

Application: 8606

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Page: Entry Information
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Chapter Community Associations Institute- NJ Chapter
Chapter Size Extra Large (1201+)
Category Membership Engagement
Program Name CAI-NJ Conquer + Connect Retreat
Each question is worth 20 points and will be scored using the following rubric: (1-5) Poor Didn't effectively answer the question (6-1) Fair Answered the question (11-15) Good Answered the question with more detail (16-20) Excellent Went above and beyond with proven results and visible data

Describe the program and why it fits the category. (20pts)

"Find a group of people that challenge and inspire you. Spend a lot of time with them and they will change your life." – Amy Poehler

On April 6, 2022, the CAI New Jersey chapter hosted 150 attendees at the first in-person Conquer + Connect retreat, hosted by our Women's Leadership Committee. This retreat was a full-day event that embodied the importance of supporting our female industry leaders through professional development seminars, vendor networking tables and mentorship opportunities that not only challenged our attendees but inspired our membership.

We were lucky to have CAI National's Amy Repke and Karen McMullen attend this event all the way from Virginia as they met our staff, participated with our attendees, and showed their support of this important and necessary retreat as strong female leaders within the CAI community.

The Women's Leadership Committee, made up of 16 female business partners and managers made it their mission to host a conference style program that spotlighted the female leaders in our industry along with educational credits, vendor/networking opportunities and having outside professionals come in to help shape and enhance their professional careers in our ever-growing industry. Conquer + Connect would not deter men from attending, but instead encourage them to support the females in our industry, learn together on how to slash stigmas and how working together and building each other up is how our association thrives. Our mission for this program entwines with CAI-NJ as our goal is to educate, advocate and give our members the tools and resources to be better both personally and professionally.

Conquer + Connect coincides with everything that involves the Membership Engagement category. The NJ chapter brought in outside, innovative speakers who challenged our attendees to step out of their comfort zone. We brought in top female management executives to shine a light on their professional journeys and to encourage others to push ahead with their own adventures. Each attendee left with a personal story from one of our speakers and they all tied in that common theme of conquering the industry through connection with each other. We used this opportunity to market on social media and engage new members, new presenters, and a new format of programming. This event opened the door to developing our mentorship program and how this is greatly going to impact our chapter moving forward into 2023.

Event Recap: Conquer + Connect started at 8AM where each attendee received a swag bag loaded with high value sponsored goods and walked down a long corridor lined with 16 tabletop vendors where they were met with a hot breakfast and networking. The first keynote speaker was Nicole Pace-Addeo, M.A., an award-winning marketer and public speaking coach. She kicked off the event with high energy as she presented her topic: Communication Skills for Improved Relationships in Life and Business. From this opening session, we then moved our group back through our vendors for their choice of two concurrent sessions, a more in depth, interactive public speaking program with Nicole Pace-Addeo entitled: Impromptu Speaking for Success or Guts & Glory: Stand Up for Yourself, Face Adversity and Revel in Your Success presented by our CAI-NJ female past presidents who allowed a closer look into their personal lives, the struggles they endured climbing the corporate ladder, all while balancing their families and generational differences along the way.

As the group broke for lunch, we hosted another keynote speaker and financial advisor, Kim Cole, who talked on the importance of Financial Wellness and how that correlates to work stress and how to set attainable goals.

After lunch and networking, we broke again into two concurrent learning sessions hosted by our CAI female professional members. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion was presented by our Homeowner Leader Chair, Vonetta Hawkins and The Power of No: Setting Boundaries with Colleagues & Clients, presented by the women of our Young Professional Committee (F.A.S.T.).

We closed out the day with our signature, Boss Lady Panel featuring six powerhouse female managers in our industry in a laid back, couch panel discussion where our attendees got to ask them questions, learn from the different generations of managers, as well as laugh at the not-so successful attempts that made them who they are today. Taken from our post-event survey:

"I genuinely benefited from the Boss Lady Panel...hearing their real stories were truly inspiring!" - Event Attendee

How did this program meet the mission and vision of the chapter and CAI as a whole? (20pts)

Upon adjourning our Conquer + Connect retreat, there was a sense of community, a feeling of comradery, compassion, and admiration for all that our members do each day and it reminded all of those who were in attendance that we are all in the same lifeboat. This program allowed for CAI-NJ to open the lines of communication between females and allow them to build up each other, not against each other and it opened the door to create allies, friends, and a much-needed support system in this ever-changing work environment.

CAI is about community. It's about creating a safe space where you can share ideas, ask questions as we promote professional development and growth. We at the New Jersey chapter are about our members, what they need to grow and what they want to learn as it's directly impacting their every day lives in the business partner and manager world. Conquer + Connect came from our Women's Leadership Committee, their topic ideas, what they felt they needed to learn more about and what they find trending in our industry currently. We provided that committee a platform that speaks directly to our female audience, but never discouraged male participation as this program is to encourage and empower females, but also drive professional development for all in attendance so we can grow and develop as a whole membership organization.

The committee wanted "connection" to run throughout our retreat, so in the back of our program, we listed every attendee with their contact information so those who left knew who they connected with and had an index to reflect back for future reference. We found that it was important to expand our network and allow those who attended the benefit of reaching out to those at any time to grow personally and professionally.

