



Women IN INDUSTRY

NAED STRENGTH IN CONNECTION

EVENT IMPACT AND ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

EMPOWERING PROGRESS: WOMEN IN INDUSTRY DRIVING CHANGE

NAED hosted Women in Industry this summer down in Orlando, seeing over 1100 attendees utilizing the moments for the professional growth it provided. Women in Industry is a three-day assembly that brings together women from entry level to upper-management roles within the electrical industry for a forum on empowerment, fostering success, and becoming changemakers in the industry.

Women in Industry provides learning opportunities for its attendees, allowing them to connect with senior leadership and industry-leading companies. Additionally, the conference offers an environment for professionals within electrical distribution to take steps toward advancing their careers by leveraging educational pathways and industry networking.

During WII 2025, NAED hosted many speakers on varying topics all highlighting the keys to gaining success within the electrical industry. Attendees left the conference refreshed and motivated, spurred on by a variety of speakers and workshops focusing on their specialties. WII had breakouts and workshops centered on topics such as business development, digital importance, management, and more, all designed to help attendees unlock career potential.

To balance the educational forums held during the conference, WII also held a 3k/5k race, yoga and HIIT classes, morning coffee talks called 'Brew Crew', a first-time attendee event, a trailblazer award dinner, a WII gives back function, as well as a Cirque du Soleil closing party. WII participants helped pack over 1000 sensory toy bags for the Autism Society of Greater Orlando, took part in interviews, networking, getting their headshots taken, and more.

Overall, participants engaged in motivational and informative activities while furthering their professional skills and getting to know others from around the nation who are also in the electrical industry. These women not only uplifted one another but also affirmed the vital role they hold as women in a male-dominated field.

WII STATS

1100

Women in Attendance

44

Speakers

120

Companies Represented

611

First Time Attendees

8

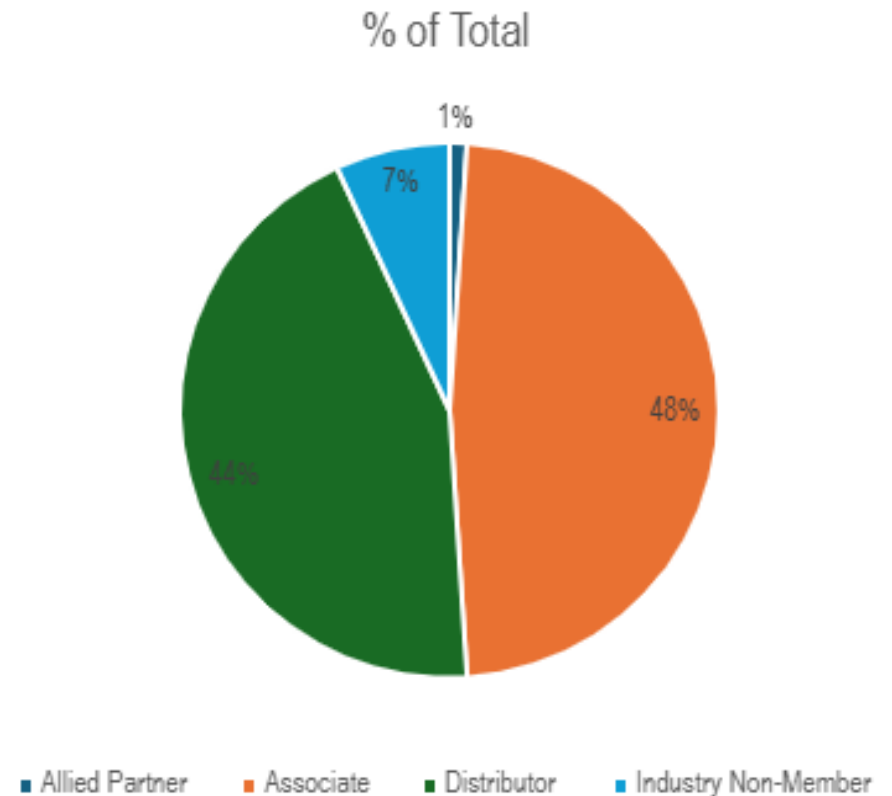
Wellness Activities

40

Education and Networking
Opportunities over 3 Days

WHO ATTENDED WII?

