

Hurdling into 2020

Leading women executives discuss what lies ahead

endor relationships. Technology.

Mentoring. Strategic plans. When you look at the boxes on the to-do list for the road ahead, the aforementioned topics are among the items that stand out. Just ask the leading women commercial construction executives who sat down to discuss business during our 2019 Commercial Construction & Renovation Women's Retreat in Louisville in August.





Anniece AckerFounder, Speaker
& Coach





Lauren Albrecht Strategic Account Specialist - Retail





Kat BielefeldDirector of New Store
Construction





Colleen Biggs Founder





Amanda Blieden Channel Manager





Kelli BuhayDirector of
Business Development





Celene ConnellSupplier Relationship
Manager





Leslie DeanAccount Director





Pam GoodwinPresident





Liz Hauswald Principal





Sarah KovacDirector of Architecture
& Engineering





Diane MaxwellGeneral Manager





Gina Noda President





Kelly ReillySenior Construction
Manager





Lori RowanProject Coordinator





Kelly SpauldingManager of Permitting
& Signage





Jennifer Willett Marketing





Justine YeagleStore Designer





Nicole YoungBusiness Development



Taking residence from Aug. 1-4 at The Embassy Suites in downtown Louisville, retreat attendees discussed the ever-growing need for today's professionals to get more proficient and efficient in their day-to-day duties. The road to success, among others things, means finding ways to build their acumen and relationships.

Sponsored by *Commercial Construction & Renovation* magazine, the roundtable discussion was part of the retreat's three-day agenda of business meetings and networking opportunities, including lunch and a tour of historic Churchill Downs.

On the following pages is the first session of the event's roundtable discussion. The second part will be covered in the November/ December issue.

CCR: Give us a snapshot of your role and some of your biggest needs?

Sarah Kovac, Maverik: Right now, I need the support of my internal team and peers within my department. I'm the only woman among my direct peer group, which has been quite a challenge—being new to a company and a culture that is very male dominated. I am having to adapt and find new ways of looking at innovation, process and development in order to be successful.

Jen Willett, MarketSmart: I think what I need is time, which might actually be a symptom of needing to be better at time management. I have the ability to take complex situations and scenarios and break them down in a way that can be communicated across teams, from clients to internal teams, etc. I'm very adaptive.

Kelly Spaulding, Party City: I need time, too. We're usually put under pressure for opening stores within a few months and getting the support from the cities we work in through getting that information from the field. Anything I can offer is permit questions, because I do ask for them 24/7.

Leslie Dean, Storefloors: We all have different needs. What I need are the kind of partners that can give me new ideas for doing things a different way. Being in the business for so many years, I am tired of things going the same way all the time. I think women today are able to offer more insightful ideas. It seems like too many people just want to do things the easy way, the same old way. I am looking for more innovation.

Amanda Blieden, YUM! Brands: At this stage in my career, I probably want and need more. I need to meet more people in the industry, especially women. There are not many of us. I am also looking for a fresh perspective.

Lori Rowan, Hunter Building Corp.: I'm the Sr. Project Coordinator in the Operations Department. As a company, we are always looking for good Subcontractors who are dependable and can build long lasting relationships. We try hard listening and paying attention to our client's needs. By working with Subcontractors who do the same, helps ensure that our job will be successful.

Justine Yeagle, AC Moore Arts and Crafts: One thing that I can personally use is more female support, especially in such a male-dominated field. I'm looking to get more information about buying online and picking up store platforms. We haven't rolled that out in our stores and it's something we want to spend some time researching.

We also want to branch outside of our traditional retail box to see what opportunities are out there, like the Benefits Cosmetics vending machines that are in airports. I think that's an interesting concept that can be applied to the arts and crafts market. I can offer any interior designer who wants to pursue their NCIDQ certification. Over the years, I have helped others with their exam preparation. The process can be overwhelming, but it is important.

