

By Marcy Tieger

A Day Without Awards

AUTOINC. asked me to write about my feelings as a 2010 recipient of AkzoNobel's Most Influential Women (MIW) Award, as well as my experiences as a woman in the collision industry. I tell you this up front because I would not normally write an article telling the reader about an award I received; no matter how proud I was to receive it (and I am).

Here's the truth: I long for a day when giving an award for being an influential woman in the collision industry is as peculiar as giving an award for being an influential white man. When we have a truly diverse work force that actually mirrors the communities we serve, these types of awards will become an oddity.

For now, attend most collision industry events and women (or for that matter, women and people of color), may comprise 10 percent of the attendees. Where are they? Are they employees inside organizations without enough seniority or clout to be allowed to attend? Are they business owners who cannot afford to attend? Or maybe, they can attend, but in this lopsided environment, they feel unwelcome? I'm not sure which is worse.

I gratefully accepted the award from AkzoNobel knowing that independent of its 11 years of honoring women through the MIW program, it provides scholarships to female students pursuing careers in collision repair, and it has been a strong supporter of the Women's Industry Network from the very beginning. It is a company that truly believes in diversity – these are not merely gestures for public consumption (and no, I'm not on their payroll).

I put them in the same category as the shop owner who acknowledged that before he could feel comfortable putting women on the shop floor, it was imperative that he provide his employees with sexual harassment education. And I also put the tech school



teacher who seeks out industry women to join him in mentoring and encouraging his female students in that same category, too.

As I think about diversity in the industry, I become discriminating in my analysis; focusing more on those who take action and less on those who just talk about it.

It's easy to be dismissive – to point to the Equal Opportunity Employer poster in the break room and say, "We're doing our part." And even we women, so aware of our gains but perhaps bleary-eyed from the struggle, sometimes lose sight of the fact that for many young women, this can still be a very

intimidating industry.

How would I describe my experiences as a woman in the collision industry? One word: Amazing. But I say that as someone who has the luxury to speak up. I have a few other things on my side, including age and self-employment.

What is the best part about being a woman in the industry who receives an award that extols her alleged "influence?" A few more minutes on the soapbox to ask: What are you doing to advance women in your business? **ai**

Marcy Tieger is a principal with Symphony Advisors, LLC, a consulting firm focused on delivering strategic, operational and financial advisory services to the automobile aftermarket parts and services supply chain and to automobile insurance physical damage claims organizations. She holds a B.A. and an M.A. from California State University, Fullerton and a Juris Doctor from Western State University, College of Law. She is a trustee of the Collision Industry Foundation, a member of the CIC Insurance Relations Committee, and a founding board member of the Women's Industry Network (WIN). Tieger can be reached at marcy.tieger@symphonyadvisorsllc.com.



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