<u>Participant Type</u>	<u>% of Total</u>	<u>Count</u>
Allied Partner	1%	11
Associate	48%	524
Distributor	44%	482
Industry Non-Member	7%	75
		TOTAL: 1092



Thank You Corporate Partners

We could not have done this without your support!



TRAILBLAZER AWARD CEREMONY



Women in Industry 2025 kicked off with a conversation honoring NAED's 2025 Trailblazer Award winner, [Laurie Gross](#) (Gross Electric, Inc.). Laurie shared powerful insights from her 50-year career in the electrical industry. She emphasized critical leadership skills such as independent thinking, resilience, self-confidence, and the importance of patience—with both yourself and with others. Laurie's journey was shaped by intentional choices: embracing challenges, learning how to master new roles, and leveraging connections with coworkers, family, and friends to find support and resources. As a single mom by choice navigating a male-dominated field, she highlighted that making the decision is the hardest part and that following through comes much easier once you've committed. Laurie encouraged everyone to live their dreams unapologetically, reminding attendees not to let obstacles or others' doubts stand in their way. Her story exemplified grit, adaptability, and the power of determination—inspiring all to explore new paths and embrace opportunities beyond their comfort zones. Laurie's legacy challenges each of us to choose our own paths boldly and hold fast to our ambitions.

Laurie Gross (left) and [Tammy Miller](#) (right) after Laurie won the NAED Trailblazer Award. Tammy (CEO, Border States, retired) kicked off the conference, presenting Laurie with the award.

CARLA'S PEARLS:

TOOLS FOR MAXIMIZING YOUR SUCCESS

[Carla Harris](#) (Morgan Stanley) started the conference off strong by emphasizing how intentional leadership is rooted in authenticity, trust, and courage. Carla shared her eight “pearls” of wisdom, including the power of perception: how you're seen impacts your success, and you have the power to train others how to think about you. Carla showed attendees that true leadership means using your voice, building relationships, and creating clarity. Performance may get you noticed, but relationships secure advancement. Memorable quotes included: *“Your voice is the heart of your power,”* and *“Failure always brings a gift—experience!”* Leadership today demands embracing diversity, nurturing other leaders, and leading with inclusion and clarity. Carla's insights were a standout, inspiring many with her message to *“be bold, be real, and lead from any seat.”* Her “pearls” offered a roadmap to thrive, not just survive, by owning your voice, managing perception, and building lasting influence through relationships and courage.





STATE OF THE ELECTRICAL INDUSTRY

[Wes Smith](#) (NAED) and [Tammy Livers](#) (World Electric Supply) explored the key forces shaping the electrical industry today, highlighting exponential growth in electrification, the increasing energy demands of AI, and the evolving talent landscape. With the U.S. and North America representing the world's largest electrical market, they noted a projected 2-3% growth in distribution, alongside industry-wide consolidation among contractors, manufacturers, and distributors. Electrification alone will require the transmission system to double in size by 2050, driven in part by the rising demand from data centers and generative AI. Both speakers emphasized that while AI won't replace people, those who embrace it will outpace those who don't. Additional macro pressures include housing affordability (up 47%), political uncertainty, and inflation. Trade shifts, tariffs, and reshoring are also reshaping procurement and supply chains. The session reinforced the need for adaptability, with "change management" named as a critical skill and a call for distributors to have a stronger voice at the table.

GENERAL SESSION: THE FUTURE IS ON

[Debra Phillips](#) (NEMA) outlined the organization's critical role in advancing standards for the electrical industry, representing 1% of U.S. GDP and over 1 million jobs. NEMA prioritizes energy resilience—addressing grid constraints as electricity demand is expected to rise 50% by 2050, and strengthening supply chains through trade policy and domestic manufacturing.

[Jana Gerber](#) (Schneider Electric) emphasized the growing importance of microgrids for energy efficiency and grid stability—especially in data centers, where 23% of construction costs go to electrical infrastructure. Schneider has deployed over 350 U.S. microgrids, supporting decentralized, fast-to-deploy power in high-demand areas. Policy support from the Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act is accelerating clean energy investments, though challenges like education gaps and grid delays persist.

Both leaders stressed collaboration, innovation, and standardization as essential to advancing electrification, clean energy, and climate solutions.



