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NEWiRE president's message: Choosing to succeed

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Choices. We all face them every day: what to wear in the morning, where to eat lunch, etc. Most are fairly mundane, but other choices can be more impactful. For example, what if we put more thought into the choices we make that affect our career? Can we, in fact, choose to succeed?

I pose the question because I recently attended the Commercial Real Estate Women (CREW) Network Convention in Chicago, October 24th-27th, where the theme of this year's event was "choice." I found it to be both thought-provoking and inspiring as it relates to one's career. But first let me begin with a brief re-cap of events to put things in context:

Prior to the official opening of the convention, I attended a delegate meeting. There we met to discuss various issues, as well as vote on the slate for the 2013 president elect and board members. I am pleased to relay that two of our own NEWiRE members, Judy Nitsch of Nitsch Engineering and Janet Pirrello of BayNorth Capital LLC, were voted president-elect and board member, respectively. Each CREW convention includes an Insider's Tour of particular areas or projects the host city wants to showcase. In this case, it was Millennium Park, an award-winning center for art, music architecture and landscape design which was once nothing more than railroad tracks. From a real estate perspective, the park has become an anchor, a catalyst to new multi-family developments and a revitalization of the area.

Sheena Iyengar, a professor at Columbia Business School and author of "The Art of Choosing" who also happens to be blind, spoke about leadership and choice. According to her, successful leaders possess the ability to see choice where others do not—and use those choices to empower themselves and their teams. Even when we hit our limits, we have a choice.

Best-selling author, business expert and management educator, Jim Collins, spoke about his most recent book, "Great by Choice: Uncertainty, Chaos, and Luck - Why Some Thrive Despite them All." He points to luck simply being an event. We all have a choice as to how we deal with luck, good or bad.

Other activities included the marketplace networking and welcome reception where members can meet and re-connect. The IMPACT Awards, which is a night dedicated to celebrating talented women in real estate. Concurrent sessions that covered capital markets, calculating a green building ROI, retail trends, urban redevelopment, to name a few. Learning excursions that included the Chicago Architectural Cruise.

Clearly, the overall theme of "choice" was intriguing. Which leads back to my initial question: can we choose to succeed? I would argue, yes, we can.

For instance, it wasn't an accident that Nitsch and Pirrello came into CREW positions. They chose to throw their hat in the ring and let people know that they wanted a place at the table. And I, personally, made the choice to go to this year's conference and I'm glad I did. As with anything, knowledge gives us the power to make informed choices. Some of the best minds in the industry

presented sessions during the convention. I chose to capitalize on this opportunity by not only attending sessions, but by reaching out and expanding my network.

Ultimately, what I took away from this year's CREW Convention is that not all choices in life are "right" or "wrong." It's more about being aware of the all of the options available to you, especially in our careers. In other words, you can succeed if you choose to.

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