

CREW National Convention 2023 Article – Ryanne Bush Dent

Crew, Squad, Troop, Posse, Unit, Bunch, Partners. All synonyms for team. And this year, teamwork was the thread running throughout the 2023 CREW National Convention.

We all know what work is – we do it all the time. In fact, that’s why we’re involved in CREW in the first place. We all touch commercial real estate in our work or professional life.

But what about team? It’s inherent in the acronym CREW. In fact, crew is a synonym for team.

The 2023 National Convention really brought this team emphasis front and center. The conference had a lot of great content, and I highly enjoyed it. But the real showstopper of this convention was the focus on teams and teamwork. It permeated every facet of this convention, bringing people together. It seems natural that this year bringing people together was the focus – I mean, we’ve been separated and holed up in our houses and with our personal “crews” for years. But now, it’s time to come out of those personal crews and work on our professional crews, or teams.

Many of us have probably struggled with getting people back into the office. Many of us have probably struggled with keeping good workers. This convention catapulted many of us back into the public sector, away from our personal crews and back to our professional crews. The insight, tips, tricks and vision shared by many of the speakers at the convention can assist with this reintegration with our professional teams. And I think it does more than that – it pushed us to not only re-up our commitment to our professional crews, but to expand those professional crews, thinking of a broader sense of CREW community to help us all achieve our goals.

For me, the opening session was just outstanding. I have to admit, I was a bit skeptical: how is a world class kayaker going to talk about teamwork? Isn’t kayaking an individual sport? But Robyn Benincasa turned out to be an excellent speaker, able to communicate the value and challenges of teamwork.

Robyn’s understanding of teamwork, in some of the roughest terrains on earth, was not just interesting, but insightful. She talked about the struggles, particularly being the only woman on an adventure racing team. Something most of us can relate to – how many times are you the only woman on a deal, project or case? She talked about the benefit of teams and relying on your teammates to (sometimes) literally carry you across the finish line.

Robyn’s experiences transcend the adventure racing context – something, by the way, I have no interest in participating in! But my personal disinterest in being an adventure racer didn’t take away from her message at all. Not only could we all understand the underpinning of teamwork as applied to our own lives, but Robyn also

shared how adventure racing then morphed into her Project Athena Foundation to help trauma survivors and her quests in kayaking. Her triumphs were due to teamwork. She could have never accomplished what she has without a team – and we can't either. If we want to take that next step, if we want to continue our journey, if we want to thrive, we have to do it together.