SALES & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

[Deni Miller](#) (ABB) engaged attendees in the art of listening not just to reply, but to understand. By applying empathy, curiosity, and active listening, we can uncover unspoken needs and build meaningful relationships. The W.A.I.T. acronym ("*Why Am I Talking?*") reminds us to pause and reflect before speaking or asking. Effective communication, Deni explained, is like approaching a conversation with the passion, persistence, and clarity of a 10-year-old. Through compelling stories, Deni helped us recognize common biases such as the frequency illusion (where we tend to see and hear only what we expect). She pointed out that knowing your numbers enhances credibility and helps you address hidden business needs and understand hidden motivations. Deni also talked about supporting conversations with openness vs. shifting the conversation; and avoiding groupthink. She introduced the concept of *smart brevity*: being clear and concise to communicate effectively. Key takeaway: effective communication begins with intentional listening. By pausing to understand rather than simply respond, we build trust, uncover real needs, and create deeper, more meaningful connections.



HUMAN RESOURCES

[Debbie Tucker](#) (Hubbell) highlighted that effective talent programs must be grounded in a company's mission, vision, and values to ensure alignment and impact. While HR priorities have remained consistent over the past decade, approaches to addressing them need to evolve—especially by adapting support to different leaders and closely aligning with business strategy. The session outlined a clear framework: understand the business strategy, structure HR to support it, and build the right team. HR's strategic role was emphasized through three key questions for every business decision: Do we have the talent? Is our structure appropriate? Will our culture support this? A major insight was that HR challenges are remarkably similar across companies, underscoring shared experiences in the field. Debbie also stressed the importance of differentiating mentors from sponsors for leadership growth. Additionally, she recommended exploring AI tools like Microsoft Copilot, ChatGPT, and HeyGen to improve HR processes like performance planning and engagement survey analysis. The session reinforced that HR needs an early seat at the table to integrate people strategies effectively and avoid operational bottlenecks.



KEYNOTES & ROUNDTABLES BY JOB SEGMENT



FINANCE

[Dana Pascarella](#) (Wesco) delivered leadership insights applicable across various fields. She advocated embracing unexpected roles—highlighting their potential to unlock new opportunities and position individuals as experts and trailblazers in their field. Dana also talked about the importance of aligning skills with new responsibilities and advocating passionately for business partners; emphasizing that tailoring leadership approaches to individual team members is crucial for effective management. She reinforced her message by sharing a compelling story from her own experience at a new company: initially faced with underwhelming results, she turned the tide by fostering deeper personal connections with her team. Recognizing their unique talents and tailoring her strategies helped unlock their potential; and maintaining an open policy and being available also helped her build rapport and foster strategic partnerships with other departments. Dana advised attendees to view details as part of a broader narrative—consistently comparing forecasts with results, understanding the impact of compensation on teamwork, and capturing the broader value in financial stories, reminding all that flexibility in discussions is essential for enabling strategic pivots.



MARKETING

[Kerry Tingley](#) (Eaton) and [Kelli Joseph](#) (Eaton)(left) led discussions about how marketing can better capture product value and build emotional connections. They stressed that price is more than cost plus margin—it conveys the product's true worth, highlighted by Simon Sinek's quote, *"Price is not just a number; it conveys a message."* A key moment focused on using Voice of Customer (VOC) insights to identify emotional pain points and design campaigns that address those feelings. The speakers encouraged shifting from product-centric messaging to human-first storytelling, putting more emphasis on how products solve real problems. They challenged typical industry brochures that rely on long product names and specs, urging marketers instead to focus on the details that invoke emotional responses (i.e. labor savings lead to more time to do the things you love). The session demonstrated how focusing on outcomes and experiences can create more compelling stories that stick with the customer and encourage brand loyalty.