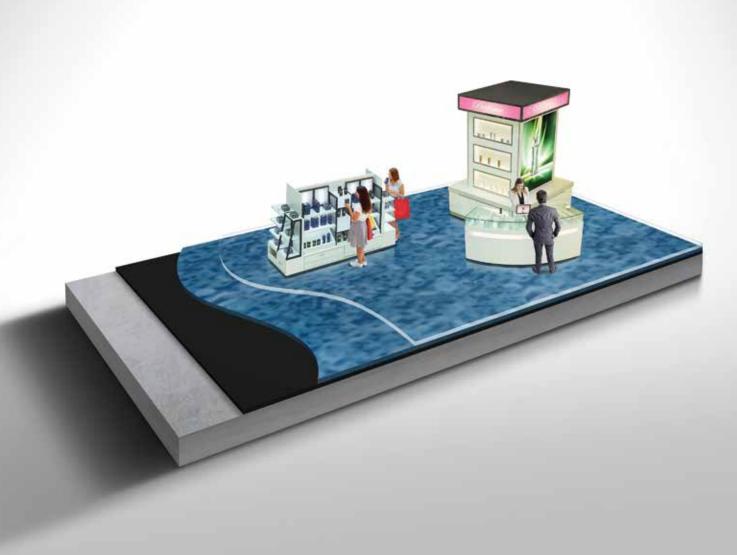


Nicole Young, IdentiCom Signs: I'm a giver not a taker. So I am a hunter. I was in collections for 25 years, so I can sense things from people. Being in real estate, I can find properties that no one else can find. I know a lot of people in a lot of different industries, so I can get you in front of people you would never expect to sit down and talk to.

I also am in a mentor program for young women who are just starting out. I want to teach them how to leave a legacy. Each one of us go to work, represent our brand and value our customers. I don't put up signs; I build relationships. While you might not need my services today, I want you to remember me. It is about making an impression and making a difference.

Pam Goodwin, Goodwin Commercial: I host a weekly TV show on Propelio TV teaching commercial real estate. I'm

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always looking for guests. We have been on the air for about three months and it has been great. My goal is to have a national TV show on commercial real estate that can help women invest in real estate. Being in the business for so long I have seen and done a lot of things. I have a big Rolodex with lots of really big connections. I like to help people get connected.

Celene Connell, Prime Retail Services: I think we need more platforms that can get women more involved and excited in the industry. We have to establish something that can help women be able to start, finish and solve a project. That goes back to my military background—get things accomplished.



Lauren Albrecht, Laticrete: I think there needs to be more networking opportunities in the industry, especially for women. I come from the retail ownership side of the business. Now that I am on the vendor side, I want to expand my network. Working in a male-dominated field, I want to be able to have a network where we can communicate. There are very few females in my company and most of them are on my team. We serve as project managers across 11 regions of the country, so it takes a lot of coordination-relationship building with men to get what we need them to do.

Diane Maxwell, Choctaw Shopping Center Enterprise: I'm looking for a network, too. I'm new in my field and I need to be recruiting new tenants, having a network of professionals with experience in this field would be great! I'm Native American, I live on an Indian reservation and work for my tribe. there are around 570 tribes in the U.S.—most are looking to build up their economies with new development projects, and add products and services to their areas.

Liz Hauswald, Nvironment: We are echoing a theme here. We all need networking. I've been in the industry for a long time, on both

sides of the table. I was on the in-house side and now I am on the vendor side. So I get both sides.

Kat Bielefeld, Shoe Sensation: I can offer out-of-the-box problem-solving. In construction, we're constantly being asked to mold, move and change, and to be cheaper and faster, so we are always looking for ways to do this.

Kelli Buhay, Retail Maintenance Specialist: What I have to offer is my relationships with my clients, knowing that I'm always looking out in their best interest, their position, locations, our relationship and our friendships. My relationships run deep and I value that trust.

What I also value about what I do is that I have my interior customers, which are all the people who work within Retail Maintenance Specialist. There are the people who speak with my customers, my project managers and coordinators who handle projects all day long, they are my ears I think at the end of the day, that's what fulfills me, keeping everyone happy.

Kelly Reilly, Campus Realty Advisors:

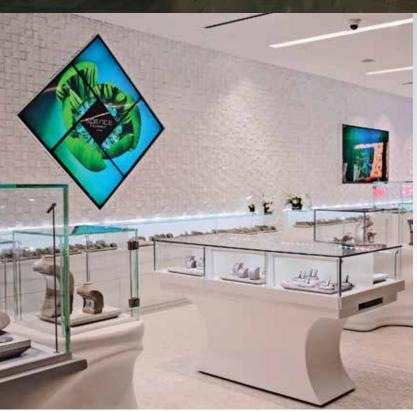
After spending the first 13 years of my career working in the architecture industry, I recently accepted the position of Senior Construction Manager with Campus Realty Advisors, a firm focusing on the acquisition, development and asset management of private student housing near university campuses. In my past roles, the party line was always, "The contractor has to tell us what things are going to cost." Now that I am on the ownership side, I am facing the challenges of developing early

stage budgets and cost models that will hold up over the duration of a project. My biggest needs are industry partners with student housing experience who can offer insight and feedback for upcoming construction projects.