Our mission is our members. What drives them, what benefits them and what helps them succeed in their daily professional journey. We encouraged our members to come up with a program that directly correlates to that mission, and they created a format, topics and network connections that fulfilled and embodied everything that CAI-NJ is proud to offer.

What was the impact on the chapter and its members after completing the program? (Growth of membership, financially, public awareness, membership value, better chapter/member relationship, chapter operations, etc.) (20pts)

"People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." – Maya Angelou

The impact was just that, a feeling that we supported a group in the industry that doesn't often get spotlighted. The chapter brought recognition to our strong female leaders and gave our up-and-coming business partners and managers new connections and mentors to look up to. This program allowed for managers in attendance to receive 5 credits for this full day event, assisting them with advancing their professional development, which is always our goal with every program we host.

One of the programs offered shed a huge light on the importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in our communities we service and how we as, CAI-NJ can create a mission to better educate and create resources and tools for our members to utilize. This one program has started a bigger conversation amongst the chapter and what we can do to better serve our membership when it pertains to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The best way to measure success is by hearing it from our membership directly from our post-event survey:

"Connecting with others who have experienced similar situations...that women are there to support each other and not step on them on the way up the ladder."

"What a great event. My personal favorites were the morning "be a better speaker" presentation and the finale with women leaders in this business. I certainly plan on following up and using the resources from the presentation to be a better public speaker."

"The feeling of not being alone in the industry, there are many of us going through the same things."

Hosting the Conquer + Connect retreat at a hotel gave our members the opportunity to host vendor dinners and networking opportunities the night prior to the program, adding additional value to both of our membership groups. The impact of giving this additional benefit to the program allows for further connections, enhancing current work relationships with the possibility of introducing new ones. This directly impacts our membership, giving those who might be non-members a look to what it means to be a part of this organization, as well as solidify the importance of being a member of CAI and how it connects those in our communities together.

Due to the impact of this program, our Women's Leadership Committee has grown as we've had women select this committee based solely on making a difference and them wanted to be directly involved in the programming for the 2023 retreat.

Lastly, our Boss Lady Panel that hosted our top female Management Company leaders started the development of the first CAI-NJ Mentorship Program, which kicked off January 2023. Through this program, New Jersey has successfully used the ideals and questions from the Boss Lady Panel and developed it into a program that is going to allow our membership to grow and learn from the best of the best in our industry. Our organization thrives on education, and what better way to learn then from a mentor who has been in the industry and can guide you along the way as you grow professionally with CAI.

Please provide quantifiable data supporting the rationale for success. (20pts)

Anticipated Revenue: Not knowing exactly what to expect with the Conquer + Connect attendance, we budgeted carefully for only 100 attendees. We were projected off our 100 attendees to make \$9,225.00 in registrations and \$19,000.00 in sponsorship, bringing our total budgeted revenue to \$28,225.

Actual Revenue: The venue could only hold 150 people with 16 vendor tables, which we maxed out with our final numbers at 150 attendees with a wait list and 16 vendor tables. We made \$12,680 in registrations and made \$36,380 in sponsorship opportunities with a total revenue for Conquer + Connect totaling \$36,380. For 2023, we did have to relocate so we can accommodate and expand due to the interest surrounding Conquer + Connect and to allow more members to participate in this program.

Conquer + Connect held so much value that additional funds were allocated from the overall chapter budget to enhance and grow with its success for the next year. Our Board of Directors saw the value in this program and decided that for 2023, expanding the budget for professional speakers and attendees by over \$1,000.00 was necessary for the growth and development.

Among the attendees, we had 65 managers receive 5 hours of credit, totaling 325 hours of continuing education towards their professional development. We are proud to offer a program that allows for managers to receive that many credits for a full day of education.

CAI-NJ prides itself on our member involvement, especially on our 12committees. Our Women's Leadership Committee is our newest committee established in 2020 which started with only 11 female members has grown to now 19 members for 2023 due to the success of the event. Our members want to be a part of the efforts and discussions on how to make this program an even bigger success and more beneficial for our membership.

Based on the results, will the program be a regular part of the chapter's programs in the future and why? (20pts)

Conquer + Connect is a program that will now be added into our signature events as the anticipation and interest is there. We had to relocate to a new venue that could accommodate our size, our growing education programs and vendors who want to sponsor and support this event.

We've added Conquer + Connect to our Partnership Program as an added benefit to those who participate in our annual marketing program allowing them to receive tickets to attend under their level. We have vendors who already committed in their post-event survey asking to renew again and hold their spot as they know the value in being a part of this retreat and their return on investment.

Besides being successful from a financial standpoint, we filled a void in a membership category that females in the industry didn't realize they needed and for that, we want to continue to grow professionally, offering credits towards furthering their careers. We want to create new programs within the Conquer + Connect retreat that allow females to connect with one another, opening up the lines of communications between business partners and managers in their communities. Like Amy Poehler's quote at the beginning of this submission, to keep challenging each other within CAI, we'll continue to host this program and learn from one another, inspire, push boundaries, and hope for change as strong female leaders in this organization.

"This is a great event that I plan on attending for years to come." – CAI-NJ Member

Supporting documents including flyers, postcards, pictures, videos etc. can be uploaded below. While they aren't required for your submission we certainly encourage it.

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