

The David F. Miller Center for Retailing Education and Research conducted its 18<sup>th</sup> Retailing Smarter Symposium in Orlando June 25-26. With innovative speakers and new ways to explore opportunities, the Symposium offers a unique venue to retailers and students, helping them progress within the industry and survive the difficult economy through an open exchange of ideas.

Participants came from around the globe to focus on topics of strategic importance to retailers. The impressive line-up of speakers and topics included:

Deborah Weinsberg, retailing/broadlines, Citi Investment Research — focused on best practice fundamentals to help any retailer succeed in any environment.

Michael Boylson, executive vice president and chief marketing officer of JCPenney took the company's 107-year history to demonstrate success through continuous improvements that were innovative and relevant for the customer.

Tony Hsieh, the chief executive officer of Zappos.com — shared how building a brand, culture and company that matters to customers keeps his company thriving.

Alison Bond, author of *The Direct Hit* — offered practical ideas on how to stay on top of the competition.

Julia Arnette, vice president, Global Retail Industry for IBM — shared insights gleaned from an IBM survey of more than 1,100 CEOs.

Toni Koziak, vice president, product development, Dick's Sporting Goods — spoke about differentiation in the marketplace through private brand assortments.

Mike Kratofil, senior vice president, global market development, Jarden Consumer Solutions — gave a talk on the evolution of retailer/supplier relationships and the value that is added for both sides.

This symposium brought about a new approach to conference education. Twice during the two day event, the participants broke out into concurrent sessions Michael Boylson, executive vice president and chief marketing officer, JCPenney — hosted the breakout session "Surviving the Storm and Attracting Customers During Difficult Times," which led participants to determine that the "winners" of this economic crisis will be retailers that react the fastest to customer changes.

Doug Koch, chief talent officer, the Brown Shoe Company — was featured in a session that defined changing paradigms, and inspired discussion on how human resources are adjusting to the current challenges in the retailing.

Cory Lipoff, executive vice president, principal of Hilco Merchant Resources and William Mayer, president and COO, Wells Fargo Retail Finance — hosted "Retail in Trouble." Together, they determined that retailers and consumers have to, temporarily, take fewer risks and that change will happen gradually beginning the first quarter of next year.

William Lucas, group president, retail business group, The NPD Group and Steve Kirn, executive education director, Miller Center for Retailing — led a discussion on the implications involved in helping consumer shopping behavior restore its robust activity once a healthy economy is restored.

Cynthia Cohen, president, Strategic Mindshare — hosted a session wherein it was decided that companies that eliminate competition and boost a competitive working environment inspire employees to work harder.

Alison Bond — facilitated a discussion about measuring commitment from customers and advancing our relationship with them in order to grow business.

Mary Beth Garcia, director of client services, Novations — promoted dialogue on the importance of engaging everyone in the culture of the company—to accomplish more, raise productivity and boost the bottom line.

John Crossman, president, Crossman and Company — led a discussion on site selection strategy and the need for businesses to look outside their stock formulas to grow strong and remain prosperous.

With innovative speakers, and new ways to explore opportunities for retailers, the Miller Center works to engage retailers and students to progress within the industry. The Eighteenth Annual Retailing Smarter Symposium will be noted as a successful event for an industry that survives difficult economies because it promotes an open exchanges of ideas.