Anniece Acker, Rise High Now: I came from the insurance industry, which was very male-dominated. I was able to serve as a coach there, helping roughly 8,500 CEOs, most of them men. I was brought in to balance the masculine and feminine energy. That's what I am known for inside of all stages. I change the whole dynamics of a culture so that everybody wins. It is a matter of learning how to merge the cultures. We are all meant to wake up. We are all meant to step into our greatest, not step back.

Gina Noda, Connect Source Consulting Group: I am the founder and principal consultant with Connect Source. I help bridge the gaps by connecting people and connecting the dots, creating cohesive and collaborative teams for successful outcomes for all, and setting up win-win-win-win situations for all. What I need is to hire some employees and start to grow my business.





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CIRCLE NO. 21

CCR: What are some of the hurdles you deal with or where are you stuck?

Shoe Sensation's Bielefeld: One of my hurdles is when I have to talk to a vendor that I don't have a specific need for and I am busy. I don't want to waste their time or mine. I would never not talk to them because you never know what they may bring to the table. It just may be that I cannot get with them on that specific day. Sometimes it is an email.

IdentiCom Signs' Young: What happens when you get an email like that? Do you respond? All of us probably get hundreds and hundreds of emails, so if what they are asking is not going to make an impact, how do you handle it?

Shoe Sensation's Bielefeld: I always try to answer within 48

hours. If I'm busy I will flag it and I try to get to it before the next week. That doesn't always happen. We're all human, so there's that aspect. But I always try to reach out and say, "Hey, I can't do it right now, try me again in two months, and then I can give you my time." Even if your pitch is great and I need your services, if I'm fully engulfed in what I'm doing, it falls on deaf ears.

MarketSmart's Willett: You have to offer value to people because time is the most valuable thing they have, especially if you are calling and asking for something in a pitch. As a society, we are so used to being solicited. You get telemarketing calls at home, which can be disruptive. The way to help yourself get around that is to offer something up front first. There is a law of reciprocity that works with people when you make an offer. Over time, even if it's not right away, the ones who you've been providing with value and not asking anything in return will begin to trust that you want to help them.

Sales is about helping people. That's all sales is. So if you're finding people are not responsive, it is not the end of the line. Send them an email with a guide that they can sign up for, a video they can watch about your services, whatever the material is you have. It has to be relevant and valuable to them. Over time, you can build a relationship.

IdentiCom's Young: We start out with a phone call. Emails can be impersonal. I am a hands-on person, so I want to talk to you. I want your feedback. I want to hear the

emotion in your voice versus an email. I don't mind a, "Hey, Nicole. I'll get back to you in two months when I'm ready." Simple and to the point.

Laticrete's Albrecht: Because I come from both sides, I used to be more responsive to an email versus a cold call. But it is very important for me to take a phone call. That's how I start to gain information, ask questions and offer my services. "Do you have any flooring issues?" I can offer some specifications or education. What are the maintenance concerns? What are the biggest team plays?

AC Moore's Yeagle: AC Moore's Yeagle: My biggest hurdle is trying to bring fresh ideas, regarding new materials and finishes, to the company. Cost is always at the forefront of decisions and usually a new, innovative product is out of our targeted range.



"You have to offer value to people because time is the most valuable thing they have, especially if you are calling and asking for something in a pitch."

- Jennifer Willett, Marketing, MarketSmart

Retail Maintenance Specialist's Buhay:

Sometimes, when I find when people are looking for budget items and to cut their cost, if you will, what ends up happening in many cases is you get what you pay for. But if you are looking to save money, what are you really saving? You don't want to end up with something that is done poorly and you certainly don't want to end up throwing money at something you were trying to save on.