KEYNOTES & ROUNDTABLES BY JOB SEGMENT

OPERATIONS / BRANCH MANAGEMENT

[Michelle Ballou](#) (Border States) highlighted the need for adaptability in the evolving electrical distribution industry, captivating the audience by exploring the intricate web of connections between distributors, manufacturers, and customers. She walked through how persistent supply chain disruptions have created mismatches in inventory and unpredictability in lead times; and talked about how reliance on outdated, paper-based systems contributes to errors, inefficiencies, and lack of real time visibility. AI-powered forecasting and Vendor Managed Inventory (VMI) offer potential solutions—if paired with trust, clean data, and collaboration. A key takeaway from one roundtable discussion was that change is universally challenging across roles—from plant managers to project managers. However, these shared struggles present opportunities for collective adaptation. Embracing innovation, digital tools, and a mindset shift will be essential for future resilience and long-term success.



ENGINEERING / INNOVATION / STANDARDS

[Christel Hunter](#) (Cerrowire) emphasized that the National Electrical Code (NEC) is more than just compliance—it's a dynamic framework for designing safe, consistent, and future-ready systems. Christel highlighted that the NEC is updated every three years, reflecting the industry's evolving needs and the innovations driven by people. Microgrids and AI were key topics—encouraging attendees to rethink traditional infrastructure and embrace forward-thinking solutions. Hands-on training, continuous learning, and programs like NAED's EPEC were emphasized as essential for building confidence and staying competitive. The call to action: know the NEC, invest in the next generation, and lead with integrity. Relationships still matter—especially in an era of digital ordering—and personalized service continues to set professionals apart. The takeaway: embrace change, share knowledge, and wire the future together.



KEYNOTES & ROUNDTABLES BY JOB SEGMENT



DIGITAL & IT

In today's fast-paced digital landscape, alignment between business goals and IT strategies is not just a necessity—it's a competitive advantage. [Don Sarno](#) (Sonepar) captivated the audience with an insightful and thought-provoking exploration of these dynamics. His narrative challenged conventional thinking and inspired a recalibration of how Digital & IT teams approach their roles and how others engage with them. Among the powerful takeaways, Sarno encouraged a shift towards ROI-driven thinking. He underscored the importance of confidently saying “no” to requests that lack strategic alignment, viewing failures as learning opportunities, and maintaining real-time visibility into project statuses. He further emphasized the critical need for organizations to swiftly adapt to advancements in artificial intelligence, highlighting how proactive integration could mitigate potential risks and harness its transformative potential.



PURCHASING

[Julie Massey](#) (Rexel) shared how the company is transforming its procurement model from a fragmented, transactional approach to be more centralized, strategic, and data-driven. With over \$8.5B in U.S. sales, Rexel faced inefficiencies due to decentralized buying, inconsistent pricing, and missed savings. The new model consolidated buyers across regions, standardized processes, and emphasized long-term supplier partnerships focused on cost optimization and innovation. Key priorities included inventory optimization, supplier relationship management, and consistent purchasing practices. Rexel leveraged AI, machine learning, chatbots, and blockchain to modernize procurement, improve forecasting, and enable smarter, sustainable sourcing. A successful AI pilot reduced excess inventory while improving service levels. The presentation underscored procurement's evolving role as a strategic business driver through collaboration, technology adoption, and ESG alignment.

KEYNOTES & ROUNDTABLES BY JOB SEGMENT

GET BIG THINGS DONE:

THE POWER OF CONNECTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



[Erica Dhawan](#) (Cotential) opened Day 2 of the conference with a burst of energy—getting attendees on their feet and dancing before diving into the nuances of digital body language: the new cues and signals we send in the virtual world. With 70% of communication now happening online, she emphasized that clarity, tone, and intentionality matter more than ever. Subject lines are the new eye contact, and reading carefully is the new listening. What was once implicit in face-to-face interactions must now be made explicit. Erica shared practical ways to build trust and psychological safety in digital environments: send detailed agendas in advance, be thoughtful about response time expectations, and tailor your communication style based on your audience—introverts vs. extroverts, digital natives vs. adapters, etc. She also encouraged attendees to match communication method to message complexity and to be mindful of trust and power dynamics when choosing your tone. Digital body language isn't about punctuation or emojis—it's about creating clarity and connection in every message we send.

