

# AI Face Value Podcast

## Episode 18 Transcript

The appraisal profession is great in many ways for women. The flexibility, working around schedules, raising a family, but you know, I think women don't have a lot of places where they can talk about money and finances and wealth building and how to run your business. And so, yeah, just trying to provide as much support to women as we can, getting more young women appraisers in the door.

Welcome everyone back to another episode of Face Value by the Appraisal Institute. I'm Tonia Vailas. Historically, the appraisal organization has been male-dominated, but it's changing. More women like myself are entering the profession, bringing fresh perspectives and expertise. Even so, we need more representation in leadership, mentorship opportunities, and the need for a strong support network. That's where organizations like Ascend Appraisers and the Women's Initiative Committee of the Appraisal Institute come into play. Women's Initiative Committee, WIN as we'll call it from here on out, is dedicated to advancing women in appraisal through networking, education, and open discussions and ascend appraisers is a space for women in the appraisal industry to connect with one another and elevate their careers.

I'm Warren Boizot, your co-host, and pleased to introduce our two guests for today who are leading these initiatives, Emily Braman and Vanessa Hall. Welcome, Emily and Vanessa, to Face Value.

Thank you, Warren. Thank you, Tanya. Thank you, Emily. Do you want to start first and introduce yourself?

Sure. I'm Emily Braman, MAI, SRA, AI-GRS, member of the Appraisal Institute in the Ohio Chapter and Region 5. And I'm also the founder of Ascend Appraisers, which is a membership network for women in the appraisal profession. And Vanessa, how about you?

I'm Vanessa Hall. I've been in Charlotte for about 15 years. I'm from Chicago and I was 2022 North Carolina Chapter president and I've been very involved with that and I am now the WIN committee chair. I'm also in Region 5 with Emily. So good to see a familiar face today and yeah really just you know excited to be here and you know I've been appraising for 25 years and definitely seen a lot of changes as we've gone on.

So take us back 26 years and give us the background as to why you started in appraisal.

So well 26 years ago I was in I guess I was in college and I was going to school for you know for teachers and I was like am I going to make any money being a teacher and you know realistically I didn't think that that was the case and I was working part-time at a

commercial real estate firm in Chicago so you know I saw what they did and got experience watching you know the different what the processes are that go into appraisal and decided, you know, finish out my degree, but I'm definitely going into appraisal.

So, Vanessa, you have a degree in education.

Actually, I have a degree in sociology and anthropology and maybe psych. It's a bachelor of arts. So, yeah.

And Emily, how about you? How did you start out in the appraisal profession?

It's a totally different story, but not an unfamiliar one. I was forced into the appraisal profession because it was a family business. My grandfather was an appraiser. My father and his two brothers were appraisers. And my father after I finished college said, "You can always go to grad school, but you can only come and learn my business now." And so once I was there, I started to work for him and I worked for him for 15 years very closely. And you know, once I started working as an appraiser, it's you can't stop, right? Like going back to grad school is hard once you have an apartment and a car and a life. And so I worked with my dad for 15 years and he actually passed away in 2000. So and he was relatively young. He was 73. And so then I had a new baby and a company and a staff and I, you know, and had to show up and take the reigns and, you know, go from there. So I've been on my own running my own business for since 2000. So for about 25 years I've been in the appraisal profession for I like to say more than 35 years. I don't really like to tell people how many more.

Considering you're only 36 years old, it's amazing how you've been doing it so long.

Exactly. Warren, isn't it funny that every time we have guests on our podcast, some come into it without having any family connection and then there's always one guest on our podcast that's father, grandfather, son, daughter also in the appraisal profession. It's amazing to see how it's a family. There's a lot of family history here with continuing the legacy of the appraisal profession. Yeah. I just realized Emily would have been a perfect person to have on our episode about legacies and appraisal within the family.

For sure. Well, and despite all my work with women, my three daughters have had no interest in coming into the profession, but my son does. So, I think he's a senior in high school, but he's doing his senior project with me, and he thinks that he's interested in following in the family footsteps. I hope that works out for him. I will say I did have a family connection to get me into the administrative part of the commercial real estate. So, I can't claim complete no relation to it whatsoever, but my uncle got me into that door.

So, nice. So, let's get into it. tell me what challenges women have faced and still face in the appraisal profession today?