Nvironment's Hauswald: I would say, too, I don't know if there is anybody else in the company you can engage with from a management perspective. Directors of

























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- Kelli Buhav, Retail Maintenance Specialists



construction are typically about budget, budget, budget. I get it and understand it—that's appropriate. But from a customer experience standpoint, can you draw more customers in from your competitors when you create a different store experience for them? That might be something to explore.

Shoe Sensation's Bielefeld: I am a designer by trade. Now that I am in the construction world, it has been quite the change. Initially, I was fighting for really cool ideas. Everything came down to budgets. Now that I am a director, I see that in a different light—budgets are important. Everything comes from the top down. I am usually left with, "I want the Taj Mahal for five dollars." I have been trying to sneak attack the whole process, by finding efficient ways to incorporate design.

Storefloors' Dean: I want to add one thing. For example, we are a liaison. We don't charge a fee. We could go to every vendor out there for you because we don't have a dog in the show. We can offer you every vendor out there, get all of the information you need, the budget, etc. We could source the products. We offer everything.

Maverik's Kovac: The most valuable thing for me, having an architectural background, has been talking to experienced superintendents. They are able to walk you through the process. It is important to invest your time and get as much on-site experience as possible You can look at a drawing all day, but when you see it being built, it completely changes how you look at it, how you draw it from the architectural side. You gain a whole new perspective.

Laticrete's Albrecht: You can look at manufacturers' websites, too. We have free online tutorials on our website. Join your local CSI (Construction Specifications Institute) local chapter, ask vendors if they provide lunch and learns or tutorials.

Party City's Spaulding: When I went to Party City, I was a construction coordinator. I didn't know what gondola was, and on the first day, that's what they told me to order



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for a store. So I starting asking tons of questions to the field guys. I tried to learn their lingo. That was a big help.

IdentiCom's Young: It is good to go to the person who has been in the field for a long time. This person has more knowledge. It also helps them feel appreciated.

Goodwin Commercial's Pam Goodwin: The first part of my career was in commercial interior design. You have to get out into the field and learn. I would take additional classes wherever and whenever I could. 30 years into this business and I am still learning every day. You just keep learning until you find a niche you like. You cannot be a generalist or a know it all.

Nvironment's Hauswald: The veteran construction guys are great. Don't let them intimidate you. There are some who relish putting people in their place, especially women. So stand up and push back. I had one guy swear using every name in the book thinking it was going to offend me. And I was like, "I heard it all before." Don't be afraid to give it back and hold your own. The more you know from being out in the field, the better it is for you—from a drawing standpoint or project management position, whatever the situation takes you.

Shoe Sensation's Bielefeld: I have experienced a lot of what you're talking about and I'm sure I will after 30-plus years. Here's the thing: You're going to make mistakes. That sucks. Just try not to make the same

mistake again. Learn from them. If you fail, fail fast and take care of it. Nobody is going to know everything.

Storefloors' Dean: One of the things I say all the time to GCs is that we're here to help you succeed. We want to make your look good. And then go out and practice what you preach. They are going to want you to show them you can do it.

Campus Realty Advisor's Reilly: Campus Realty Advisor's Reilly: Mistakes are going to happen, that's inevitable. Depending on how you react, they can either be major disruptors or teaching moments. The sooner you own up to the problem, the sooner everyone on the team can discuss solutions, implement them, and move on.

"One of my biggest hurdles right now is a clash between the design and marketing side, versus what's co-compliant for building and doing projects."

- Kelly Spaulding, Manager of Permitting & Signage, Party City Connect Source's Noda: The biggest hurdle for me right now is being at this cross road with my business, do I stay where I am and just maintain where I am currently at or do I hire employees & start to scale my business? I have been stuck here as this is a really hard decision for me.

YUM! Brands' Blieden: These are great tips. One of the things I need is for people to respond to things in a timely manner. Sometimes, I need a response. It is good to have tips on how to get faster responses.

IdentiCom Signs Young: I find that if you listen you will find clues within that conversation—what role people play. They can tell you how to get through the journey. A lot of the facility directors and sign companies I work with tell me what their role is in the process. The people on their team will be the ones who can help make the job better and more efficient. It is good to find who the team players are. When you have questions, you need answers. Your customers need answers.

Laticrete's Albrecht: I often find that giving people deadlines helps. "Please respond by the end of the day." "Please respond by Friday, 3 p.m."

