



Power of the Purse: Negotiating as a Woman

By: Elizabeth Lash, ACC-NYC Women's Group Steering Committee Member



Helping women become “bolder, braver, and better-paid” was the theme of the evening at the September 6, 2018 event “Power of the Purse: Negotiating as a Woman,” sponsored by Kirkland & Ellis and the Women's Group Steering Committee. Bottomless Closet, a New York City non-profit which helps “connect women and work,” and Jamie Lee, a self-advocacy coach and lecturer, each presented on this theme.

Melissa Norden, Bottomless Closet's executive director, kicked off the event by screening a video highlighting her clients' experiences with the non-profit. Norden, fresh from hosting an “ambush makeover” on the Today show, talked about how Bottomless Closet works to improve women's lives by offering assistance on everything from resume (and wardrobe) makeovers, to interview practice tips, to on-the-job coaching—and more. In keeping with the event, she encouraged attendees to donate their gently-used handbags at the end of the evening.

Lee then presented her own hard-earned lessons in advocacy. She conducted a number of exercises to help attendees re-frame their negotiation mindsets: from practicing “power poses” to lower stress levels, to using her suggested acronyms as reminders of the elements of a negotiation strategy, to becoming more zen in letting go of specific outcomes. “I always start with ‘no,’” she told attendees.

A self-described “psychology geek,” Lee also shared observations to help attendees become more astute in predicting—and addressing—the concerns of a counterparty. While Lee acknowledged that it is still necessary, on occasion, to address the “elephant in the room” (a.k.a. implicit bias), ultimately, the way to achieve a successful negotiation is to approach the other side with empathy for their position, and to recognize that a negotiation is simply a “business conversation—with emotion.”



The event concluded with a networking reception in Kirkland Ellis' main foyer, with a sweeping view of Manhattan after the rain.