

WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 1 - 2, 2026 • MARRIOTT AT LEGACY TOWN CENTER

Plano, TX

SCHEDULE

All sessions are held in Trinity River Ballroom 3 unless otherwise noted.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Conference Facilitators: Maura Gast, Executive Director, Visit Irving, and Amy Brown, Senior Vice President, Sales and Services, Visit Fort Worth

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. **OPENING GENERAL SESSION**

The Secret Sauce for Leadership Communication: 3 Key Ingredients That Help Every Leader Engage, Connect and Inspire

Lori Robertson, Keynote Speaker and Speech Coach

Every woman in this room carries hard-won wisdom, insight, and stories the people around her need to hear. So why is it so easy to hold back? In this keynote, Lori Robertson unpacks the “secret sauce” that makes some leaders impossible to ignore, regardless of title, tenure, or topic. Drawing on her years leading the world’s largest women’s live event, she shows that compelling communication isn’t a gift reserved for a lucky few. It’s a set of ingredients available to every leader in any circumstance. Designed specifically for women leaders and built around our distinct strengths, opportunities, and challenges, this keynote leaves you understanding not just what to say, but how to think about it and how to show up so your voice becomes your greatest tool of influence and impact.

Key takeaways:

- Why your voice matters more than you think, and the real cost of holding back
- The game-changing “ingredients” that make any communicator more engaging and memorable
- How to lead with authenticity and leverage the power of story so you connect, not just inform
- Practical ways to cultivate confidence through clarity, practice, and community
- The shift from worrying about what to say to focusing on who you are and how you show up

12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. **Networking Lunch**

Trinity River Ballroom 4

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Communicate with Confidence: A Workshop for High-Stakes Moments

Facilitated by Lori Robertson

Some conversations carry more weight than others. Asking for what you've earned. Sharing a bit of tough feedback. Navigating a moment of conflict, a negotiation, or a room full of people you've never met. These are the moments where many of us hesitate, soften too much, or let emotion take the wheel. And unfortunately, the cost of getting it wrong can feel especially high for women. Building directly on the Secret Sauce keynote, this hands-on workshop takes the principles of clear, confident communication and puts them to work in your highest-stakes moments. Lori shares simple, repeatable frameworks for navigating hard conversations along with the opportunity to practice them in a supportive room of peers. Designed specifically for women leaders and the realities we navigate, this session sends you out with the language, tools, and confidence to handle the conversations you've been avoiding.

Key takeaways:

- Frameworks you can carry into your toughest moments: tough feedback, negotiation, and conflict
- How to be clear and kind at the same time, especially when emotions run high
- A practical approach to staying grounded and intentional when the stakes feel personal
- Live practice with real scenarios, so you leave having done it and not just heard about it
- The mindset shift that turns high-stakes moments from things you dread into chances to lead

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Break

3:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.

Gaining Clarity and Confidence by Understanding Your Values

A brief exercise featuring Kathleen Davis, President & CEO, Destinations Texas

3:45 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.

Standing in Your Values: Leading with Authenticity, Awareness, and Heart PANEL

Moderated by Meg Winchester, Vice President, Fired Up!

Panelists: Maura Gast, Executive Director, Visit Irving; Kimberly Hill, COO, CFO By Design; and Kathleen Davis, President & CEO, Destinations Texas

Your values don't truly define you until they're tested.

In this candid and inspiring panel conversation, accomplished women leaders come together to explore what it means to lead, and live, with intention. More than a discussion about corporate culture or policy, this session gets personal. Panelists will pull back the curtain on the moments that challenged them most, sharing real stories of when their core values were put to the ultimate test and what they discovered about themselves on the other side.

Through the lens of self-awareness and emotional intelligence, this conversation invites you to reflect on your own values, examine how they show up in your daily work, and consider how they shape the leader, and the person, you are becoming.

In this session, panelists will explore:

- How to identify and articulate your core values, and why most people haven't truly

done this work

- The role of self-awareness in recognizing when your values are aligned, compromised, or quietly being eroded
- Emotional intelligence as a leadership superpower: reading the room, managing reactions, and responding with integrity under pressure
- Raw, real stories from the panel: the moments their values were challenged, the choices they made, and the lessons that followed
- How to create and protect a values-driven workplace culture, even when it's uncomfortable

Come prepared for honest conversation, genuine connection, and a few moments that might just change the way you see yourself as a leader.

4:45 p.m.

Wrap-Up Remarks

5:00 p.m.

Cocktail Reception

Trinity River Ballroom 4

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

8:00 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

Breakfast

Trinity River Ballroom 4

8:45 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.

Day One Recap and Welcome to Day Two

9:15 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

GENERAL SESSION

All Hands on Deck: A Hospitality Playbook for Business Growth

Renee McKenney, President, Tulsa Regional Tourism

The most successful businesses operate like the best hospitality brands. From working below deck on a cruise ship, to learning culture-driven leadership at Southwest Airlines under Herb Kelleher and Colleen Barrett, to mastering experience design at Disney Parks & Resorts, to leading destination strategy as Visit Dallas CXO and now as President of Tulsa Regional Tourism, Renee McKenney has experienced every layer of the hospitality ecosystem. Along the way, Renee spent 13 years as an entrepreneur, owning an independent meeting and event planning business, operating on 100% commission while raising a young family. Those experiences sharpened her business instincts, deepened her understanding of sales, client service, and resilience, and reinforced a fundamental truth: whether you are a Fortune 500 company or a one-person operation, growth depends on culture, experience, and execution.

All Hands on Deck translates the operational discipline of cruise ships, the culture-first philosophy of Southwest Airlines, the emotional storytelling of Disney, and the demand-generation strategy of destination marketing into a practical playbook for leaders across industries, answering a timely business question: how do organizations create loyalty, differentiation, and sustained growth in an experience-driven economy?

Key themes include:

- Designing the end-to-end customer journey
- Turning culture into competitive advantage
- Empowering teams to act like owners
- Building emotional connection as brand strategy
- Aligning infrastructure, storytelling, and revenue growth
- Leading through change with resilience and clarity

10:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Table Talk: The Topics You Choose

The agenda for this closing conversation belongs to you. What did we not cover? What challenge is sitting on your desk right now? What question have you been wanting to ask a room full of women who get it? In this facilitated open forum, we'll gather the topics on your mind, from career growth and work-life balance to leading teams, navigating change, and everything in between, and dig into them together. Come with your questions, your ideas, and your honest take. You'll leave with fresh perspective, practical advice from peers, and a few new allies to call on long after the conference ends.

11:00 a.m. Conference Ends

We hope to see you at the Annual Conference beginning at 1:00 p.m. this afternoon!