Nvironment's Hauswald: When there is a deadline, what's the impact? Tell the person, "If I don't hear from you by this date, here's what's going to happen. You are not going to get what you need, when you need it." Sometimes, it is sort of like a game of chicken. But there has to be that sort of understanding. Everyone needs to know the





implications. Everybody gets phone calls and emails and questions during the day, so things fall through the cracks. It is not deliberate. But you have to get on the same page.

Storefloors' Dean: I treat them like my children. If they don't answer me, I text them. I text people all of the time. That will get answers.

Goodwin Commercial's Pam Goodwin: I find you also have to sometimes be a little more creative and just send them a text or email—send a video to their phone—to get their attention. We know people will respond to a video that comes with a text. It is a way to be different.

Storefloors' Dean: My biggest issues and problem comes from the client. The firms are finishing up the plans for you to get them at a 60 or 90 percent submittal. The GC is calling about the plans and saying he wants to start next week. It happens. And materials are late or broken. Sometime you don't have enough. So I need as much time as possible. The communication part is where projects get stressed.

Nvironment's Hauswald: One of the things we do to help our reps and vendors, and even our contractors, is once the specs are final, we email our reps all the information. Sometimes it's not a lot of information. We might not know who the GC or sub is, but at least you are arming yourself. You can tell them what's here, what's specked and where the project is. It is a start. You have a fighting chance.

Rise High Now's Acker: This is really interesting information. It is the kind of information that can really come in handy. The idea that came to mind is a universal tracking system that can tell you all of

the things you need. When you get a blueprint, the program tells you what you need, what you have and what you do not. It can help connect you with everything.

Shoe Sensation's Bielefeld: We use the Smartsheet tracking system. I find that most people are just checking a box. Too many do that and so we have to hold them accountable. If you don't have a task complete, it will be known. The tracking system tries to stop everyone from just checking boxes.

Campus Reality Advisor's Reilly: Another problem can be the chain of communication. You cannot always talk directly to the person you need to, because a vendor, contractor or client requires all communication to flow through them. It can complicate and convolute the process, especially if someone in the middle of the chain of communication is unresponsive.

Retail Maintenance Specialist's Buhay: We have software FE better known now as FEXA that continues to check on all calls, projects, etc. The software is built to make sure our clients are

taken care of throughout the life of the call. There are all different categories from tracking services, dollar volume, reporting, billing, invoicing or whatever it is that you need. It helps make sure that everything is being serviced, people are in place, products have been ordered, and so on. So I think a software-based situation helps greatly.

Party City's Spaulding: One of my biggest hurdles right now is a clash between the design and marketing side, versus what's co-compliant for building and doing projects. A new concept from marketing is to include digital screens in the storefront windows. Cities typically frown on the idea of flashing advertisements in the windows. We are constantly trying to come up with a solution between what looks good for our brand and what a city will allow.

AC Moore's Yeagle: IAC Moore's Yeagle: I recently dealt with a similar situation for our

Wall Township, New Jersey store. The township has strict storefront signage rules and we like to brand big. We were deep into the process for a sign variance before deciding to withdraw due to the cost. It is imperative to ensure all of the departments are on the same page and understand the risks being taken when applying for a variance.

Goodwin Commercial Pam Goodwin: I am sure most landlords won't approve things like that in the first place, probably 99 percent will not. I would have to use standard language in the lease and keep sending it to marketing for approval.



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Party City's Spaulding: One of the challenges of predesign and the build teams are trying to see the expected outcome from what's realistic versus a drawing. Its best to keep senior management and all parties involved when it comes to making those changes and what will actually be produced. This will keep all expectations consistent especially if there are price increases or surprise change orders.

Retail Maintenance Specialist's Buhay: Having been in the sign industry, there's nothing like that relationship within marketing and signage that keeps giving. I worked with Invesco in India and Toronto, Canada, as well as in Chicago and Atlanta. If you have ever been in any of those cities, you will see that they have a huge signage presence. It is all about the image of the brand and that sign represents location as well, It is free marketing. So spending that money to me is well worth the issue. It is definitely the other side of the coin.

Colleen Biggs, Lead Up For Women: When The Little Gym was looking at changes for its stores, we had the same issues. The best thing to do was to get all the powers to be that are making decisions in the room so that they understand what is happening. Have

the meeting now and let them know what the limitations are. That way, marketing has everything they need, including the limitations. They can be creative in that space, understanding what they can and cannot do.

