



“Fixing the 'Broken Rung' in the Association Industry,” as originally aired on June 9, 2020

Chelsea Brasted: Hey everybody. Chelsea Brasted here with Sidecar. I'm very excited about this session today which I wanted to kick off with a quick presentation of some data and information from a McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.org study that came out near the end of 2019. And this study really identified one of the core issues in women in leadership in corporate America and essentially what they called it was The Broken Rung. And this more or less identifies one of the issues with the small number of women at the top of leadership in various organizations, is that there is a broken rung at the bottom of that ladder, which is to say the first step up into leadership is missing for a lot of women. And so we're going to dive into some of this data, and then I'm going to turn it over to a great conversation about this in the association space.

I wanted to kick off with this first quote. The entire quote is, "Women continue to be underrepresented at every level. To change the numbers, companies need to focus where the real problem is. We often talk about the glass ceiling that prevents women from reaching senior leadership positions. In reality, the biggest obstacle that women face is much earlier in the pipeline, at the first step up to manager. Fixing this broken rung is the key to achieving parity."

So what about associations? According to the ASAE Foundation's Benchmarking in Association Management report, only 29% of the responding organizations actually track staffers' gender or gender identity. Of those responding organizations, which is about 50 in total, women comprise two thirds of staffers. So, there are a lot of women working in associations, which I think is something that a lot of us sort of see day-to-day in those organizations. And this information I just wanted to credit Terri Ashton, who's a senior research manager at ASAE who helped me find this data. It was pretty difficult to find. So I really appreciated that.

All right. So, what does this actually mean? We need more data, especially in associations. But associations also have an opportunity to be a leader because there are so many women within these organizations. We also need to ensure that the majority, if it is true that's a majority, are actually truly represented in these organizations. And the last thing, it also means we need to ensure associations are a leader in stamping out some of the major roadblocks that overwhelmingly impact women at work, which that's one of the obvious ones is paid family leave and the ability to work from home and leadership opportunities.

So, let's look at the numbers. I'm going to hold on this graph for just a second because I know it can be difficult to read all this, but basically what we're looking at is, from the far left side is entry level and on the far right side is the C-suite. And as you can see, as you get higher and higher up in an organization, women comprise fewer and fewer percent of those positions. And so, about one in five C-suite executives is a woman and only one in 25 C-suite executives is a woman of color. So for every 100 men promoted and hired to manager, it means only 72 women are promoted and hired.

This broken rung results in more women getting stuck at the entry level and fewer women becoming managers. That's according to the McKinsey study. And the result of that is men hold 62% of manager level positions and women hold 38%. And so, this is another quote from the McKinsey study that I think is pretty revealing. Even as hiring and promotion rates improve for women at senior levels, women as a whole can never catch up. There are simply too few women to advance. The case for fixing the broken rung is powerful. If women are promoted and hired to first level manager at the same rates as men, we will add 1 million more women to management in corporate America over the next five years.

And so, again I'm going to pause on this graph because you can see for every 100 men who are promoted to management, you see only 72 women get promoted. Only 58 black women are promoted and only 68 Latina women are promoted. So, what can we actually do about it? We wanted to look at some of the suggestions that the McKinsey study proposed and that study offered five. So the first one, get more women into first-level management. Require a diverse candidate pool for job openings. Put evaluators through unconscious bias training. Establish clear evaluation criteria. And put more women in line for the step up to management.

87% of companies are highly committed to gender diversity, which is a great improvement over the 56% that said they were highly committed to gender diversity in 2012. And in the association space, one of the things we needed to do in order to solve this problem is actually get more data about what the representation is like because in most organizations, what gets measured and rewarded is what actually gets done. So, thank you guys so much. I just want to go ahead and turn this back over to Amy. That's just a couple of sound bites and quotes, and I'm hoping that all of that provides a little bit more background for this conversation. Thanks y'all.

Amy Thomasson: Hi everyone. I just want to thank you on behalf of our group today for joining our discussion. I think it's going to be a really interesting and exciting topic, and we're really going to be focusing on some tangible and tactical takeaways. Chelsea's done an excellent job of providing us with information about the challenges and barriers that women face in the workplace. Not only in associations and association management companies, but the broader landscape of women in business in general. And so, I just wanted to give you some background on how we came to this point today. Our discussion group met recently and we were talking, first we started talking about the challenges and

barriers that women face in the workplace. I started to list out some of those major challenges and barriers.

