

Fourth Annual Women's Leadership Exchange Atlanta Conference
Tuesday, September 19, 2006
7:30 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Cobb Galleria, Atlanta, GA

For Immediate Release

For more information on the WLE conference
or an interview with Leslie Grossman or Andrea March,
please contact Dottie DeHart,
Rocks-DeHart Public Relations,
at (828) 459-9637 or DSDeHart@aol.com

**Women's Leadership Exchange (WLE) Conference: Finally, a Reason
for Women Business Owners to Get Out of the
Office...and Grow Their Businesses**

*Men don't mind leaving the office and hitting the golf course,
but women feel guilty if they take a "day off" to build relationships.
The WLE September conference is the perfect opportunity to change that mindset.*

Atlanta, GA (August 2006)—A question for Atlanta's top businesswomen: When was the last time you got out of the office, learned valuable new growth strategies, and connected with like-minded professionals in your area? If your answer is a rueful "I can't even remember," Leslie Grossman and Andrea March say you're not alone. The cofounders of Women's Leadership Exchange (WLE) say female business owners, CEOs, and presidents are far more reluctant to seek professional support and camaraderie than their male counterparts.

"Men have no problem doing business over rounds of golf and drinks at the club," says Grossman. "Women take more of a nose-to-the-grindstone, I-must-plow-through-this-task-list approach. Women think work means tethering ourselves to our desks and solving problems alone rather than collaborating with and bouncing ideas off peers. We are taskmasters and it's not always good for us or for our companies. This is definitely one area where we should take a cue from men."

Grossman and March believe the WLE conference—returning to Atlanta by popular demand for the fourth year in a row—will inspire area women business leaders to

change this “lone wolf” mindset. The event, scheduled for September 19, 2006, at the Cobb Galleria, is projected to attract successful women CEOs, presidents, and business owners. It’s billed as a unique opportunity for women to connect with other entrepreneurs and top executives and focus on making their already successful businesses even more successful. (See www.womensleadershipexchange.com for details.)

“This WLE event teems with innovative ideas, partnership possibilities, and inspiring stories,” says Susan Sobott, president of OPEN from American Express, the WLE conference’s founding sponsor. “For growth-oriented leaders, WLE Atlanta is a can’t-miss opportunity.”

Sara Blakely, founder and creator of the Atlanta-based Spanx Footless Pantyhose, will offer the keynote address. Attendees will learn how she turned \$5,000 in savings into a \$45 million company that revolutionized the pantyhose industry. Gloria Allred, leading women’s rights attorney, author of *Fight Back & Win* and partner in her own successful law firm, is the closing speaker. **(NOTE TO EDITOR: Complete bios are attached.)**

WLE’s acclaimed Compass Award ceremony will feature three outstanding entrepreneurs: Sheila Johnson, cofounder of Black Entertainment Television, owner of the WNBA’s Washington Mystics, and the first African American female billionaire; Maxine Clark, CEO of the innovative \$300 million company Build-A-Bear Workshop; and L. Marilyn Crawford, president and CEO of Primetime OmniMedia, Ltd. and marketing advisor to Fortune 500 countries, celebrities and world leaders. **(NOTE TO EDITOR: Complete bios are attached.)**

New to Atlanta this year is WLE’s Speed Coaching Program. The “Growth Gurus,” top business consultants and authors from the U.S., who also lead a series of educational seminars, will be available for intensive, five-minute consultations with attendees. “These women are leading business experts whose coaching services typically cost \$500 per hour, so it’s an incredible opportunity,” notes Grossman.

An overview of this year’s Growth Guru seminar program:

- **Smart Marketing: The Top Tactics to Grow Your Business and How to Integrate Them into a Great Marketing Program**

Kim Gordon, leading small business expert, national magazine columnist and author of *Maximum Marketing, Minimum Dollars: The Top 50 Ways to Grow Your Small Business*

- **Sales Strategies for Success: Turn Contacts into Clients and Networking into New**

Business

Colleen Stanley, president of Sales Leadership, Inc., and author of *Growing Great Sales Teams: Lessons from the Cornfield*

- **Growing to the Next Stage**

Janelle Brittain, president of Dynamic Performance Institute and author of *Star Team Dynamics*

- **Your Business Model: Key to Success or Recipe for Failure**

Beth Polish, president of The Critical Junctures Group, founding CFO of Ivillage, Inc., former president of Anthony Robbins' Dreamlife, and former CFO of Goldman Sachs Ventures

- **What Kind of Leader Are You? Move Your Business Forward Using Your Unique Leadership Style**