TRENDS & INSIGHTS: ECONOMIC UPDATE, MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS

[Charlotte \(Charlie\) Karp](#) (Bank of America Securities) provided a timely economic and M&A outlook tailored to the electrical industry. She emphasized strong ongoing demand fueled by key megatrends: data center expansion driven by AI, electrification, manufacturing reshoring, and grid modernization—all supported by substantial government spending. The M&A landscape is expected to see a rebound in 2025, with increased confidence from executive leadership and a more favorable regulatory and political climate. Strategies discussed included mergers to consolidate market share in fragmented sectors, complementary bolt-on acquisitions, and portfolio optimization through divesting non-core assets. Real-world examples included Wesco's merger with Anixter, Hubbell's bolt-ons like Beckwith, and GPC's divestiture to Audax. While the long-term outlook remains strong, the message also included some caution: inventories declined in May, tariffs remain unpredictable, inflation is rising, and consumer confidence has dipped—though spending remains steady. Automation will be essential in managing labor shortages, even as labor demand continues to grow. Overall, despite short-term challenges, the industry is positioned for continued growth and strategic deal-making.





BLAZING TRAILS:

WOMEN LEADING THE CHARGE AT ALL CAREER LEVELS

Each a trailblazer in her own right, panelists [Nikki Murphy](#) (Eaton), [Melissa Bucher](#) (Wesco), and [Alyssa Giesler](#) (OmniCable) shared personal stories and practical insights about leadership, mentorship, and career growth in the electrical industry. All three took bold risks—like relocating their families for new opportunities, leading in spaces where there was no clear roadmap, and switching companies—that ultimately paid off. The panelists emphasized the importance of knowing your “why,” setting non-negotiables for yourself, owning your place at the table, and refusing to shrink in any room you walk into. The conversation highlighted authentic leadership, leading from the heart, investing in people, and embracing motherhood at work without apology. The panelists distinguished between mentorship and sponsorship (mentors provide guidance; sponsors advocate behind closed doors)—stressing the need for both. They encouraged continuous learning, listening to diverse perspectives, and creating opportunities for others. Their stories offered motivation, real-world strategies, and a reminder that blazing trails often means lifting others as you lead.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

BUILDING A TEAM FOR TOMORROW: THE EVOLVING APPROACH TO TALENT ACQUISITION

Panelists [Amanda Stewart](#) (Eaton), [Jan Jesernik Ruthe](#) (Electri-Flex), and [Melissa Lunak](#) (DSG Supply) shared valuable insights on career development, inclusive hiring, and leadership growth. They emphasized that career paths are rarely linear, encouraging lateral moves to build diverse experience. Remote and hybrid work models were highlighted as key to expanding talent pools without requiring relocation. The panelists stressed the importance of a thoughtful hiring process, including clear communication with candidates, timely feedback, identifying success metrics before posting roles, and using AI to create more inclusive job descriptions. They advocated for diverse interview panels and transparent sharing of team culture and leadership styles to help candidates assess company fit. A practical tip for job seekers was to use two highlighters on job descriptions: one for skills you possess, and another for tasks you prefer to avoid to help visually assess readiness and growth potential. The discussion also covered developing warehouse employees for leadership roles such as branch manager, and closed with a recommendation to watch *Brené Brown: The Call to Courage* on Netflix for inspiration.





UNLOCK YOUR CAREER POTENTIAL: THE POWER OF MENTORS, SPONSORS & COACHES

[Becky Jacoby](#) (Focus Leadership Group), [Jennifer Bihlmier Helias](#) (Signify), and [Deb Huttenburg](#) (Mersen) led a power-packed session exploring how mentors, sponsors, and coaches uniquely contribute to career growth. Coaches challenge and guide through self-reflection, mentors offer advice based on experience, and sponsors advocate for your advancement behind closed doors. Mentors don't need to look like you; they need to support you. And everyone can pay it forward by mentoring others. Becky spoke about being intentional in your development: know where you are, where you're going, and how others can help you get there. Deb hammered home how to become "sponsorable" by delivering results, being visible, and staying flexible. Personal stories from all three women underscored the power of saying "yes" to stretch opportunities—even when they feel uncomfortable. Jennifer spoke about how leadership means mastering not just the technical, but also the relational. Confidence, curiosity, and influence matter. The biggest takeaway: growth happens when you're brave enough to ask, act, and believe in yourself.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

POWER MOVES:

M&A STRATEGIES IN ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTION & MANUFACTURING