After a little while having that discussion, we decided to take a pivot for today's session and to focus on framing a constructive mindset, talking about not just what hiring managers can do to empower women in the workplace, which is a lot of what Chelsea touched on, but also what you, the females who are on the session today as well as men who are listening in, what you can do to empower yourselves and your female staffers and the women in your life to truly succeed in association management or whatever other industry you may be interested in.

So today's discussion is going to be framed around three big ideas to empower yourself or to empower females in the workplace. But first we'll get started with a little bit of introduction so you can get to know who you're speaking with today. My name is Amy Thomasson and I am currently the Marketing Director at the Congress of Neurological Surgeons. Prior to that, I spent three and a half years working in a number of different roles for a supply chain management association. I was in membership. I was in education. I was in marketing, and with a smaller to mid-sized association. If you're a staffer on one of those organizations, that trajectory might sound familiar to you, wearing a lot of different hats.

But what's different about my journey is that prior to my five years in association management, I worked in the corporate world for about 12 years. I worked in manufacturing and distribution and electrical and industrial products. And so, why this topic really resonated with me today was that I came from a very male-dominated industry. I shared this anecdote with the other ladies when we were having a conversation prior to this session. But I had my first job out of college, I worked for a tool company. They sold products into the Home Depot. Our membership or our customers were fairly blue collar folks, linemen, men who climb up on the telephone poles, that sort of thing.

There are certainly women linemen out there. But as far as our customer base as well as our staff, I went to my first meeting for this group and we had 350 sales staff. I was one of three women at that meeting. And this was my first job at 23 years old, first professional job I should say. And that really made an impression on me. I didn't have a lot of examples of how to climb the corporate ladder. And so I've kind of had to cobble some of that together myself. And so, that's why this topic really resonated with me. It is in thinking about how can I provide that guidance and be helpful to women who were in my position before, who didn't see a lot of role models for what they could do. So I'll throw it over next to Stephanie who has a somewhat similar trajectory to mine, and that you've worked on the corporate side and in association management.

Stephanie Kusibab: Right Amy, that's exactly it. Right now I am the founder of a strategy consultancy called Essentiam. And we work with boards of directors and executives to really find strategic opportunities, articulate their strategies and their missions, and then enable their teams to achieve those missions. But you're right. I started out in the corporate world in the for profit space. My experience was in

manufacturing as well as banking. Worked with a lot of engineers, also very male-dominated gender bias was clear in that environment, especially at that time. And so when I came over to the nonprofit world, I didn't expect to see as much of that.

I don't think there is as much of it, but it's been interesting to me to see the number of women in the nonprofit space and yet there is still that inequity in terms of the people who are out around the table at the board table and the number of executive directors who are women. Particularly we have some stats that we're sharing in the chat that talk about the lack of women in those larger organizations that have executive director or CEO roles. I think that the McKinsey study really is telling in this idea of the broken rung in that it's not so much that there aren't women in the field, but it's that they're not getting those opportunities to move up.

And so I think I'm very excited about this conversation from that perspective. I've been involved in a number of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, both as a former employer at SmithBucklin as well as the Legal Marketing Association. It's great to see that associations have really picked up this mantle and are working hard to overcome the barriers. And I'm excited about our conversation talking about how women and men can help support this initiative in their organizations and just in their lives. And thanks for having me.

Amy Thomasson: Excellent. Lauren, did you want to go next?

Lauren Harley: Sure. Hi everyone. My name is Lauren Harley. I'm the Assistant Director of Education and Certification at MCI USA. So I work on the association solutions team. I also serve as managing director for one of our clients, RSUS. I'm coming into this conversation with the perspective of a young professional, and I'm really excited because I feel like this topic really hits home for me in a lot of areas.

Throughout my career, I've had the opportunity to work with a lot of influential women and be mentored by them and be taken under a lot of wings and I think it's absolutely had a huge effect on me throughout my career. I've been in the association space for almost nine years working at healthcare, nonprofits, trade associations. Working in all types of areas, including event, planning, education, certification, and membership. So thank you for having me.

Amy Thomasson: Excellent. How about Lisa?

Lisa Campo: Hi everybody. I'm Lisa Campo. I'm a Senior Manager Marketing at the American Staffing Association. I'm based out of Alexandria. I originally started my career in journalism, not in associations or marketing, but it took me about five years to realize that was going fairly downhill for a lot of people. And so I needed to look for something else and someone I knew was working at similarly a place that deals with linemen. So we'll have to talk about whether or not it was the same place. And that's how I got my first association job was that a journalism colleague

sort of got me over there. So I moved into association web editing, and then eventually into communications and into marketing.

