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# APPLYING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE COMMUNICATION IN OUTREACH, RECRUITMENT & RETENTION STRATEGIES IN VR

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# GOALS

- Communicating in a culturally responsive and inclusive way can help VR agencies have positive interactions & communicate more effectively with underserved populations.
- Culturally responsive communication can help VR agencies convey messages sensitively and effectively across various cultural backgrounds, supporting improved retention of existing employees.
- Mastering culturally appropriate communication helps VR agencies foster trust, improve relationships, and better serve their internal and external clients.

# OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTIONS

- Overview of Culturally Responsive Communication – What it is and Why It Matters to VR
- Experiences from the VR Agencies
- Strategies and Tips
- A Call to Action and Next Steps



# CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE COMMUNICATION

WHAT IS IT & WHY DOES IT MATTER TO VR?

# WHAT IS IT?

- The ability to communicate with people while being aware of and accommodating their cultural difference
  - Involves respect and understanding that socio-cultural issues can affect a VR client's beliefs and behaviors
  - Core of culturally responsive communication is a person-centered approach
- Understand the cultural norms of a group
- Recognize that there are many ways to communicate and to understand a message
- Respect people's backgrounds, beliefs, values, customs, knowledge, lifestyle, and social behaviors

# WHY IT MATTERS: 2023 CRC CODE OF ETHICS

## A: The Counseling Relationship.

3.c. Communicate information in ways that are both developmentally and multiculturally appropriate while taking into consideration the accessibility needs of the client

- Qualified interpreters, translators, captioning
- Collaborate with clients, considering the multicultural implications of informed consent and adjusting practices accordingly

# WHY IT MATTERS: 2023 CRC CODE OF ETHICS

## B: Respecting Client Rights.

### 1.c. Multicultural Considerations.

- Develop & maintain awareness & sensitivity of the client's cultural meanings of confidentiality and privacy

## C: Advocacy & Accessibility

### 2.b. Referral Accessibility

- Refer clients only to programs, facilities, or employment settings that are appropriately multiculturally responsive

# WHY IT MATTERS: 2023 CRC CODE OF ETHICS

## D: Multicultural Considerations.

- 1.a. Establishing Constructive Multicultural Counseling Relationships. To be aware that professional relationships may be impacted by cultural differences that exist between the CRC and the client
- b. Impact of Client Intersectionality/Identity. Across each stage of the rehabilitation counseling process
- d. Interventions. Develop or adapt interventions & services that considers the client's cultural perspectives.



# CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE COMMUNICATION

- Creates a safe and welcoming environment
- Involves building relationships, learning about culture and traditions, and incorporating these into the relationship
- Reinforces engagement and respect
- Helps us understand and appreciate different perspectives and builds empathy for others
- Chopp, S., Topitzes, D., & Mersky, J. (2023). Trauma-Responsive Vocational Rehabilitation Services. *Behavioral Sciences*



# EXPERIENCES FROM VR AGENCIES

ALEXA SOBERAL, CONNECTICUT AGING & DISABILITY SERVICES

TRICIA EYERLY & MICHAEL MACKILLOP, WA DEPARTMENT OF SERVICES  
FOR THE BLIND

# Providing background

October 2022 Conducted a Latino Needs Assessment

**Purpose:** Conduct a needs assessment for ADS and the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) focused on the Connecticut Latino community.

**Goals:**

**Data Review:** Analyze administrative and statewide data to compare service utilization and outcomes of the Latino community with other racial and ethnic groups in Connecticut.

**Access Understanding:** Investigate access and utilization patterns of ADS/BRS services by the Latinx community, identifying strengths and weaknesses and making recommendations for improvement.

## Why is it important

- As of 2020, the Hispanic population in the U.S. reached 62.1 million accounting for 19 percent of all Americans. The Hispanic population is also the fastest growing group in the U.S. increasing 23 percent between 2010 and 2020 (Pew Center Research, 2022). For many states, including CT, the demographic shift to more people identifying as Latino will undoubtedly intensify the existing challenges to provide more equitable VR services and employment.
- "Cultural differences were often mentioned when speaking about language barriers. Needs assessment respondents suggested that people with certain language repertoires, like those speaking Spanish, often felt disadvantaged in their access to language-mediated services and benefits and this created a lot of anxiety and fear."