During this intriguing session, [Samantha Barnes](#) (Mountain States Agency), [Melissa Wesorick](#) (Hubbell), and [Chris Scarbrough](#) (Echo Electric) offered an in-depth look at the M&A process—emphasizing both the technical steps and the human impact. From strategy development to integration, the M&A journey involves nine key phases and demands strong communication, emotional intelligence, and cultural alignment. Two main types of processes—exclusive and auction—differ in structure and competition. This panel really showcased that success isn't measured at deal-close, but 90 days later, through engaged associates and happy customers. Attendees were encouraged to raise their hands within their own organizations to get involved, ask questions, and build visibility in the M&A space. Culture and relationships are as critical as financials; and companies are defined by their people, not just portfolios. Post-acquisition, leaders must be present, celebrate milestones, and provide ongoing clear communication. The takeaway: M&A is a team sport. Stay positive, communicate clearly, and walk with your people through change.





MODERN LEADERSHIP SKILLS

[Erin Coupe](#) (Authentically EC Inc.) led this powerhouse session focused on self-awareness, emotional control, and redefining leadership from the inside out. Erin stated that we are not our thoughts—our minds create realities that can either hold us back or move us forward, and that change begins with how you treat yourself. The inner critic, driven by fear, must be challenged with intention, presence, and self-compassion. Erin led attendees through techniques like the 4-7-8 breathing method, showcasing how we can calm reactions and respond with clarity. Leadership begins with how we lead ourselves. Beliefs are just repeated thoughts, and we have the power to choose new, growth-based narratives. Imposter syndrome, fear, and self-doubt were common themes, especially among high-achieving women. The key message: speak back to fear, treat yourself with worth, and show up in alignment with who you are—not who others expect you to be. True productivity isn't about doing more, but about showing up with energy, presence, and purpose.



PROJECT MANAGEMENT & ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

[Kelsey Garza](#) (OmniCable) reminded attendees that smooth projects are rare and require clear strategies. She highlighted the importance of setting SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-based) to define success and avoid misalignment. She reviewed key tools, including stakeholder identification and power-interest grids; and clarifying roles with project plans and RACI matrices to ensure accountability. Garza stressed the value of “lessons-learned” meetings to capture insights for future projects. On change management, she outlined phases of preparing, managing, and sustaining change—focusing on communicating the “why” to boost buy-in and reduce resistance. She introduced change champion networks to support communication and training, along with readiness assessments to track preparedness. Overall, Garza’s session provided practical, actionable insights that combine solid project management fundamentals with a people-centered approach to successfully lead change.



STORYTELLING

[Becky Jacoby](#) (Focus Leadership Group) talked about defining and communicating your personal and professional brand story by first discovering your purpose. She explained that feeling stuck often signals a misaligned story that needs refocusing; and stressed the importance of nonverbal communication—noting that body language accounts for 75% of how others perceive us. She also encouraged developing *gravitas*: a mix of warmth and confidence that builds trust. She urged participants to reflect on how they are experienced, seek honest feedback, and be intentional about the impressions they leave. The session offered a clear framework for crafting a compelling brand story and elevator pitch focused on the value you provide, who you serve, and what sets you apart. Jacoby also highlighted the need to align your personal “portfolio” (including your bio, resume, and LinkedIn profile) with your story. She also talked about networking strategically to leverage your brand by connecting with the right people and sharing your unique value.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS



STRATEGY & CRITICAL THINKING

Author and executive leader [Shontra Powell](#) (Hubbell), distinguished between strategic and critical thinking in leadership: strategic thinking involves understanding the “*what*” and “*why*” behind actions (akin to planning moves in a chess game); while critical thinking focuses on the “*how*”—considering the potential outcomes of each action. Powell highlighted the necessity of *recognizing your superpower* to inform how you understand situations and position yourself strategically. She advocated for using tools like SWOT analysis—not just in business, but for personal career development as well, encouraging leaders to map out their career paths thoughtfully. She suggested employing the “*3 Horizons Model*” to visualize long-term goals and break them down into manageable steps. Effective leadership, according to Powell, also involves asking insightful questions, being open to vulnerability, and understanding the cultural dynamics of new teams. She stressed the importance of continuous learning, listening to business podcasts, and never underestimating your value as a leader.