I think I've worked at about five different associations or associations-centric for profits. I've seen both sides. It's been really interesting. I've witnessed a lot that makes me unhappy about how women are treated in the workplace and how they don't necessarily get the same advantages that men always do. I've seen men get raises solely because they're raising a family, which is very frustrating. And as Stephanie pointed out, one of the things that really feels wrong to me is that most people who work in associations are women and most executive directors are men. So I really, really hope that in the next 10 years or so, we can get more women up to the upper management level so that we can have a little bit more say in what decisions are made.

Amy Thomasson: So now we're going to get into a little bit less formal discussion, but hopefully a lively discussion and hopefully one that a lot of you will be interested and will relate to. And we're going to get tangible and tactical about things you, or if you are a male listening to us things you can do on behalf of women to help empower them to succeed in association management. So our first big idea is to seek out mentors and models to create an advisory board. So let's get started discussing.

Lauren Harley: Yeah. So when we were going through this discussion and we were brainstorming ideas about creating opportunities for women in leadership, one thing that came up quite a bit was mentoring and sponsorship. I've really felt that it's important for women to have their own personal board of advisors, those who champion them in their career. And so when you think of a mentor, it's really that person that advises you throughout your career and a sponsor who really advocates for you. And for that perspective, rather, I really feel that sponsorship is so beneficial because if you have someone who is advocating for you behind closed doors or in those meetings that you're not in, that naturally they're going to mentor and advise you as well. But really it's such a lost opportunity to not have a mentor.

I want to share a quick statistic. It says a 2017 study by a professional services firm, Egon Zehnder, found that only 54% of women have access to senior leaders who act as mentors or informal sponsors in their career. So, there's a huge gap there because there's no denying how beneficial it is to have a mentor and have someone who has gone through what you're going through and to receive that guidance, to not have a mentor. We know there's that benefit there.

I just want to speak just a moment about my own experience as a mentee. I've had multiple mentors throughout my career. Sometimes it's who you know, and really in those conversations that I've had with my mentors, we've really talked a lot about their network. When I'm sharing my goals and the things that I'm working on, a good mentor will say, "Hey, I know this person that can help you with this." Or, "They're having a training about this. Let me put you in contact with this person." Or, "Why don't you go to this event?" So it really has helped me a lot to make those

connections. Especially as a young professional, I felt alone a lot of times dealing with different tasks or going through different experiences for the first time. So to have a mentor really does make a difference.

Also, a mentor can give you a strong reference. They can write you a really good letter of recommendation. There's been times that I've applied for scholarships or to participate in summits or even for a job and to have a mentor or a reference, someone to speak to your experience and what they know that you're capable of, makes a world of difference. I want to share just another statistic really quick. It says a study by Development Dimensions International, DDI, found that while nearly 80% of women in senior roles have served as formal mentors, only 63% of women have ever had one. So that really shows or it really speaks to the fact that a lot of times we're afraid to ask someone to serve as a mentor for us.

I know personally every time that I've asked someone, I have been scared to death. There's that fear that they're going to say no or you think you're going to take up a lot of their time, that it's a huge time commitment. But honestly every time I've asked someone, they've been flattered and it's really been an amazing experience working with different people in different areas of expertise that you wouldn't any other time. Whether it's the VP level or the C-suite, it's not a huge time commitment. There's been times that I've met with a mentor once a month for an hour. That's not going to make or break any of us.

And also if someone asks you, definitely step up to be a mentor; just remembering that both sides benefit from the experience, on the mentee and the mentor side. A lot of times I've spoken to my mentors and they've said, "Lauren, you've helped me so much with this." We do a lot of idea sharing. I put them in contact with some of my young professional contacts. So just keep in mind that mentorship does create a lot of opportunities for women. I'm going to pass it on to Stephanie now.

Stephanie Kusibab: Yeah. Thanks Lauren. Great points. It really is important to have those mentors and to find someone that you can trust and ask questions of. And even if they're not formal mentors, identifying leaders around you, surrounding you, whether they're men or women who you would like to emulate or are interested in or believe are doing a good job, either in a particular situation or in general, and watching them and learning from them can also be beneficial, right? Whether or not you have the opportunity to actually interact with them one-on-one, there's also a lot of observations that you can do your own observation and really learn based on watching.

If you're in a meeting and you feel like someone is really doing a great job of being inclusive and asking questions and doing other things that are making you and others in the room feel empowered and important, understanding what it is, thinking about what is it that that leader or that program manager is doing to actually enable that feeling is part of your learning. So it doesn't have to be even necessarily a formal mentorship relationship all the time, but also informal mentorship. And that's what we were calling modeling, right?

