

Empowerment and education the focus of Aurora Chamber Women's Summit

By Brock Weir

Local women in business will gather at the Royal Venetian this Thursday, October 25, for a summit designed to Empower, Educate and Elevate.

These are the three driving themes of the 2018 Aurora Chamber Women's Summit hosted by the Aurora Chamber of Commerce. Tailored for working women and entrepreneurs, the summit will feature keynote speakers Jazz Samra and Traci Melchor, presentations from Liz Scott, the Business Firestarter, Kirsten Martin and Anne-Marie Cabrini, co-founders of K&A Personal Concierge, Nikki Pett of Sigma Promotions, and Kelly Stacey and Anastasia Trutneva, co-owners of Artistica Ballroom Dance Studios.

"It is about empowering women to build their businesses, grow their businesses and, if you're working for a company as well, to grow your career," says Sandra Ferri, Executive Director of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce. "We have Jazz Samra coming to us from Google to talk about what tools they have to help women grow their business, and we're also looking at mental health. Mental health is an issue everyone is talking about these days, so we have Traci Melchor from eTalk to talk about her life, her work, and mental illness in the workplace because this is something she has been dealing with over the last few years.

"I am hoping that people walk away from the summit with tools to bring back to their businesses and actually use them to help them grow and make a difference in their businesses. Whether it is talking to your customers and how to do that, or social media, it is the tools you need that aren't always readily available for you when you're sitting in your home office."

As an entrepreneur herself, one thing Ms. Ferri says she struggled with was effective marketing. It's an area, she says, where entrepreneurs can spend a lot of money, but the desired results aren't always achieved.

"Social media is a way to do that, so we're focusing on digital as a big part of this summit and how to get your word out, how to tell your story," she says. "It really isn't just about selling your product, it is about telling your story and why they should buy from you. We're putting focus on that, as well as how you communicate with people and build relationships that will ultimately grow your business."

Woman or man, all entrepreneurs share similar challenges, Ms. Ferri adds. While women are the focus of this summit, the topics that are set to be discussed are relevant to all entrepreneurs.

"I don't know if there are huge differences between men and women when they start businesses," she says. "I think women sometimes need a little bit more support to empower them to do what they need to do to build their businesses and that is also part of what I am hoping this summit will do."

The Aurora Chamber Women's Summit is just one of a number of initiatives the Aurora Chamber of Commerce has to support women in business. They offer a monthly Women of Influence luncheon series, which has long-featured on Chamber calendars, but one that has a new spin this year.

"They used to be straight networking luncheons, but more we do some professional development at each of those luncheons," says Ms. Ferri, adding that, in addition to professional development, \$5 from every \$15 ticket goes to a women's charity. "People get to know each other really well through these conversations because you're understanding what things mean to their business and what is important to them as people, not just entrepreneurs. It is women supporting women in all senses, not just through the group, but with charity as well."

For more information on the Aurora Chamber Women's Summit, or the Women of Influence Luncheon series, visit www.aurorachamber.on.ca.