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HIA-LI'S Women Leading The Way Breakfast Inspires Successful Females

[MICHELLE GABRIELLE CENTAMORE](#)

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L. to R.: Carolyn Mazzenga, Office Managing Partner, Marcum LLP; Kristen Jarnagin, President and CEO, Discover Long Island; Rebecca O'Connell, Managing Director and Regional Head, Chase Bank; Joanna Austin, Publisher, Long Island Press.

Long Island professionals gathered on Nov. 22 at the Stonebridge Country Club in Smithtown for the Hauppauge Industrial Association of Long Island's (HIA-LI) 9th annual Women Leading the Way Executive Breakfast.

Some of the most distinguished female executives on LI served as featured panelists. They included Discover Long Island CEO Kristen Jarnagin, Carolyn Mazzenga, managing partner of the Melville office of Marcum LLP and tax partner and leader of Family Wealth Services Group at Marcum LLP, Rebecca O'Connell, managing director and region-head of Chase Bank, and *Long Island Press* Publisher Joanna Austin. The event was moderated by Domenique Camacho-Moran, partner, Farrel Fritz, P.C.

The panelists explored common issues experienced by local female professionals and empowered attendees to approach their careers with knowledge, strength, courage, and faith and to never give up on a dream, whether personal or professional.

Here are some key takeaways:

FIND YOUR INSPIRATION

Inspiration is a key motivator for personal and professional success, according to Austin. “You have to find inspiration from every aspect of your life whether it is from your family that influences your work or your work that influences your family,” she said.

For Austin, “the everyday hero” who gets the job done, is happy, and is still standing at the end of the day is certainly applaudable.

DEFINE YOUR SUCCESS

For most of the panelists, the definition of “success” was initially tied solely to financial security but evolved to include more substantial values.

While in college, O’Connell said, “I had my eye on the money.” Her vision changed once she embarked on her career. She came to define success not only by earnings but also by abilities, thriving on her own courage, commitment, humility, and ability to connect with others.

“The minute that I recognized that and started leading in that capacity was the minute I started making a difference in the organization, as well as for myself and for the individuals around me,” she said.

PROMOTE AND PERSEVERE

“Hope is not a strategy,” said Mazzenga.

She recalled a childhood memory in which she asked her mother why there were no female paper carriers; her mother could not answer. From that point on, Mazzenga was determined to not let anything stand in the way of her success.

“If you can’t tell me why I can’t do it, then I’m going to do it,” she said. “That drove me all through my career.”

Success takes wholeheartedness and ambition, asserts Jarnagin.

“You have to have the passion for what you love and what you do,” she added.

OWN YOUR SKILLS

O’Connell offered some key advice she received from her mentor while at a crossroads in her career. She said these words helped her reach a greater level of success.

“Don’t sit back and wait,” she said. “Find outside opportunities and be proactive.”

Jarnagin said the proof is in the pudding.

“If you want to be a manager, act like it,” said Jarnagin. “Take on management roles and show that you can do it.”

Austin added, "You have to have the courage to push boundaries."

Respect yourself and respect your team.

"Listen," Austin advised.

DON'T FEEL GUILTY

Leaders can have hearts, but they also need to have thick skin and the ability to make difficult choices, said Mazzenga.

Regarding terminating an employee, she said, "There are times when you just need to part ways."

It's possible to do with no hard feelings.

FIND A BALANCE

"If you want to have it all, you need to manage your sacrifices," said Jarnagin.

While work and family are both a priority, she notes that sometimes, something's gotta give. Finding the balance to keep everyone including yourself happy is critical, she noted.

There's no hard-fast formula to achieving work/life balance, said Austin. It's personal. "It's a constant work-in-progress," she said.