# Culturally Responsive outreach

## **Cultural Competence:**

Understand cultural values, beliefs, and norms specific to Latino communities.

Employ bilingual counselors or staff to facilitate communication.

## **Building Trust:**

Establish rapport through community engagement and relationship-building.

Use culturally relevant materials and approaches to foster trust.

## **Community Partnerships:**

Collaborate with local organizations, churches, and community leaders to reach wider audiences.

Leverage existing networks to disseminate information about counseling services.

## **Accessible Services:**

Offer services in various locations and formats (e.g., in-person, virtual) to enhance accessibility.

Provide flexibility to accommodate work schedules.

## **Awareness Campaigns:**


Conduct outreach campaigns to raise awareness vocational rehabilitation services.

Utilize social media, local radio, and community events to spread information.

## **Addressing Stigma:**

Educate communities about vocational rehabilitation to reduce stigma associated with seeking help.

Share success stories and testimonials to normalize counseling.



“I think that it’s mass messaging. It’s, again, having the cultural awareness to reach out to individuals so that we’re not focused only on marketing our services across the state in English and not just translating it over just to Spanish word for word but actually sending a different message that’s culturally relatable for the Latine population.” [Staff]

# Seeking assistance

**Goal:** Develop and implement a statewide strategic approach to marketing in this current and future landscape to effectively target our audience and promote new connections

- Establish consistent messaging
- Enhance Social Media & Video content to reach wider audience
- Address Outreach to underserved populations
- Bring in marketing expertise

## PROCESS AND OUTCOME

1.

### PR

Multicultural media outlets in multiple language

- PR candidates selected
- PR training provided to staff

2.

### Target Audience

Facebook and Instagram, create custom audiences based on different consumer interests/characteristics, and even specific geographies if needed.

3.

### Videos

Using leaders, employers who are currently employing people with disabilities, disability advocates... as well people with disabilities currently employed.

4.

### Social Media

Social media content calendars focused on 3-4 communication/messaging pillars, to ensure we are publishing ongoing, relevant content for consumers and employers to generate awareness and leads for the employment programs.

5.

### Data

Establish and monitor key targets and metrics using dashboards



# PR / Earned Media

**Public Relations (PR)** refers to the strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics. It encompasses a wide range of activities, including media relations, crisis communication, event planning, and community engagement. The goal of PR is to manage and shape the perception of a brand or organization in the eyes of its audience.

**Earned Media** is a subset of media coverage that occurs when a brand gains exposure through media coverage, social media mentions, or word-of-mouth without having to pay for it. This type of media is considered "earned" because it reflects the organic interest or support from journalists, influencers, or the public, rather than being directly paid for through advertising. Earned media can include news articles, blog posts, social media shares, and mentions in podcasts or broadcasts. It is often valued for its credibility, as it comes from third-party sources rather than the brand itself.

In summary, PR is the broader practice of managing communications and relationships, while earned media specifically refers to the unpaid media exposure that results from those efforts.



## Recommendations

“trans-create” your brand and messaging to be culturally-relevant to today’s diverse consumer

Latinos and multicultural consumers are more connected than any other demographic

Needed to develop a bi-lingual social media management and content development.

# Recruitment Campaign

Planned and executed a BRS VR Counselor Recruitment campaign to drive awareness and leads for VR career opportunities at BRS.

- Developed website and vanity URL ([WorkForBRS.org](http://WorkForBRS.org)) as the call to action to find opportunities and sign up for updates as well as inform people on the requirements and benefits.

- Content creation was a significant part of the approach, and multiple videos were produced for web, digital and social.

