

West Coast Summit on August 12 to Feature Practical Discussion on Diversity
Results of Three-Year Research Project to Serve as Guide

LONG BEACH, Calif. (July xx, 2008) - When the Women's Leadership Exchange (WLE) West Coast Summit returns to the Long Beach Convention Center on August 12, the afternoon will feature a new session - a panel discussion and town hall meeting addressing how to breakdown the barriers, boundaries and biases women continue to face as business owners and business leaders.

During this afternoon general session, WLE and the Center for Women's Business Research, the foremost source of knowledge on women business owners and their enterprises, will explore the results of the Center's three-year research project: *Accelerating the Growth of Businesses Owned by Women of Color*. Through an interactive discussion with the audience, the research will be transformed into a roadmap for women in business – whether of color or not – to create opportunity by embracing diversity as a universal practice.

“Our findings show that women of color are starting businesses at rates three to five times faster than all other businesses; however, once in business, their growth lags behind all other firms,” said Dr. Sharon Hadary, executive director for the Washington DC-based Center for Women's Business Research and a participant in the Summit. “The reality is that businesses owned by women of color are a substantial economic force, so it's vital that as a country and business community, we learn how to support the growth of this dynamic sector of business owners.”

Other session panelists include: Maria de Lourdes Sobrino, founder, Lulu's Desserts; Sheila Brookes, founder, president & CEO, SRB Productions Incorporated; and Nien-Ling Wacker, founder, chair & CEO, Laserfiche. Each will bring her perspective as business leaders who also are women of color.

“This is our sixth year coming to Long Beach, and we've adjusted the program to address the specific needs of Southern California business owners,” said Leslie Grossman, cofounder of the WLE. “Past participants told us that diversity continues to be an important topic, but the conversation has been quiet recently. We're going to get the discussion going again, and our goal is to walk away with practical ideas and solutions.”

The session is part of a full-day event (7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.) that features six seminars, SpeedCoaching, facilitated networking, breakfast, luncheon, evening cocktail reception and raffle. The seminars will cover topics such as building sales momentum, tactics to triumph in tough times, and green growth strategies. The pre-registration cost is \$199 through Aug. 5. The cost is \$249 beginning Aug. 6. Tables of 10 are available for \$2,500. Participants can register by calling (800) 937-5800 or visiting www.womensleadershipexchange.com.

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