INVESTING FOR YOUR FUTURE

Attendees joined [Maureen Armstrong](#) (AA Financial Advisors) in a discussion about how to build smart financial habits. Maureen focused three key principles: pay yourself first, diversify your portfolio, and understand the ABC’s of Cash Flow:

- A – Available:** funds for immediate needs and daily living.
- B – Buffer:** 3-6 month savings cushion for unexpected expenses like home repairs or travel.
- C – Compound:** money invested for long-term growth.

Other discussions included managing debt wisely (monthly obligations should stay under 45% of your net income) and maximizing Health Savings Accounts (HSAs), which offer triple tax benefits. Maureen emphasized being proactive with savings and planning—helping attendees reframe their approach to budgeting and financial goals. The key takeaway: financial success starts with intentional planning, disciplined saving, and making your money work for you.

P&L PRIMER AND THE ROLE OF REPS, MANUFACTURERS, DISTRIBUTORS & AGENTS

[Laura Fleener](#) (Crescent Electric), [Michelle Mathis](#) (Siemens), and [John Palk](#) (SESCO Lighting) explained how Profit & Loss (P&L) statements summarize total income and expenses over a period to determine profitability and identify business trends. They detailed key components such as Cost of Goods Sold (COGS) and operating expenses (such as payroll and commissions), explaining how P&L can be used to evaluate trends and ratios year-over-year. For example, investments in technology or acquisitions might temporarily increase operating expenses but position the business for future success. They highlighted distinct business models. For example: agencies and reps have minimal COGS since they don’t own inventory and typically have higher operating expenses; while distributors record cash discounts under other income and expenses. The clear explanations and real-world examples helped attendees grasp how to analyze P&Ls effectively across manufacturers, distributors, agencies and reps for financial decision-making and operational optimization.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS



EMOTIONAL LEADERSHIP

[Brandy Henson](#) (Siemens) shared insights on stepping into leadership roles, emphasizing the power of self-belief and support from others. She highlighted that emotional intelligence (EQ), which encompasses self-awareness, empathy, and social skills, is more critical than cognitive intelligence (IQ) in driving effective leadership, as EQ fosters stronger communication, trust, and conflict resolution. Henson introduced the concept of *Emotionally Empowered Leadership*, which focuses on connecting with others emotionally to inspire and lead authentically. She explored four leadership styles: Mindful (intentional and present), Relational (trust-based connections), Compassionate (empathy-driven), and Inspirational (motivating others). Central to her message was the idea that outstanding leadership captures the heart before guiding the mind. By embracing authenticity, seeking feedback, and maintaining self-awareness, leaders can create a more positive, resilient, and emotionally connected team environment.

RETIREMENT PLANNING

Attendees rejoined [Maureen Armstrong](#) (AA Financial Advisors) for a talk about navigating taxes and retirement. Maureen drove home the importance of proactive and thoughtful retirement planning. She recommended aiming to save 10-15% of your gross income (or 20% if you're starting late). Attendees learned to plan for your retirement funds to last at least 20 years, with a safe withdrawal rate of 3-4%. Understanding how Social Security, pensions, savings, and other income sources work (and especially how they're taxed) can help you make smarter decisions. For couples, timing Social Security benefits can be key—particularly when there are income differences or health concerns. Medicare and long-term care can bring added costs, so planning ahead is essential. Maureen offered averages of \$6K-\$12K per month for long-term care. This makes early financial preparation critical. The key takeaway: plan for lifestyle growth, understand your income sources, and align savings to ensure financial stability and peace of mind in retirement.

KEYNOTE HIGHLIGHTS BROUGHT TO YOU BY: NAED'S WOMEN IN INDUSTRY 2025 ONGOING ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE



