

## **Session: “Peer Panel and Summit Wrap-Up”**

In this inspiring session, WESMS attendees got the inside stories from six top-tier women executives in supply management. These highly successful women shared their career challenges and successes, revealed the secrets of their success, discussed their unique experiences moving up the procurement ladder and talked about the challenges they faced along the way.

### **Moderator:**

- *Pamela Prince-Eason, vice president, Worldwide Procurement, Pfizer Inc*

### **Panelists:**

- *Cathy Rodgers, vice president, Global Opportunities and Strategic Relations, IBM Global Services*
- *Jill Bossi, vice president and CPO, American Red Cross*
- *Stacy Taylor, vice president, Indirect and Capital Procurement, ConAgra Foods*
- *Ginny Tucker, Vice President, Procurement Solutions, Xerox Corporation*
- *Trish Mosconi, partner, McKinsey & Co.*

### **Cathy Rodgers**

To hear Cathy Rodgers explain it, her career progression in supply chain began with a simple choice: “Go away,” or lead the procurement organization at IBM.

“Before that, I was the worst offender of bypassing procurement activities!” Rodgers joked. “Now, I’m grateful for the ‘reframing’ opportunity. I took it and decided to create the best procurement organization in the world.”

From this trial-by-fire vantage point, Rodgers was able to pinpoint 10 lessons for surviving — and thriving — in supply management:

1. **Keep a positive attitude.** “No one likes to be around a grump,” she warned.
2. **Surround yourself with the brightest people you know.**
3. **Show up every day “ready to play”** — and play hard.
4. **Play by the rules.** “If you get a bad call, don’t be bitter,” she advised. “Be *better*, because people are watching.”
5. **Practice the four Rs:** Be *responsible*, be *resilient*, build *relationships* and show *respect*.
6. **Bring others along.**
7. **Remember: It’s never too late.**

8. **It's not just about who you know;** it's who knows you.
9. **Be careful what you wish for.**
10. **Have fun.** "Life is too short to be miserable," Rodgers urged.

She also shared her best advice for attracting top talent: "You're got to train them, build them up and let them go."

### **Jill Bossi**

Jill Bossi — who, at the time of the WESMS, had recently joined American Red Cross — admitted she still couldn't fathom how much she had to learn. "But," she added, "my happiness factor now is through the roof!"

Bossi credits faith as the biggest component in her career shift to the nonprofit sector. Prior to leaving her previous employer (a major financial institution), she said the culture was such that no one was going to live or die based on what she did every day. "But now, [my job] does kind of mean that, in a way," she told attendees. "And that affects the entire team dynamic."

Though she left the corporate world, Bossi said she learned plenty of good strategies she's now carrying into the world at large. Chief among them: "Play by the rules, and you can always look yourself in the mirror."

### **Ginny Tucker**

Ginny Tucker has been intrigued by Xerox and its values since the beginning of her career, which she began, surprisingly, as a technician. "There weren't a lot of female technicians on staff at the time I was hired," she recalled.

It seems even fewer had the level of responsibility Tucker assumed: Part of her job was to ensure delivery of Xerox products for the Winter Olympics in Atlanta in 1996. "It was 18 months of preparation for a 10-day event," she recalled.

Over time, Tucker was promoted to first-line manager, to a position in finance, and then to IT. Although she liked her job, when Xerox offered her a promotion to procurement, she couldn't refuse. Since then, Tucker has thrived professionally, thanks to a handful of guiding principles:

- **Understand yourself.** “For example, I get bored really easily,” she laughed.
- **Figure out what you’re good at, and build on it.** “With the right track record and experience, you have 70 percent of the moving-up power,” she told attendees. “The other 30 percent is sort of a ‘gimme’ you can learn later.”
- **Be prudent in your risk-taking.** “I have a lot of confidence I can do stuff,” Tucker confided.
- **Be part of a community.** “Becoming part of a community is how we learn,” she explained. “We’re social beings.” In fact, Tucker started a LinkedIn group for women in procurement.

