

WithIt is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1997 to encourage and develop leadership, mentoring, education, and opportunity for professional women in the home furnishings industry. To learn more about sponsorship opportunities, memberships, founders, board of directors and board of governors, visit www.withit.org or call Sara Lyke at (336) 880-2188.

Get WithIt!

By Kathy Wall

Women Do Impact Industry

“ We can help you attract, retain, encourage and fully leverage female brainpower and talent. ”

Who objects to increased diversity on the board or in executive offices? No one.

Who has brains and talent and guts enough to step up to the plate? More women than you think. And, although they can and should be recruited from everywhere, they're not all to be found in some other industry arena.

In fact, I personally know and vouch for some 415 outstanding women working in the home furnishings industry today, some corporate presidents (OK, two), some VPs, some creatives (lots), some financial and legal mavens, some top-tier sales reps and some enthusiastic novices.

That explains our existence.

We encourage women – at all levels. We walk alongside them, educate and mentor them. We connect them.

We assist businesses. We provide a connecting point, a mentoring resource, a reservoir of real thinking and new ideas – free for the taking. We honor and recognize best practices and persons who promote or advance female leadership. We can help you attract, retain, encourage and fully leverage female brainpower and talent.

Why? Why do we – a small group of volunteers, already occupied in super-high-performance day jobs – do it?

Because Fortune 500 companies with the highest representation of women on senior management teams have a 35-percent higher return on equity and a 34-percent higher total return to shareholders than companies with the lowest female representation, according to catalystwomen.org's report on the impact of gender and diversity on the bottom line.

Because diversity initiatives help a company to keep a competitive advantage by improving corporate culture, improving employee moral, higher retention of employees, easier recruitment of new employees, decreased complaints and litigation, increased creativity, decreased interpersonal conflict between employees, enabling movement into emerging markets, improving client relations, and increasing productivity, according to *Fortune's* 2001 article on diversity in business.

But really, why WithIt (Women In The Home Industries Today)? After nine years of explaining our existence one-on-one, it's time we speak to you collectively.

My friends, we do it ...

Because we buy the furniture (with his help, wink, wink). Because we CAN do the job. Because growth in home furnishings is like a painfully ripe peach just waiting to be picked. Because we make home. Because success follows belief, purpose and passion. Because design makes us happy. Because we do design. Because teamwork is our forte. Because some leaders are born women. Because if we can't play here, we'll play somewhere else. Because relationships are everything. Because in business, relationships are everything. Because it's a fashion industry.

Because we love fashion. Because if you don't get it, who does? Because what kind of industry wastes brainpower?

Our commitment to women, and – more importantly – your commitment to women, could be one of our industry's most effective tools for growth.

Call me.

If you are a WithIt member, have your profile or needs sheet handy. If you're a CEO or senior executive who gets it, enroll your female associates today and reap the benefits. And if you really get it and you want to see the advancement of women in this industry, sponsor our educational conference Aug. 29-31.

Ask about market events such as Competitive Intelligence, Educational Breakfasts, Student Day of Mentoring and our annual WOW Awards and Scholarship Foundation.

Then join this monthly dialogue in support of initiatives and opportunities for women – both those who work within our industry, and those who control all of our futures with their purchasing power.

As I said, call me. **HFB**