And as a leader, taking the time to model. Thinking about that as an actual part of your job. Finding upcoming leaders and actually sharing with them, "Well, this is how I approached that project." Or, "This is how I approach planning for that meeting." Or, "You noticed how in that situation I did this," and helping them to actually hear and understand what's going on inside your mind as you're thinking about or leading through a situation can also be extremely helpful for up and coming leaders. And women, I think, sometimes are a little bit more reluctant to ask the questions. They're a little bit more intimidated. And so being more forthcoming with that information can be really helpful.

Amy Thomasson: Stephanie, I think you bring up a great point about not necessarily needing to have a formal mentor. Formal mentors are certainly important if you could get one. I was just thinking back on my career too. I'm sure there's people who have no idea that they were mentoring me who I really view as mentors at different stages of my career. You don't have to be a mentor forever, right? You can be mentoring someone when it's really valuable for a certain point in time in your career and perhaps you, or that mentor, makes a transition and you reevaluate the relationship.

For me, I've been involved in both formal and informal mentoring. Actually wrote an article for Association Forum's Magazine FORUM last year about the different archetypes of mentors that have been valuable to me in my career. One of them, I called this individual the attitude adjuster, and he is that person in my life. He's somebody I worked with for a long time who's just so incredibly positive, who's been through a lot, who has a lot of perspective on how important failure is as part of having a successful career; because failure means you've tried, you've put yourself out there.

He is also incredibly well connected in the association space. So when I pivoted from corporate to association and I attended my first association forum event, he walked me in, he introduced me to the CEO. And so, that's something that I try to do now too because I'm in my mid career, so I'm in that interesting point where I'm both being mentored and mentoring others. And so when I think about mentoring others, I think about what was really valuable to me when I started my career in association management and how can I pay it forward? So when I meet somebody, I always say, "Check out former ASAE event calendars. If you're going to go to something and I'm thinking about going to, I would love to walk you in and introduce you to people to help make this event a little bit more comfortable for you."

And then another archetype I had was the impartial impactor, I called this individual, because I think it's important or at least it has been for me to have a mentor who I don't work with on the day-to-day so that I can talk to him candidly about different situations that I'm encountering. And he has a little bit of distance. And there's a little bit less of an inherent risk in that type of relationship too, like I can be more vulnerable. I can really get candid and share things with him because he has that distance he's not working with me in the day-to-day.

So, both of those types of individuals have been really valuable to me. Lauren, I know we talked about your involvement in the NextGen program with ASAE and also how not a ton of people necessarily know about that program. Another program at ASAE is the DELP program. For me, I have been involved with Association Forum. They have a 40 under 40 program. It's an awards program, but what's great about it is that afterwards you get access to tons of education, including connections with C-suite leaders who are part of leading some of this education. My formal mentor, I actually got through the 501c League. If any of you are familiar with Cecilia Sepp, a shout out to her, that's how I found my formal mentor. But there are so many different programs like that. So definitely take a look at some of those resources.

Lisa Campo: And I just wanted to jump in really quick and say I'm really interested in some of the things you guys talked about in terms of not having a formal mentor. Just because you're not a formal mentor doesn't mean you can't step in and give someone a little bit of advice, or if they ask you to do something, do something small for them. I had a boss, her name's Susan Payne, you're amazing Susan. She knew that I was looking for another job and she took one look at my resume and went, "Hmm. No, we're going to work on this."

She helped me translate what I wanted to say into numbers. I saved the company this much money because I did this, instead of me just saying I did marketing. So she showed me what was incorrect. I didn't know because I was probably in my mid 20s and I just hadn't really been in the job market that long. So, she just did a couple of small things for me that really helped my whole career and made my resume amazing. So, there's definitely small things you can do.

Amy Thomasson: There's another group of mentors that I forgot to mention earlier, too. And we talked a little bit about this in the lead up to this session we are collaborating on, and that's creating a personal board of advisors. That's something, I think it takes a while. It takes some experience to start to cultivate that. My friend Jackie calls them her kitchen cabinet. She said everybody in her life to a certain extent falls somewhere in that kitchen. Some of them are in the junk drawer, but some of them truly are your true kitchen cabinet that are people you can rely on. Those might be your resources for jobs you're interviewing for. They're people you can go to to give you different diverse perspectives on your experiences and the challenges you're facing. So, I'd advise anyone to start to think about like, do you have a personal board of advisors, even if you're not calling them that? And if not, how can you begin to cultivate those relationships to build one?