ITEM DESCRIPTION  
Campaign Dates  
August – October 2023  
Media Mix TV, OTT, radio, streaming, outdoor, print, digital marketing, social media Languages English and Spanish

MEDIA		ELEMENTS	8/14	8/21	8/28	9/4	9/11	9/18	9/25	10/2	10/9	10/16	10/23	10/30
<b>RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN</b>														
NBC - TV	0:30													
NBC Spot-On, OTT, Pre roll digital (NBC 6 platform)	0:30s ENG/SP													
NBC/Telemundo	:30s & 15s SP													
Entravision (Univision/Unimas)	2 TV segments (will run on FB)													
Entravision	TV & OTT :30													
Entravision	Email Blast													
FOX61	TV :30													
FOX61	Geo Fencing													
FOX61	Pre-Roll/OTT													
Altice	Digital Messenger EN & SP													
Altice (Cable TV - Fairfield County)	TV :30 SP & ENG													
iHeart	stream - audio 15s & 30s													
iHeart	podcast - audio 15s /30s													
iHeart	emails EN & SP													
Camelo Digital	Digital Ads													
Camelo Social	Social ads													
Lamar	OOH - Billboard													
Outfront	OOH EN+SP - Billboard (East Hartford, Manchester, New Britain, New Haven, Waterbury)													
Hot 97	Radio and News & Weather report													
Dinamica	Radio													
Viva	Radio													
Cumbre	Radio													
Bomba	Radio													
La Voz	Print Ad - Weekly													
El Sol	Print Ad - Weekly													
La Vision	Print Ad - Monthly													
Identidad Latina	Print Ad - BiMonthly													



Creative was developed in Spanish and English in both :30's and :15's to support broadcast and OTT..

:30 Radio spot was also developed in both English and Spanish for both broadcast and streaming.

English Radio

Spanish Radio

Spanish TV :30 Spot  
(also :15)



English TV :30 Spot  
(also :15)

- La Voz
- El Sol
- La Vision
- Identidad Latina

750,000  
Impressions



**¡Una Carrera de Impacto te Espera!**

El Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) está contratando personas bilingües como Consejeros de Rehabilitación Vocacional para ayudar a las personas con discapacidades a prepararse, encontrar y avanzar en el trabajo.

Si te apasiona crear una fuerza laboral inclusiva y tienes un título universitario y experiencia en rehabilitación, psicología, trabajo social o asesoramiento, tenemos vacantes inmediatas. BRS ofrece un salario competitivo y beneficios del estado de Connecticut.

**Empieza tu Carrera en Consejería Vocacional en [WorldForBRS.org](http://WorldForBRS.org).**

UN EMPLEADOR DE ACCIÓN AFIRMATIVA  
E IGUALDAD DE OPORTUNIDADES

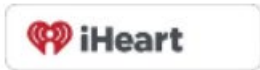


# CAMPAIGN – Email Blast

Email blast was sent to a targeted audiences in both English and Spanish leveraging both i-Heart and Univision media platforms for deployment.

- E-Blast included information on the role of a VR counselor and qualifications needed.
- Overall email blasts delivered above industry open rate (views) of 8% and 1% CTR.

<b>Headline:</b>	Estamos Contratando Consejeros de Rehabilitación Vocacional. Aplica Hoy.		
<b>Broadcast Date:</b>	08/28/2023		
<b>Audience:</b>	50,000	<b>ID:</b>	1879808
<b>Views:</b>	7,259	<b>Clicks:</b>	950
<b>View %:</b>	14.52%	<b>Click %:</b>	1.90%



### Targeted Email Performance

Deployment: 8/28/23  
Recruiting



### Targeted Email Performance

Deployment: 8/12/23  
Recruiting





## A Career With Impact Awaits!

We're Hiring Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors

Every day, people with disabilities are seeking for a real and long positive career choice across employment in Connecticut. The success of Rehabilitation Services Jobs (RSJ) Job Vacancies at Rehabilitation Connecticut is to help people with disabilities explore the, find and advance on the job.

If you have passion for helping others to be confident in their work and self-esteem and background in rehabilitation, psychology, social work or counseling, we have immediate openings. With a focus on respectful safety and sense of ownership at work.

### What is a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor at BRS?

- VR counselors help people with disabilities prepare for their new careers on the job.
- VR counselors develop individualized and comprehensive plans that help individuals related barriers to their individual on-site work readiness work.
- VR counselors manage referrals from educational institutions, school systems, healthcare providers, etc.
- VR counselors obtain and use IEDs to coordinate the in-site skills of being job-ready with their clients.



