PUT YOURSELF IN A POSITION TO SUCCEED
I am a planner. I am a planner by profession—but also by personality. I am the person who makes Excel spreadsheets for weekly dinners and binders for vacations. I like things to be organized. Linear. Clear. This is the approach I like to apply to my life, and especially to my career path. So it is understandable that when I had an opportunity to meet so many amazing mentors at the ULI Fall Meeting, and their common career advice was to allow for some “serendipity” in your life, I had a lot to think about.

Thanks to the Women’s Leadership Institute of the ULI, I was fortunate to attend the 2015 Fall Meeting in San Francisco as a Prologis National Scholarship Recipient. My mentor was Debbie Orshefsky, a partner at Holland & Knight, LLP. Over the course of the week, I got to hear her stories, and the stories of her colleagues, of how they’ve arrived at the top of their respective fields. They have all worked extremely hard, and they are some of the smartest and most talented professionals I’ve had an opportunity to get to know. When listening to their experiences, I wanted to tease-out the commonalities so I knew how to approach navigating my own career path.

The common theme I heard was that in addition to hard work, talent, dedication, and ambition, in everyone’s success story, these women seemed to think that there was a moment (or two) of chance that put them at the right place at the right time. But the more I learned about their experiences, it became clear that the reason these moments existed in the first place, was because these women weren’t afraid to put themselves in a position to succeed. So while yes, everyone must expect the unexpected and I need to accept that not all in my career (or life) can be planned, there are things you can do to make those moments more likely to occur, and that for many of the women I spoke to, their success had a lot less to do with chance and a lot more to do with brains and strategy. And I believe that the Urban Land Institute is a primary vehicle available to women, and men, to help make that happen. From all the stories I’ve heard and advice I’ve received—not just at the Fall Meeting, but from industry leaders in general—real estate professionals can put themselves on the path to success by meeting new people, learning new things, and giving back to our profession and our communities, all cornerstones of the Urban Land Institute’s Mission Statement. These ideas are explored below.

1. Meet New People
The more people you know, the more opportunities available to you. You never know when someone is going to think of you for a job or project. The ULI facilitates connections between all facets of real estate professionals better than any other organization out there, so take advantage and meet new people outside of our immediate market and comfort zone.

2. Learn New Things
Everyone can learn something new, every single day. And sometimes, that new thing you learn will change the way you look at problem-solving or relationship building. Learning something new doesn’t have to be technical; it can be learning how to listen better, be a better mentor, or engage more with your community. ULI gives its members the tools to get smart on a range of topics, from projects to people.

3. Give Back
The most successful real estate professionals recognize that our industry is inextricably linked to the communities in which we do business in. We must be active participants in our communities by giving back by donating our time, ideas, and financial resources. Together, we can build better places.

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