Our next big idea, and one that I think this group has got a lot of interesting perspective on is making a commitment to fostering diversity, inclusion and belonging. Do that within your organization, within volunteer groups that you're working with. Creating that commitment, I think that's an important one. Commitment to fostering diversity, inclusion and belonging. So I know this group has got some great thoughts on that.

Lauren Harley: There's a lot of focus on diversity and inclusion but I felt it was important to include belonging because really that's the ultimate goal. As you mentioned, Amy, I went to the NextGen summit last year. One of my favorite quotes was, "Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance, and belonging is dancing like no one is watching." I love that because it really puts it into perspective for what you want. That feeling you want your members, your employees to have at an organization.

I want to just share a quote. It says just 7.5% of all nonprofit executive staff and 14% of nonprofit boards are women of color. That's an alarming statistic. Another one, a recent report on gender and diversity by BCG, a leading consulting firm, notes that companies with above average diversity within their management teams have innovation revenue of 45% versus 26% for those with below average leadership diversity. So there's no discounting the benefits of having a diverse organization. And that's really why there needs to be this push to create opportunities for women in leadership. Just one more. It says, according to the Center for Creative Leadership, Fortune 500 companies with the highest representation of women on boards financially outperform those with the fewest board members.

So, how can we go about diversifying our organization and really ultimately giving that sense of belonging? I would say the first step is making the commitment to do so. I think a lot of people think, "Oh, it's going to..." There's this misconception that it may happen organically, that the industry may change and so the organization will change. But no, you really need to make the commitment to have a diverse organization. Look at where your organization is now. Look at the data, look at opportunities for growth, and communicate that to the rest of your organization.

If you have this board meeting and you come up with this diversity statement, but you don't convey that to your membership, they can't help. Your conference planning committee will make the effort to have diverse panels at your conferences. Your committees won't make the effort to reach out to diverse committee members. So there's not that communication so that change will be brought about. So, that's the first step. Definitely making that commitment to diversify the organization and understand-

Stephanie Kusibab: Lauren, maybe I can jump in there and talk a little bit about the... As I mentioned earlier, I've done a lot of strategic planning. I work with boards of directors and executives on their strategic plans. And I would say over the last three, maybe three and a half years, I've seen a lot more boards of directors take this initiative, this idea of diversity and equity and inclusion and belonging, and actually write it into their strategic plans, which has been I think a great first step for a lot of organizations. If you think about what goes into a strategic plan, it's those things that the organization really needs to focus on for the future and the things that their board of directors wants to, I say, double down on or really make sure

that they are committed and making sure that the resources of the entire organization are committed in order to move that forward.

And so, as we've seen this happen, it's been a really fascinating conversation. I have not only seen it at the board level, but then also have been involved with the Legal Marketing Association in their actual diversity, equity, inclusion initiative, and helping them to create a plan specifically for that. And being a part of those conversations, it's been fascinating to think about the different levels. Lauren, you sort of mentioned this. There's the diversity within the board and the leadership, there's the diversity within the association itself, and there's the diversity within the community, right? The sort of the profession or the industry that that association serves. And then it even goes back to who's coming into that industry, the education that's driving people into that industry. So there's so many different levels to this.

And then also in the case of a trade association, what is the level of diversity in those positions within those companies that are members of the association. But I think associations have this really incredible opportunity to be leaders, not only for their own organization, but for the organizations they serve as well. And so, it's been great to see that come into the board conversation and dialogue, and then to be built into strategic plans.

As we talked about, how do you implement these strategic plans, there's all kinds of different initiatives. And Lauren, you mentioned some of them, a few that I've seen that I think are really interesting that the most basic one that, being someone with a marketing background, I hadn't thought a lot about but now I sort of think how could I not have, and that was in our first conversation with the LMA taskforce that was thinking about diversity. The biggest pain point, the things where there was a lot of passion around it was seeing people like me in the organization, but not just in the organization, also within the marketing material. Something as simple as the photos that we are using on our website or in our advertising or in our membership brochure.

And not just representing the diversity actually that people see, but actually the diversity that maybe isn't as a parent when you walk into a meeting, right? Seeking out those diverse members of the association and really representing them in the marketing materials, even if 60% of the association is say women and 40% of men or 70% is white and 30% is black. Making sure that we're pulling the men in, we're pulling the people of color into those pictures and making sure that we're representing the diversity we want, as opposed to the diversity that we may have today. I think that was a very simple but interesting way of doing it.

And then we've seen the organizations go all the way up to actually having conferences specifically for the people that they're trying to bring into the organization, the diverse folks that they're trying to bring into the organization, especially for women or young leaders or those types of things. So there's so many ideas, I'll put some more into the chat as we keep moving forward here. I think another way that we have seen organizations really take on this challenge is by

talking about the unconscious bias that exists. And I know Lauren, you have some experience in this area, so maybe I'll pass it back over to you.