## Stacy Taylor

Originally, Stacy Taylor had her sights set on investment banking. So, she landed a job as an assistant buyer with a very small company that offered tuition reimbursement and stayed on staff there for two years. “My number-one question was who was going to pay for my school,” she recalled.

Soon after earning her bachelor’s degree, Taylor moved to Massachusetts. There, she held three different jobs in one year before settling on a small automotive company, where she remained for six years. During that time, she had her first child, so the company was an ideal fit; it not only offered telecommuting, but also paid for Taylor’s master’s degree.

Eventually, she left the company to accept a position in healthcare procurement. Soon after, Shelley Stewart, Jr. — ISM’s current Board chair and Tyco International senior vice president and CPO — took over the supply management function at her new company. “I pretty much asked him for a promotion or new duties every six months,” Taylor laughed. “When I left, I know he was proud of me.”

Based on her positive experience working for Stewart, Taylor said she now devotes a lot of time at ConAgra to determining what her procurement employees want and need. “For some, negotiating and making deals is their strong suit,” she told attendees. “Others prefer things like category sourcing.” Either way, Taylor said, she is proud of the talent she turns out, even when they choose to leave the company.

A big part of her leadership formula is one-on-one meetings — a practice she was encouraged to give up at one point. “My direct reports went from four to 14!” she recalled. “But, I wouldn’t give up on the meetings. I worked late and did what I had to do to ensure those continued.”

## **Trish Mosconi**

As Trish Mosconi found out after graduating from business school, she is happiest doing something new every six months. “Consulting fit that bill,” she recalled.

Then, Mosconi attended graduate school. Upon graduation, she joined A.T. Kearney. “I liked operations — the tangible element of ‘fixing stuff,’” she told attendees. “I also liked focusing on optimizing external spend.”

Mosconi spent five years at A.T. Kearney before moving to McKinsey & Co., where she is now a partner.

## **Q & A**

Following their session, Prince-Eason, Rodgers, Bossi, Taylor, Tucker and Mosconi answered a handful of attendees’ questions pertaining to career management.

**Q: As hiring organizations, how can we adapt to the generation of under-30 job-hoppers?**

**Taylor:** I use lists when interviewing people. I gauge their behavioral style of living. I look for the right fit and experience regardless of the number of jobs they’ve held. Yes, “fresh-outs” are prevalent; still, we need to focus on the experiences they’ve had; lots of jobs might equal lots of experience. And, to keep them around, I encourage them to move across the company’s supply chain versus leaving for another organization.

**Tucker:** You know what they say about people who live in glass houses ... [laughs] I guess I’d just tell you to manage your assumptions and not to let an unconventional record and/or generational differences keep you from recognizing a qualified and gifted candidate.

**Mosconi:** I’ll always applaud initiative and risk-taking. If the fundamentals seem to be there, then OK. What *isn’t* OK is if they seem to have a sense of entitlement.

**Rodgers:** I look for graduate degrees these days. The experience might not be there all the time, but an MBA indicates commitment and staying power.

**Q: For women with backgrounds outside of supply management, how would you recommend they learn the ropes?**

**Eason:** ISM gave me what I didn’t get from my bachelor’s or master’s degrees. First, get certified through the organization, Then, you can network through it.

**Taylor:** I recommend traveling with the procurement team. Say, 'Tell me what you do every day.' Visit suppliers. You can learn a lot from your team.

**Q: It's a challenge for us, as process-oriented supply management professionals, to understand the sales and marketing mind-sets. Any advice?**

**Eason:** We're always buying, selling or negotiating — but it's always about the value-add. We must understand all our customer segments. We do that by identifying *their* value-adds and tying our processes to those.

**Q: What's the difference between "bringing along" an employee and pushing/pulling him or her? When (and how) do you let go?**

**Rodgers:** In the sink-or-swim supply management culture, the employees who need more structure don't usually last. Equilibrium works for the remaining ones; they push *me* to push *them*. The willingness and ability to learn quickly is critical. You don't need to be a great engineer to be a great leader of technical teams. Sometimes, the people with the least experience ask the best, most insightful questions.

— Reporting by RaeAnn Slaybaugh