Shoe Sensation's Bielefeld: Cost for those items alone is more expensive than window graphics. In every lease I have it says nothing can be blinking per city, state and township regulations. You don't want to stop the flow of the store and disrupt sales. That is a big ask. I fight that battle every day.

IdentiCom Signs' Young: We help with all of that—permitting, background, everything. It saves the client from being frustrated with contractors, job site, property leasing, strip malls. We find other variances where you can do what you can't do. So throw your margin to the stars. I deal with a lot of developers and what they are looking for in new locations.

Goodwin Commercial's Pam Goodwin: When I worked at Brinker International doing development for Chili's, we always had issues getting things approved. Sometimes it is best to take your marketing department with you. They can learn, too, CCR

Live from Louisville, it's ...

Retreat attendees kickoff festivities at Louisville hotspot

If you're looking for everything and anything Louisville, Fourth Street Live! is the place to be. That is where attendees of this year's Commercial Construction & Renovation Women's Retreat kicked off the three-day networking/business event.

Incorporating the heartbeat of downtown Louisville's vibe, the restaurant is one of the city's premier dining and entertainment destinations. Just a short walk from a slew of historic downtown hotels and Waterfront Park, it was the ideal place to get the Retreat ball rolling.

Sponsored by Commercial Construction & Renovation magazine, the retreat featured a series of networking opportunities and roundtable discussion. The gathering was held at the Embassy Suites in downtown Louisville.



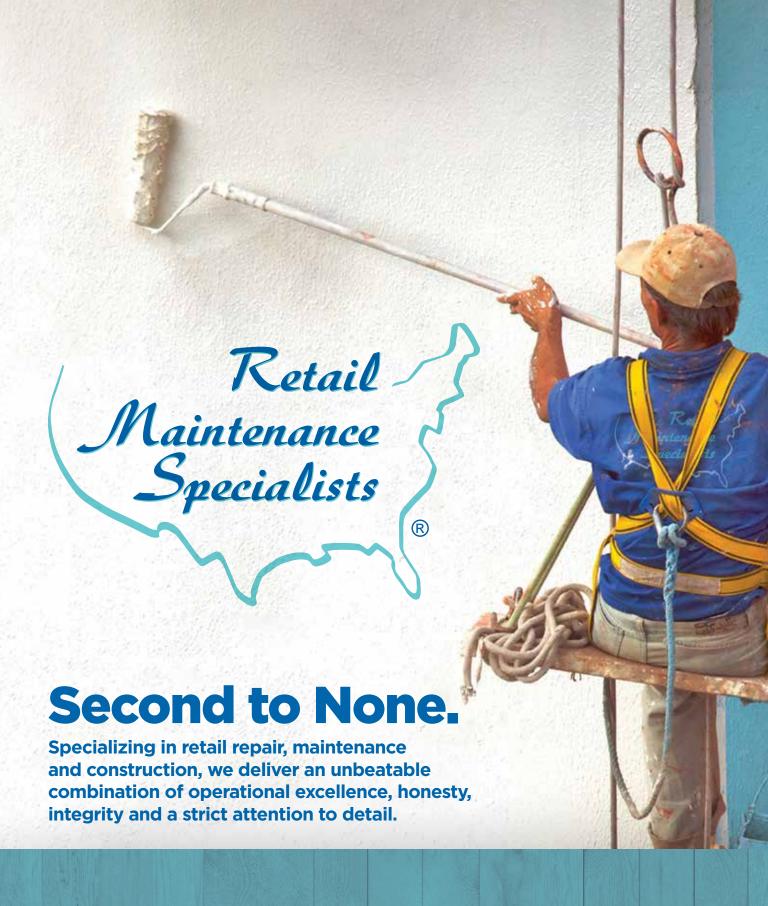












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The retreat, sponsored by Commercial Construction & Renovation magazine, was held at the Embassy Suites in downtown Louisville. The agenda featured a series of networking opportunities and roundtable discussion.

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Tour of historic Churchill Downs highlights Retreat visit

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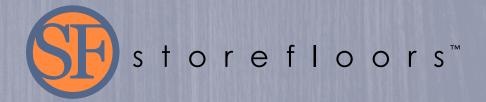








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