Lauren Harley: I just want to give a quick definition of what exactly unconscious bias is. It is often defined as prejudice or unsupported judgements in favor of, or against one thing, person or group as compared to another in a way that is usually considered unfair. So it is a training in that regard.

Lisa Campo: To teach you about what your biases are, against whether it's other people or other ideas, so you can just help people figure out a way they might be thinking that they had no idea that they were thinking.

Stephanie Kusibab: Right. The first step in change is understanding what needs to change, right? And if you're not aware of the bias, then it's hard to make it change or to think about it. Everyone has unconscious biases and it's hard to... you can't stop yourself from having unconscious biases, but what you can do is change the way that you react. When you react the way that is sort of natural to you, you can sort of put a stop in that and pause that and try to change your reaction in the moment.

Lauren Harley: When done correctly, unconscious bias training can be really effective. I think it really gives everyone the opportunity to be aware of their own unconscious bias. Even when I did it myself, I was surprised at what I discovered about myself. That's the experience that a lot of people feel through this training, but it also gives you the connection of how an unconscious bias really affects your behavior. And so when you're aware of those behaviors, you're able to change them. I don't know if everyone has heard of when Starbucks had their one day unconscious bias training last year and they received so much criticism because it's like, is that really effective to do a one day training? It needs to be something that is consistently done to bring about a change and a behavior that you've had for so many years.

So I think, when you're doing an unconscious bias training, you really want to track the progress and look at the growth and also recognize what are the factors that are affecting people from advancing? What are the factors that are affecting women from advancing in leadership, and women of color in particular, and it can be many different things. It can be microaggressions, double standards, and of course looping back to the unconscious bias.

Lisa Campo: I think I will just talk for a few minutes to follow up the diversity and inclusion discussion to talk about how to include some of the junior people who are women at your association in conversations and how to help other women speak up and be heard. And I come at this knowing that I'm a more aggressive personality, surprising no one that knows me. I have no problem saying my opinion, even when it's not warranted. I don't have any problems speaking up in meetings, and women in general speak up less than men do. And when they do

speak up, they're usually judged a little more harshly than men are. I have no data to back that up, you can Google it somewhere.

So what I usually try to do, and this has to do with personalities, like I said, is when I talk to people and they tell me, oh, I had this idea or whatever. And I know later in a meeting when we're talking about it that that idea would go well, I usually say, "Oh, so-and-so, weren't you talking about this earlier. I think you had a really good solution for that." And that's the kind of thing that women, especially white women, because there are less women of color in positions of power. White women can use their privilege to bring other people up when they're not feeling empowered to speak, especially at a table where it's 20 white men and women and one person of color, that I know I'm sure is very daunting for that person or can be daunting to that person.

And another thing that you can do is really give credit where credit is due. This is just general advice. Obviously don't take all the credit for others, or if you notice a junior employee doing something that is great or has a new idea, letting other people know like leadership or your boss or anyone, or even just bragging to them about other people, is a way to lift that person up. And what if later they talk to someone else and they hear that person say, "Oh yeah, Lisa was saying all these great things about the work you've been doing." That's amazing for someone to hear and it gives them a lot of confidence, I think, and I know it has for me personally.

Stephanie Kusibab: Yeah, Lisa I think that your points are really important. It's that idea that there are certain things that the organization can do, but then there's things that each and every one of us can do, right? It's always easy to say someone should. But then asking yourself, can I? Can I help? Can I do that? How can I make an impact, so that it becomes every single one of us helping to change this perspective or helping to lift others up as opposed to assuming that someone else will always be the one that takes the lead on that. And great points, Lisa. Thanks.

Lisa Campo: Thanks. I'm not as much of a big picture person, probably than you all are. Not saying that I can't think of big picture, but I know for me, I always think about what are the very specific things that I can do to help out this 22-year-old woman who I'm working with who just entered the workplace and maybe doesn't feel confident to share what they can do for the organization or for the association.

Amy Thomasson: So Stephanie and Lisa, I think you really transitioned us well into our next of the big three ideas by talking about, what can I do? Our next idea is, how can you build skills through experiences, cross functional leadership and volunteering that enable you to empower yourself and those around you.

Lisa Campo: I am adamant and very convinced that the only person who will ever stand up for you is yourself. And I think the longer you're in the workforce, the more you realize that nobody is going to do anything for you but you. And if

someone does happen to do something nice for you, that is great. But you need to be your own advocate. You need to become comfortable with touting your accomplishments. Not bragging all the time, but saying, "Oh yes, I did do that. I thought I did a great job." Would you like to talk about it more?