Learn More



### What are the Qualifications for a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor?

- A bachelor's degree with a minimum of 30 credits in a field such as psychology, social work, counseling, or rehabilitation services.
- Experience in a field of high interest in direct or indirect work with disabilities.
- Experience providing direct and indirect services to individuals with disabilities.
- Also related experience and background.



Learn More



High potential career opportunity at Rehabilitation Services Jobs (RSJ) Job Vacancies at Rehabilitation Connecticut. Contact us today.



## ¡Una Carrera de Impacto te Espera!

Estamos Contratando Consejeros de Rehabilitación Vocacional

Every day, people with disabilities are seeking for a real and long positive career choice across employment in Connecticut. The success of Rehabilitation Services Jobs (RSJ) Job Vacancies at Rehabilitation Connecticut is to help people with disabilities explore the, find and advance on the job.

If you have passion for helping others to be confident in their work and self-esteem and background in rehabilitation, psychology, social work or counseling, we have immediate openings. With a focus on respectful safety and sense of ownership at work.

### ¿Qué hacen los Consejeros de Rehabilitación Vocacional?

- Los consejeros ayudan a las personas con discapacidades a prepararse a prepararse y avanzar en sus vidas.
- Los consejeros desarrollan planes individualizados que ayudan a las personas con discapacidades a superar sus barreras para encontrar el trabajo que les permite ganar su vida.
- Los consejeros administran los servicios de rehabilitación personal, social, conductual, vocacional, y en otros de sus clientes, entre otros.
- Los consejeros obtienen y utilizan los IEDs para coordinar las habilidades de ser job-ready con sus clientes.



Aprende Más



### ¿Cuáles son las Calificaciones para un Consejero de Rehabilitación Vocacional?

- Los consejeros tienen un título de licenciatura o un título de grado con un mínimo de 30 créditos en un campo como psicología, trabajo social, consejería vocacional, o servicios de rehabilitación, entre otros.
- Experiencia en un campo de alto interés en directa o indirecta con personas con discapacidades.
- Experiencia brindando servicios directos e indirectos a personas con discapacidades.
- También experiencia y antecedentes.



Aprende Más



High potential career opportunity at Rehabilitation Services Jobs (RSJ) Job Vacancies at Rehabilitation Connecticut. Contact us today.

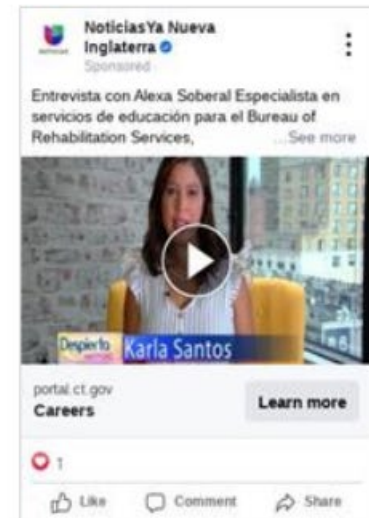
Boosted content on partner SM pages, delivered additional **250K+** impressions for the campaign.



**Impressions 47,316**  
**Reach 40,517**  
**Clicks 999**  
**CTR 2.11%**



**Impressions 168,352**  
**Reach 159,181**  
**Clicks 240**  
**CTR 0.14%**



**Impressions 50,725**  
**Reach 24,992**  
**Clicks 110**  
**CTR 0.22%**



# Culturally Responsive Communication – WA-B Story

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**Department of Services  
for the Blind**

# An Administrator's Bottom Line

- Rehab Act mandate to identify and serve underserved communities
  - CSNA, State Plan
- To be successful:
  - Messaging
  - Belonging

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Our buzz words can have a completely different meaning among communities

# Independence



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# Belonging

- Culturally responsive messaging alone is not enough
- Services and experience must also be culturally responsive
  - Language
  - Representation
  - Services aligned with community and individual's values