Robin Johnson, PhD, Harvard University associate professor, Cal State Polytechnic University faculty member, UCLA Anderson School of Management, and author of *Dance of Leadership*

- **Panel Discussion: Onward and Upward: Alternative Growth Strategies for Your Business**

Lori Loftstrom, partner, Holmes and Loftstrom, LLP

Marilyn Montross, director, vendor relations, QVC

Anne Robinson, group counsel, OPEN from American Express

Of course, if you are like most successful businesswomen, you want benefits, not features. You want to be reassured you're going to get a good return on the investment of a day of your valuable time. Grossman and March offer four powerful reasons for women to break away from their desks and attend the WLE conference:

REASON #1: You'll learn powerful growth strategies. The WLE Atlanta conference is designed specifically for growth-minded businesswomen—whether that means increasing your annual sales from, say, \$1 million to \$5 million or starting a second or even a third company. “This is a serious event for serious professionals,” asserts Grossman. “It's intensive; it's practical; it's information-packed—everything is presented in a ‘how to’ format and backed up with inspiring real-life case studies.”

REASON #2: You'll form beneficial relationships with other powerful women.

“When creative, intelligent women get together, amazing things can happen,” says March. “This conference is a great chance to connect with successful CEOs and presidents from the Atlanta area. We provide facilitated opportunities for networking, collaboration, and forging profitable partnerships and alliances. We don't just throw you in a room; we help you find the *right* people to meet for your business.”

REASON #3: You'll learn how other multi-million-dollar business owners have solved their most perplexing problems. "Women tend to learn from personal stories and case studies," says Grossman. "And whether those stories are shared by speakers, seminar leaders, or other attendees, they're invaluable in helping us understand how our peers have faced daunting challenges and thrived."

REASON #4: You'll gain inspiration, a renewed sense of purpose, and maybe even a creative breakthrough that will propel you to unprecedented success. We all get "stuck" from time to time—and the WLE conference is designed to get you *unstuck*, says March. "*Perspective* can be one of the best reasons to attend an event like this," she notes. "You get a whole different view of the world from here than you ever will from sitting in front of your computer or gazing out your office window."

"Here's the bottom line," says March. "Come to the Cobb Galleria on September 19 with an open mind and you'll walk away with ten new ideas for growing your business. It's a big promise but it's one we can make with a clear conscience. It's hard to describe the creative energy that's generated at our conferences. Many past attendees have told us it's unlike any other event they've ever experienced—and you owe it to yourself and your business to find out firsthand."

To register for the WLE Atlanta conference, visit www.womensleadershipexchange.com or call (888) 937-5800.

###

WLE Atlanta conference sponsors include founding partner OPEN from American Express, visionary partner IBM, IKEA, Monster, Jones New York, Avaya, and BellSouth.

Leslie Grossman is a serial entrepreneur. Since the age of 23, she has launched or run five different companies—all in the areas of marketing, public relations, and edutainment—and all geared toward reaching women. She is the author of *SELLsation! How Companies Can Capture Today's Hottest Market: Women Business Owners and Executives* (WPE Press, March 2006). As cofounder of Women's Leadership Exchange (www.womensleadershipexchange.com), now in its fourth year, Leslie develops the marketing/edutainment platform for the national multimedia program, which supports successful women entrepreneurs in growing their businesses. WLE conferences, held in major cities around the country, and business spa retreats have been attended by more than 12,000 businesswomen. As president of B2Women, Leslie develops win-win marketing programs for companies that want to capture the affluent market of women in business.

Andrea March has successfully reinvented herself several times as a woman business owner and leader. After selling real estate for some years, she and her husband Sy launched a jewelry import and distribution company, Andrea March Accessories. Andrea and Sy ran this multi-million dollar business together for 20 years. Next came Investment Expo, a company Andrea founded and ran for five years. Under her guidance Investment Expo became the largest financial strategies trade show/seminar program in the Northeast and South Florida, attracting up to 14,000 attendees annually. In 2001, Andrea met Leslie Grossman, who had attended one of her two-day events. The two experienced women business owners shared a powerful commitment to women entrepreneurs like themselves. That commitment became Women's Leadership Exchange. Andrea and Leslie won the Enterprising Women Advocacy Award in 2005.

Learn More about the WLE Atlanta Conference's Keynote Speakers and Compass Award Honorees!