We talked a little bit about imposter syndrome and we all laughed because each of us had a thought at some point about, why are we on this panel talking about what women should do to be better leaders? And the fact that all four of us, all of whom are accomplished women in the association space and fairly respected. I don't want to speak for myself, I hope that some of you are like me; that shows that everyone, and a lot of women have imposter syndrome.

You go, "Oh, am I really qualified to do this?" Guess what? You're not going to be qualified until you do it. So apply for the board that you want to be on. Put yourself out there. Ask someone to be your mentor. Ask somebody to look at your resume. I can say personally for me, this has helped me get numerous jobs. I've created my own website. My website says things that are professional about me, but at the bottom it also has a picture of my dog. And in my last job, one of the things that stood out to them was the picture of my dog on my website. The first question during the interview was, "Oh, you have a dog. I saw it. That's so great."

So you need to be able to show your personality and open up about who you are and what you can bring to the table. Whether it's like your love of dogs or how great a communicator you are or how good at marketing you are, that telling. So telling someone who we are about that and advocating for the fact that you are qualified for this is something that women I think struggle with. And it's taken me a long time to be okay with doing this. And I think we've all discussed how we still have some imposter syndrome going on even now when a lot of us are in mid to late career. Lauren, did you want to bring something?

Lauren Harley: Yeah, I just want to just chime in to the fact where you are talking about, as women we don't want to be arrogant and we don't want to boast about everything that we've done, but men do it. They're more likely to do it. They're more likely to do it. I work at an AMC, an association management company and I've learned that I have to do that. I have to talk about the work that I'm doing and the things that we've accomplished. And I have to convey that to the client because otherwise they will not know, and they will not appreciate everything that we're doing. And they'll think we're sitting there twiddling our thumbs, not getting anything done. So it is important. Talk about what you're doing, share your accomplishments. If you write an article, if you're speaking on a panel like this, share it on your social media, talk about it.

Lisa Campo: Put it on your LinkedIn just so that all-

Lauren Harley: Put it on your bio. Like, yeah, absolutely. If this is anything you need to boast about about yourself, your career needs it.

Lisa Campo: Or your dog, apparently that gets you.

Stephanie Kusibab: Apparently dogs as well, right? And I think not just boasting about what you're doing or telling people what you're doing, but also telling people what you think, right? As you look around you and you look at what's going on in your organization, you may see things that others don't. And so, bringing those forward I found is often a way to get assigned onto a cross functional team for example, where you can build new skills. You can maybe do things that you wouldn't do in the sort of box that is your normal job description. So you can have those new opportunities.

Also meeting people from across the organization and building out those new relationships can really help you as you move up in your career and need to be able to communicate with others in different departments or be able to understand... My background is primarily in marketing and strategy and new product development, but in doing that I had to learn, what does an engineer do and how do they approach their work and how do the operations team work and how does our customer care team work, so that I could think about that more broadly.

And as you build those relationships and that understanding of different areas of the business, that's what allows you to take a broader perspective, right? To have that wider view, which then makes you more valuable to the organization because you're bringing more to the table and you're able to pick up and do things that maybe others can't. And it also allows you to build relationships across the organization who then, they could become mentors, they could become models, they could be part of your kitchen cabinets, right?

So those opportunities to do cross functional roles or take on cross functional roles. It also, especially in a flatter organization where there maybe aren't as many opportunities to actually move up sort of structurally within your department or within your role, cross functional teams can allow you to be a leader of a bigger group than maybe you would be able to if you stayed in your own individual sort of siloed lane, if you will.

Lisa Campo: Let's discuss, quickly, the gender pay gap and I'm going to drop a link into the chat that is from the American Association of University Women, which is a very comprehensive report on this. Essentially women make about, what, 75 to 80% of what men make even in higher paying jobs, right? And that is not necessarily because they're less qualified. It is because, well, first of all I'm sure there's misogyny involved, but women also do not negotiate as much as men do when they are going in for jobs. So this ties back into what I was talking to before about being able to say what you want. You need to be able to, number one, ask for the promotion or the money that you want. You need to go into a job interview prepared to say, "I don't want this job. I can walk away from this."