- **Language**
  - Instant Interpretation by phone
  - Pay increase for conversational languages
- **Representation**
  - Intersectionality of blindness
  - Interaction of customers with blind staff
  - Accessible internal processes
- **Services**
  - Training Center



# Recruitment & Hiring

- Targeted jobs boards
- Reasonable Accommodations prominent at top of recruitment text
- All hiring managers attend Recognizing and Mitigating Bias in hiring training
- Removing unnecessary levels of education across job classifications that can be performed by years of experience instead
- Removing unnecessary skills

- Creating interview questions that are predefined and coincide with the scoring rubrics
- Score Sheet crosswalks interview questions with skills and competencies required
- Removal of “Long-Term Fit” Score
- Scoring individually prior to panel debriefing
- Offering “in-training” positions



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# Creating an Environment of Belonging

- Customer voice
  - Compensate for lived experience
  - Community Forums in evening
  - Collaboration with Blind Consumer Organizations
- Staff Voice
  - Agency culture pulse point surveys
  - Fireside Chats & Listening Sessions
  - Staff-level development of Mission/Vision/Values
  - Active support attending state enterprise business resource groups
  - Dual language pay



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# Creating an Environment of Belonging- Policy

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy and Respectful Work Environment Policies work hand in hand

- **DEI policy provides philosophical background for creating a safe and inclusive work environment. Some expectations include:**
  - Co-create with your colleagues a welcoming, supportive, safe, affirming, and respectful work environment.
  - Accept that mistakes will be made, acknowledged, learned from and improved upon as much of this journey requires learning through iterations of growth and failure.
  - Engage and support respectful dialogue and courageous conversations even when uncomfortable about racism, privilege, white fragility, dominant culture, ableism, oppression and historical trauma.
  - Identify and address micro-aggressions as they occur in our workplace, whether intentional or unintentional, and use these as opportunities to educate, learn, grow, listen and respond with respect.
  - Offer support and encouragement by honoring each individual's truth through the affirmation and validation of their values, beliefs, principles and lived experiences.
  - Promote diversity in all hiring activities including recruiting, interviewing and selection.
  - Recruit and appoint culturally, racially and ethnically diverse managers and leaders.
  - Actively listen to the experiences of staff, especially those from marginalized groups, and take action to change discriminatory or exclusionary practices.



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# Creating an Environment of Belonging

The Respectful Workplace Environment Policy provides more concrete descriptions of what respectful and disrespectful behaviors are, which has been useful in addressing behaviors.

- **Respectful behaviors listed include:**

- Committing to learn and develop an understanding of differing social and cultural norms.
- Taking responsibility for one's actions, displaying humility with mistakes and offering others grace and forgiveness for theirs.
- Emphasizing positivity and commonality rather than opposition or right and wrong.
- Finding ways to be constructive in providing feedback to others.

- **Disrespectful Behaviors listed include:**

- Offensive or inappropriate remarks, jokes, gestures, material (electronic or otherwise) or behavior
- Yelling
- Belittling
- Reprimanding in the presence of others
- Aggressive or patronizing behavior
- Embarrassing or humiliating behavior
- Intimidation and/or coercion
- Damaging gossip or rumors
- Bullying
- Inappropriate physical contact
- Covert behavior (inappropriately withholding information, undermining, underhandedness)
- Micro-aggressions



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# STRATEGIES AND TIPS

DR. EMILY A. BRINCK, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

# Active Listening and Empathy

## **Active Listening:**

- requires complete attention to the speaker
- Free from judgement or premature responses
- Involves absorbing the message fully and reflecting on it before replying
- Nonverbal & Verbal Cues

## **Empathy:**

- Shows understanding by acknowledging cultural contexts that may influence a person's experience

# Active Listening and Empathy (Example and Impact)

## **Example**

- In a VR setting, when working with a client from a collectivist culture, listen for cues related to family influence on their decision-making, and validate these perspectives.