Keynote Speakers

Gloria Allred is an attorney and a partner in the law firm of Allred, Maroko & Goldberg. She has been practicing law for over 27 years. Her firm handles cases involving employment discrimination, including sex, race and physical handicap discrimination, sexual harassment, wrongful termination; family law, including divorce and custody disputes; and civil rights and civil litigation. She has won countless honors for her pioneering legal work on behalf of women's rights and rights for minorities who are discriminated against on account of their gender, race, age, sexual orientation, or physical condition. An active feminist, Allred founded and is currently serving as president of the Women's Equal Rights Legal Defense and Education Fund (WERLDEF). She was a talk show host on KABC TalkRadio in Los Angeles for 14 years and is a columnist for the legal newspaper *The Daily Journal*. Recently she was selected by *USA Today* as one of the 25 most important radio talk show hosts in America. She has also been nominated for an "Emmy" three times for her television commentaries on KABC-TV. Articles by or about Allred have appeared in publications such as *Time Magazine*, *The New York Times*, *Ms. Magazine*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and more. In addition to being an attorney, she taught in public schools for six and a half years, and was also a lecturer at the University of Southern California for several years.

Sara Blakely, Spanx founder & owner, wanted footless bodyshaping pantyhose to wear with her cream-colored pants and open-toed shoes but couldn't find them anywhere. Frustrated consumer turned entrepreneur, she took \$5,000 in savings and began her adventure in the \$2 billion male-dominated hosiery industry. Two years later, with the first pair of footless pantyhose in hand, Blakely cold-called and landed all of the top retail stores across the country. Selling over 50,000 pair in its first three months from the back of her apartment, Spanx revitalized an industry in a ten-year slump. Since then, the company has developed and launched a full line of new products, all designed to be innovative, comfortable, slimming and stylish. Blakely and her brainchild have been featured on The Oprah Winfrey Show and CNN as well as in the pages of *Glamour*, *Vogue*, *People*, *InStyle*, *The New York Times*, *Vanity Fair*, *WWD* and *USA Today*. Spanx products are available at Nordstrom, Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, Bloomingdales, and other upscale retailers and boutiques nationwide.

Compass Award Honorees

Sheila C. Johnson co-founded Black Entertainment Television and is the current CEO of Salamander Hospitality, LLC, and a partner in Lincoln Holdings, LLC. She has enjoyed success in many arenas. Currently, she is developing Market Salamander, a working chefs market, in Middleburg, Virginia. The company is one of the first components in the portfolio of Salamander Hospitality. Lincoln Holdings owns the Washington Capitals and Washington Mystics and has a minority interest in Washington Sports and Entertainment

Limited Partnership, which controls the Washington Wizards, Washington/Baltimore TicketMaster, in-house promoter Musicentre Productions, and the management of the MCI Center and the George Mason University Patriot Center. Johnson is president, managing partner and governor for the Washington Mystics WNBA team. She also developed an award-winning weekly program, Teen Summit, for BET. The show gave teenagers a chance to talk frankly about their critical issues. In addition to her business ventures, she is involved extensively in philanthropy. Her primary concerns are to make opportunities available for children and young adults to express their creativity through the arts, and to ensure that the world is a safe place for children.

Maxine Clark has been “chief executive bear” of Build-A-Bear Workshop, Inc., since the company’s inception in 1997 and has served as chairman of the board of directors since conversion to a corporation in April 2000. From November 1992 until January 1996, she was the President of Payless ShoeSource, Inc. Clark is one of the true innovators in the retail industry. Another of her additions to entertainment retail is friends 2B Made, which launched in 2004. It’s based on the simple premise that kids, especially girls, love dolls. Clark and her companies have won many awards throughout the years, including her 2006 induction into the Junior Achievement National Business Hall of Fame. In 2005 the National Association of Small Business Investment Companies (NASBIC) made Build-A-Bear Workshop Portfolio Company of the Year. In May 2006 Clark’s first book, *The Bear Necessities of Business: Building a Company with Heart*, was published by Wiley.

L. Marilyn Crawford, president and CEO of Primetime Omnimedia, Ltd., advises businesses, celebrities and countries on strategy, marketing and media. Her forte is to expand brand, drive consumers/viewership and generate revenue through the integration of mass communications and cost savings. PTO clients include Liberty Artist, FedEx, Volvo, Jaguar, National Association of Black Female Executives in Music and Entertainment (NABFEME), Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers Association (PHRMA), Lee Daniels Productions (Oscar winner for *Monsters Ball*), and Turks and Caicos Islands. Crawford also co-chairs some of NY’s premiere charity events—The Angel Ball with Denise Rich, Dress for Success “April in Paris,” and the Larry King Cardiac Foundation Annual Events—and is involved extensively with the entertainment world, assisting with creative marketing for events for Usher, Magic Johnson, Patti LaBelle, and more.