on marketing communications management and strategy, "Changing Lanes" has been the theme of **Ellen Kroner's** entire career, having started out at AMC Networks in public relations and ultimately becoming Executive Vice President and Chief Communications Officer. Ellen advised those facing disruption to develop what she calls a "pocket plan" to map out the possibilities, which should include an exploration of your successes, strengths/weaknesses and ambitions. Ellen also suggested that we "learn to influence others and build trust outside your immediate contacts, because your ability to influence company culture matters more today than ever before."

Dalila Wilson-Scott, President, Comcast Foundation & SVP, Community Investment, Comcast, spent a number of years in the world of financial services before joining Comcast. Throughout her career, she has benefitted from a number of visionary mentors and sponsors who saw possibilities for her that she wasn't even aware of. Shifting gears just for the sake of change is not worth undertaking, so carefully consider your options when a new opportunity comes up, because "running to something is very different than running from something." You have to know yourself, understand what you want to achieve and recognize the level of risk you're willing to accept. Remember to listen to feedback and other opinions "with your ears wide open," and understand that to be successful you will need to step beyond your comfort zone.

Each of these women eagerly accepted responsibility for mapping out her own career path, and came out on top. One of the primary takeaways from the discussion is that in a constantly evolving business environment, we must accept that change is inevitable and look for ways to turn it to our advantage. We hope you are able to take their advice to heart on your own professional journey.

[Visit our website](#) to view photos and learn more about what transpired during the 2017 WICT Leadership Conference.



From all of us at WICT,
best wishes for a Happy and Prosperous New Year!

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