I understand that is a privilege, not everybody is able to do that. But if you are able, don't take the \$3,000 less or whatever. You go and ask for what you want and don't

compromise unless you know that you're already asking a crazy amount of money. So you need to be, again, your own advocate, especially when going in for a job because they, at this point women I believe are 20% less likely to negotiate at all about any sort of pay when they go in for a job. They just take what's given to them, and we shouldn't be doing that. That's not acceptable. We need to be able to say, "I am this value. I would like this. If that's not good with you, goodbye. Thank you. Next association."

Amy Thomasson: I think it's important to note too that there is a gender pay gap and then there are additional pay gaps for different groups as well. I recently saw a presentation one of the senior leaders at the YMCA had developed and she talks about how they don't celebrate equal pay day, which is the day when women would catch up to men pay wise, which I believe occurs in the following March of every year. They celebrated after everybody, all different groups. So they celebrate it when... like African American women, Hispanic women. So they wait until later in the year when everyone has pay parity. So I think it's important to think about that too. That equal pay day, we may be saying equal pay day is in March of every year for women, but it's not for all women.

Lisa Campo: And a lot of information about that is included in the study that I'm linking to. If you go through that, it has so much information on the different races, different genders and how and why they're paid differently. It delves into a lot of interesting information.

Amy Thomasson: So I wanted to talk a little bit about... Stephanie, you had mentioned volunteer experience bridging those skill gaps, experiences, cross-functional leadership. I think you can get all those things by volunteering. For me, the single most important thing in my opinion that I've done in my career is to become a volunteer. It's enabled me to get a broader picture on, like for instance someday I would like to be an executive director in association. But my background is in marketing, membership and volunteer management. There are so many other areas of association management. To be an effective ED, I need to know about governance. To be an effective ED, I need to know about fundraising. To be an effective ED, I need to know about advocacy.

How can I get those experiences that I wouldn't get in my day-to-day job and also expose me to other connections that can be valuable in my work or just in building my network and building my own personal brand? So currently I volunteer, I am the co-chair of a committee for Association Forum. I'm in Chicagoland, so Association Forum is my local association. I'm a co-chair of a committee that oversees the strategic development of content for the forum. That's all their digital content as well as their print publication. But I'm also involved in other different areas of volunteering.

Like you don't have to make a huge commitment to get started volunteering. I think that's important to note. Like you can be on a committee or a task force, but you

can also do project-based volunteering. Things that are lower levels of commitment or ways to dip your toe in before you get in the whole pool. So, one of the ways I do that is through events like that. You're speaking, creating, you're writing content.

I started something about a year and a half ago that I was calling my year of yes, like Shonda Rhimes, if you're familiar with her Year of Yes book where I just started to say, "Okay, well, I'm done speaking on behalf of my own organization, but how do I get myself out there and build my speaking skills and create more content and quite frankly create more value for our community." Because when I think about your personal brand too, it's not just about telling people what you do, you need to provide true value for authors.

So I started getting out there just like saying yes to all sorts of different speaking engagements and opportunities to create content. So I've done the past year or so like a keynote, a podcast, virtual conferences, in-person events, just trying all sorts of different things and seeing what sticks. And our earlier discussion about imposter syndrome really resonated with me, especially in getting out there and speaking and writing. Like who am I to say I'm the authority on any of these things? So I started to try and get over that, one, by just putting myself in situations that make me uncomfortable.

Now, there's a caveat there. Not any situation where you're in danger or something like that, but something where you feel like you are stretched a little bit. And so anytime I've started to feel those nerves or that discomfort, I remind myself, this is my little mantra, that discomfort, this is what growth feels like. So how can you stretch yourself a little bit and put yourself out there a little bit more beyond your comfort zone where you can grow your skill set and also important in advancing yourself, your visibility as well.

Lauren Harley: A really good friend of mine wrote an article about removing self doubt. Her name is Amy K. Brown. She wrote an article for ASAE. And it speaks to the imposter syndrome feeling that many of us go through. So I definitely want to put that in the chat box as well.

Amy Thomasson: Excellent. I know we've touched on a lot of different personal experiences today as well as some tips, some pointers on what you can do to empower yourself, empower women within your organization and quite frankly your life as well. But we just want to end with a quick recap on what those three points are and I hope that this is the start of a discussion, not the antidote one. So let's keep this conversation going in the chat. Let us know if any of these points really resonate with you and what you're going to be doing. Tactical, tangible actions that you're going to be taking based on some of the things we've discussed or covered today.

So those three key points. The first one is to seek out mentors and/or models and create your personal advisory board or your kitchen cabinet. The next key takeaway or big idea is to make a commitment to fostering diversity, inclusion and belonging.

And that's at all levels of your organization. And finally, our last big idea is to build skills through experiences, cross-functional leadership and volunteering.
Thank you for joining us today.