

## CAC organized its First Successful Seminar *Communicating with Conviction*

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In a room filled to capacity, over 30 Asian American actuaries gathered to participate in a 3-hour seminar on effective communications and leadership specifically designed for Asians in the American workplace. On November 14, 2005, at 3:30pm on the first day at the 2005 SOA Annual Conference in New York City, the mood in the meeting room was decidedly full of excitement and anticipation. The attendees came expecting to gain better insight into the workplace and to hear career advice from Jane Hyun, executive coach, speaker, and diversity strategist to Fortune 500 companies, schools, and professional associations.

The seminar *Communicating with Conviction* addressed not only the standard career advice of networking and creating one's personal brand, but also confronted the difficult question of why there are so few Asian American managers? Why companies such as those in Silicon Valley for example, with 30% Asian technology professionals, had only 12.5% of managerial positions held by Asians versus 80% by Caucasians?

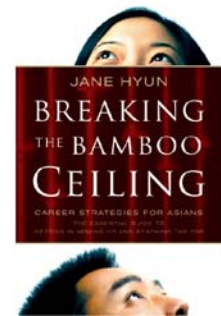


Jane highlighted the misunderstandings and misperceptions stemming from cultural differences that could become barriers to career advancement. For example, not speaking up frequently may be interpreted by mainstream U.S. as being not interested or knowledgeable. Not being outwardly assertive may be interpreted as lacking leadership ability. Furthermore, quality that is traditionally valued in the East like being modest and humble could result in one's effort not being recognized or, worse yet, being overlooked for a promotion.

Group exercises and role playing followed presentations on topics like Elements of Assertive Communications, Responding to Challenges during Meetings, and Developing and Using your Personal Marketing Pitch. Although the materials presented were practical and informative, the group activities generated a great deal of engaging exchanges and a few good laughs. A case study further reinforced the concepts introduced (See article written by Mark Yu for more details).

The seminar affirmed what some attendees had already come to realize over the years and also brought to others details that should be considered when evaluating one's career development and making adjustments to one's plan. It is important to raise and answer difficult questions for oneself:

- Do you come across as assertive and confident or unsure and tentative at the workplace?
- How effective are you at interfacing with internal/external clients and managing up, down, and across the corporate hierarchy?
- Are there cultural influences that impact the way you relate with your colleagues?



After the seminar, a book signing event was held on Jane's new book, *Breaking the Bamboo Ceiling: Career Strategies for Asians*. Some attendees also decided to head for the banquet that followed the book signing.

Our club had made a real connection with our member tonight. Our members enjoyed this hands-on seminar very much and have made requests for more future professional development opportunities.