MADELINE HENDRY | ELA + Synergy

WII 2025 Board | OEC Co-Chair



ALI GRIGGS | Signify

OEC Co-Chair



HILLARY ANDERSON | Werner Electric



ASHLEY BUZBEE | Border States



NATASHA DESMARAIS | Rexel Energy Solutions



CHRISTINA GRIMM | Eaton



BECKY KRAGER | Echo Electric



JESSICA SANCHEZ | Cooper Lighting



MEGAN SHISKO | Sonepar



ELIZABETH SIEFKAS | Hubbell



EMILY SPAULDING | Hubbell



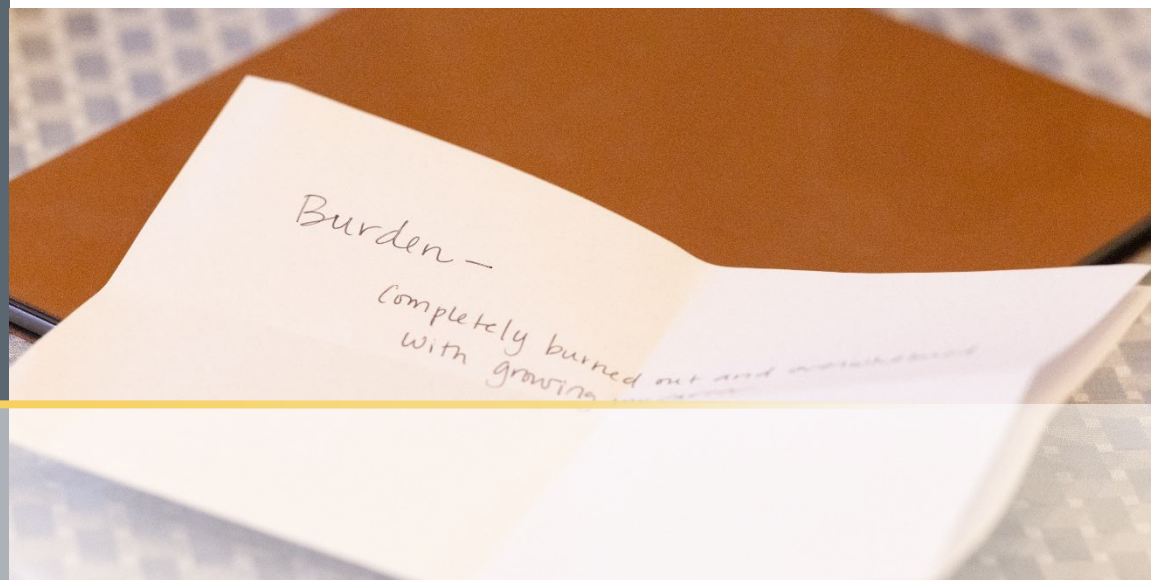
KATE YAKIM | Supply Force

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

THE COMMUNITY QUOTIENT:

DESIGNING WORKPLACES FOR CONNECTION & IMPACT

[Liz Bohannon](#) (Noonday Collection) delivered an emotional and humorous closing keynote about the importance of intentionally building community for both personal and professional growth. Drawing from interpersonal neurobiology, she explained that some learning simply cannot happen in isolation. Failure is a natural part of the process, but a strong, co-created community helps us navigate it. Bohannon encouraged attendees to “dream small,” noting that small goals are often more achievable and less resource-intensive, but just as impactful. She reframed loneliness as a signal, not an accusation, and emphasized that community is not something we consume, but something we create together. Her RICH framework (Rhythms, Initiative, Communication, Help) offered a guide for cultivating connection. Vulnerability was central to her message: ruptures in relationships are not the end, but an opportunity to build trust through repair. Community, she reminded the audience, is where resilience, belonging, and meaning are born. Bohannon then asked attendees to write down a burden they hadn’t shared with anyone; and had others read the anonymous burdens aloud to the audience. She then asked who in the room would support a woman carrying these burdens, and every person stood up. *“When we share our burdens, the weight divides. When we share our joy, it multiplies.”*



STAY CONNECTED:



Attendee Hub*

Scan QR code to access additional content from WII2025 speakers.

**Attendee Hub is only accessible to WII2025 attendees*



Virtual Event

Scan QR code to sign up for *Strength in Reconnection*.
September 9th at 2:00pm ET




Social Media

How are you sharing WII2025 with *your* sphere of influence?
Use hashtag #NAEDWII2025



WII2026

Scan QR code for updates about next year's conference!
June 15-17 in Houston, TX

An aerial photograph of Houston, Texas, showing the downtown skyline with numerous skyscrapers, including the Texas Tower and the Reliance Tower. The foreground shows a mix of urban development, including parking lots, roads, and green spaces with trees. The sky is clear and blue.

Women IN INDUSTRY



JUNE 15-17, 2026

VISIT

Houston