

WOMEN'S
ADDED
VALUE in the
ECONOMY



Connecting & Advancing Women in Business

21st December 2015



The annual WAVE conference organized by the Career Women's Forum (CWF) is one of the key networking platforms for its members and key stakeholders in the community

f.l.t.r. Valentina Gizzi, President CWF and Patricia Legler, Vice-President CWF about the increasing importance of networking and the quest for quality as a strategic differentiator.

Founded in 1982 in Geneva, the CWF has grown to one of the highest profile women's networks in the Lake Geneva region. The non-profit forum has 250 members, all Senior Women Executives, representing 30 different nationalities, active in all sectors of the economy. The CWF's networking and development activities are supported by individual members and 15 corporate members, all national and multinational corporations headquartered in the Region.



Valentina, you are the CWF President since April 2015, what are the key drivers that make the forum such a strong network? The CWF was founded by successful women entrepreneurs and executives to create a networking and development platform. For more than 30 years we are active in the promotion and recognition of professional women in the aim to move towards a gender balanced society. As part of our 2015-2017 mandate, we focus on three key drivers: quality as a differentiator, measuring success, and building on the trust of both our individual and corporate members. The CWF provides an exclusive platform to meet and exchange with peers. Connecting with others is a powerful tactic to accelerate and sustain success for any individual or organization. To provide the best networking experience, we focus on quality to make our interactions sustainable and fruitful. We also join forces with external institutions and associations to create a multiplier effect in our common quest: a gender equal economy and society.

What does WAVE stand for and how does this annual event fit into the CWF portfolio of activities?

[Valentina] WAVE is the acronym for Women's Added Value in the Economy. The conference was created in 2009 by a former CWF President, Caroline Miller. The idea was to build on our corporate partnerships and open the CWF to both female and male executives. The WAVE is open to members, non-members and key stakeholders in the community. Every year, we reunite some 100-150 participants. This is in line with our mission to partner with the public and the private sectors, thus promoting what the event stands for: women's added value in the economy.

"The 2016 WAVE speakers are known for both their authentic or charismatic personality and their extensive business experience"

Patricia, you are the CWF Vice-President and the project leader of the next WAVE conference. Now in its 7th edition, what's on the agenda? For the 2016 edition we will focus on two things: A topic of cross-gender interest and a strategic partnership in line with CWF's vision: "connecting & advancing women in business". ...and the topic and partnership are?

[Patricia] The topic is one that is currently high on the agenda of executive leadership development programs and research, more specifically around "Authentic Leadership and its influence on diversity and inclusion". The CWF is acutely aware that we need both genders driving the diversity agenda. And we also firmly believe that in order to move the needle with regards to diversity and inclusion, today's leaders – both women and men - require a particular leadership skill. Authenticity can be one of them.

And the partnership? We have found a great partner with the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (GI), one of the Region's top educational institutes in international relations. The GI will host the WAVE on their state-of-the-art premises near the United Nations square in Geneva and we are very grateful about this opportunity. The GI, like the CWF, has women's advancement high on the agenda. As a professional network we are convinced that we can advance the connection and the development of our members by combining forces with key networks, associations and institutes. Our collaboration with the GI will have a multiplier effect in terms of visibility, networking and impact.

You have 4 key-note speakers on the agenda – why did you choose them?

[Patricia] The WAVE sub-committee focused on bringing together female and male speakers. All are known for both their authentic or charismatic personality and their extensive business experience in national and multinational environments. In addition, we were looking for an expert aligning on the definition and drivers of authenticity and leadership and found him in the person of Professor Antonakis, Professor of Organizational Behavior at University of Lausanne. The other speakers are Bertrand Levrat, CEO of University Hospitals Geneva, Valérie Peyre, Founder and CEO of TEKOE Tea Shop, Fabienne Lupo, President and Managing Director of the Fondation de la Haute Horlogerie.

Do you expect to come up with a full analysis of the Influence of authenticity on diversity after the conference? That sounds like an ambitious plan.

[Patricia] Here is what we expect from the WAVE conference. We expect to inspire and trigger thoughts through presentations and debates. We will facilitate a journal of success that each participant can complete at her/his own initiative. A professional moderator will manage a panel debate and direct interactions with the audience. This will make the WAVE both lively and introspective. All participants will receive a summary and a visual support, featuring the key-points, after the event.

The objective of the WAVE conference is to facilitate interaction between our members, offering a prime platform for networking, exchange and hands-on reciprocity.

If you had to summarize it in short 3 sentences what is the main “raison d’être” of the WAVE?

[Valentina] A) – it’s connecting members through a great Networking platform. B) it’s advancing Women through Inspiration and C) it’s exposure and recognition for our private members and our 15 corporate members.

The CWF harnesses a combination of private and corporate memberships, an exclusive environment for cross-fertilization, networking and advancement.

What do you mean by “reciprocity”?

[Valentina] Reciprocity is the balance between giving and taking. It’s about seeking growth for all parties – not solely pursuing individual benefits. Reciprocity is a mindset and a key virtue when networking. It’s the genuine desire to support others and it’s the most sustainable attitude that will grant the quality of the network.

Who are the CWF members and what do you look for in a member?

[Valentina] Our members bring extensive professional experience to the forum. When the committee evaluates new applications, we also look for the “right mindset” and with this we mean: high energy, positive attitude and an engaged and engaging personality. Our members’ high qualifications are a logical consequence of such behavioral traits. Advancing women in business cannot be achieved through consumerism. It requires hands-on attitude, pragmatic actions and willingness to engage and commit personally.

To understand the structure of the CWF – can you tell us how the CWF is organized?

[Valentina] The CWF is currently governed by a committee of volunteers. The current team is composed of seven women, three are longstanding individual members and four are delegates from our Corporate members. Each of them brings as set of invaluable experience and skills to the team: Patricia Legler, our VP, is from Geneva. Previously working as legal counsel, she is the Director of the Zdenek and Michaela Bakala Foundation, active in education.

Silvia Schaub, in charge of communications for the CWF, is Swiss German. She is Manager Internal Communications at Alcoa Europe. Annabella, our treasurer, is Italian. She is CFO at IBM Switzerland. Silvia Stanciu, of Romanian origin, is EMEA Sales Lead at Lexmark, and together with Annabella, they manage the CWF Corporate Member partnerships. Anne Dafflon Novelle, also from the Geneva Region, has a doctorate in Psychology and is specialized in gender equality. Anne is in charge of our luncheon events, also focusing on continuous improvement. Kathyne Bonvin-Bercl is Canadian and Swiss. She’s an HR senior professional and currently works at Von Rohr & Associates in Geneva, a company specialized in career and life-cycle management. Kathyne is in charge of our workshops and development activities. As for me, I am Italian. I am a Diversity and Inclusion Champion at DuPont since 2010 and I am a Global Product Manager for DuPont’s Nutrition and Health unit.

The General Assembly voted us in for a two-year term. The role of a committee member is fully voluntary. The current committee is very lucky to inherit a fantastic legacy from the previous team. This allows us to build on the strengths of our forum. We are a very diverse steering body in terms of backgrounds, culture and skill-sets. We’re the proof that diversity is a great driver and fertilizer.

Back to the WAVE – where do I find the agenda and where can I register?

[Patricia] The conference will take place on 4th February 2016 in the auditorium of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. The agenda and registration can be found in our event agenda on our website: www.cwf.ch.