## **Impact**

- Builds rapport, reduces resistance, and enhances client trust, which contributes to higher retention rates and client satisfaction

# Avoiding Assumptions and Stereotyping

## **Unconscious Biases & Stereotyping**

- Recognizing unconscious biases and challenging preconceived notions that may influence interactions.
  - Recognizing cultural complexity
  - Practical approach
  - Assumption check

# Avoiding Assumptions and Stereotyping (Example & Impact)

## **Example**

- When interviewing a client from a minority group, resist assuming that they face certain barriers based solely on their ethnicity. Instead, exploring their unique circumstances through open-ended question

## **Impact**

- Fosters a more personalized and respectful approach,
- Leading to clearer communication
- Improved service delivery
- Better retention of diverse clients and employees

# Adapting Communication Styles

## **Communication Methods**

- **Modifying communication methods to suit different cultural preferences and sensitivities**
  - Verbal communication
  - Non-verbal communication
  - Language Barriers

# Adapting Communication Styles (Example & Impact)

## **Example**

- Wne working with a client whose culture values indirect communication focus on softening critiques and providing feedback in a roundabout manner to avoid confrontation.

## **Impact**

- Tailoring communication ensures messages are understood
- reduced likelihood of misinterpretation
- strengthens relationships
- vital for both retention and trust-building

# Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity Training

## **Learning and Training**

- Continuous learning and training for staff on cultural diversity
- best practices for communication
  - Training content
  - Cultural humility
  - Periodic evaluations



# Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity Training (Example & Impact)

## **Example**

- Provide case studies of successful culturally responsive interventions, followed by debrief to extract lessons and improve future performance

## **Impact**

- Well-trained staff are most capable of handling diverse client needs effectively
  - boost retention
  - client satisfaction
  - builds agency's credibility in the community

# Inclusive Language and Communication Practices

## Inclusive Language & Communication

- Use language that is respectful, inclusive, and avoids marginalizing or stigmatizing any group
  - Person-first language
  - Avoid jargon
  - Culturally appropriate materials

# Inclusive Language and Communication Practices (Example & Impact)

## **Example**

- When developing career assessment materials, ensure they are available in multiple language and have been reviewed for culturally sensitivity.

## **Impact**

- Reduce misunderstandings
- Creates a more welcoming environment
- Promotes the retention of clients & employees from diverse backgrounds

# Case Study

## **Implementation of culturally responsive communication in VR agencies**

- Highlight a real-world or hypothetical example of how culturally responsive communication strategies were successfully implemented in a VR agency
  - Case description
  - Outcomes
  - Lessons learned

# Case Study (Impact)

## **Impact**

- Demonstrates the practical value of these strategies
- Provides evidence-based support for their continued implementation

# Summing it up!

**Improve Communication**  
**Retention and Engagement**  
**Building Trust**  
**Enhanced Service Delivery**



# A CALL TO ACTION



# A CALL TO ACTION

- Language Matters – What’s your style of communication?
  - Is it Complicated?
  - Do you use excessive jargon?
  - Are you Authoritarian?
  - Are you Patronizing?
- Leadership Matters – What Training Does Your Agency Provide?
- Check Your Resources
  - Relevant languages
  - Appropriate graphics
- Check Your Hiring
- Check Your Interpreter Services
- Check Yourself 😊



# REQUIRED SKILLS

- **Communication**
  - Ability to listen
  - Clarify for understanding
  - Inclusion and/or acknowledgement of family
  - Limiting use of jargon
  - Using inclusive language
- Avoid generalizations & stereotypes
- Avoid an assumption of similarity
- Avoid nonverbal misinterpretation

## CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE COMMUNICATION

It is important to explore with individual clients (and their families/communities) their beliefs, values, expectations, and understandings about VR and our processes, as well as their beliefs, values, expectations & understandings of disability, employment, and independent living, and their willingness to participate in the shared decision-making process.

# Call to Action



TO GET *something new*  
YOU HAVE TO STOP DOING  
*something old.*

[WWW.HEROPRESS.COM/ESSAYS/THE-POWER-OF-WOMEN-IN-WORDPRESS/](http://WWW.HEROPRESS.COM/ESSAYS/THE-POWER-OF-WOMEN-IN-WORDPRESS/)

- Peter Drucker 51

## Q&A / DISCUSSION / ADJOURN

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