I would say that we can look at our leadership actually there's you know we've had two women presidents in a row which has been a great thing to see but you know before that we had Sarah Stevens and it was a long you know so it's really not a lot of you know spotlight on women in the profession and that may you know maybe be a deterrent maybe just you know people not realizing that it's a profession that can accommodate women and I think that you know the challenge is you know the appraisal profession is great in many ways for women the flexibility working around schedules you can work part-time and so raising a family which is usually the main role of a woman and I know Emily can speak more to this as I don't have children but you know that you know they usually tend to run the household and also work and you know and then if they have time to volunteer as well So there's a lot of time constraints and a lot of things fall to women, you know, and that just creates challenges, you know, across the board.

I would say that challenges are related to that for sure. You know, I think we definitely have work life balance challenges. I was lucky that about 18 years ago my husband stayed home with the kids and so I was able to be the main bread winner because I had a business that I had to put money into if I didn't work where he had a salary that you know like it was very different. I'm like if I can't get my job done we have to put money in. He worked for IBM and was a computer consultant and he's now working for me doing computer spreadsheets and all kinds of improving all of my processes for sure. And yeah, that was a big issue when my dad passed away. I had a baby and I was intending to take the summer off and I had to get in there because I knew I would leave all my staff. They would leave me if I if I didn't say, "Hey, I'm here. I'm in charge. You can this is going to be a predictable job."

But I also think there are a lot of other issues. You know, I was the only woman in the room for 25 years. There were two or three other women appraisers. Even my dad didn't take the first woman MAI in our area seriously. He said her husband was a doctor and she just liked education and that's why she got an MAI, you know. So, he even was sort of derogatory about taking women seriously. And I think a lot of men, especially, you know, I mean, he'd probably be a hundred by now. So, but of his generation didn't see women seriously in a professional capacity. And so, for me, when I entered in the profession, I'm entering in with my father's, you know, friends and co-workers. And I had to try to establish some kind of an adult, you know, equal footing kind of presence and that was challenging. But I also think, you know, I hear from women all over the country all these stories of, you know, what is like their most embarrassing moment of being a woman in the profession. And mine was certainly when I was hired to do an impact study and went to testify at a zoning hearing and the law director said to my client, "Oh, I didn't know you were bringing a court reporter." And my client had to say, "Oh, that's my expert." You know, like, "Oh, what a way to start the day." Right? Like it's that kind of things where you know, no, I'm the appraiser. So just having people realize that you're there to be taken seriously to do the job.

You know, Emily, you're reminding me of something of when I was a lot younger. Growing up, I always wanted to do what my uncle did. I wanted to be an accountant because, you know, he had a nice office, a corner office right by the financial district overlooking the

Statue of Liberty. And I looked up to him. So, me and his son are a year apart. And he gave his son an internship during college. And I said, "Oh, I'm not going to say his name, but I said, "Can I get an internship?" He goes, "Oh, no. I'm not going to give you one." I go, "Why?" He goes, "You're a girl." So from that point on, I was like, well, I'm going to be better than his son. I'm going to do whatever it takes to advance my career, advance myself, learn, do whatever I can to be better than his son. And when I went into the appraisal industry, it was like, well, why are you doing that? You know, who would hire you? Cuz the same thing, it was like male-dominated when cuz I worked for the city of New York. When I went to work for the city, they're like, "Well, why'd you do that? Why are you working? What do you What is your job there? Oh, you went to work for the city." I'm like, "I went in as a director. It's not like I went in as an entry level job, but no matter what, every step I took, he was always there to push me down instead of help me up."

So, I'm glad though your dad did help you up. He did bring you into the business. But I guess mine was more of a retaliation and a fight back to prove my uncle that I can do whatever his son can do and more. I will say that there's also the challenge of being one of the only few women in the room as Emily said and you get hit on and it's a very it can be unnerving and sometimes it's just friendly and sometimes it's not. And I think that that has kept some women from feeling comfortable. And I think that the more women that have been involved in these meetings and events, one I think is the harder it is to do that, but you also have someone that you can, you know, kind of, you know, reach out to. And I'm really thankful for that.

And for those of us who feel that we're professional and know how to act, it is so uncomfortable to watch and to see happening. And I could go up to that guy after a break and say, "Dude, that was he he'd be like, "What? What are you talking about? What did I say? It's just it's frustrating. So, even from the guy's side, we see it and can be very uncomfortable.

I think that's a good point, Warren, is that a lot of men didn't realize that this was happening. They weren't necessarily doing it, but they also didn't know it was happening. And I, you know, we have, you know, there's some really good men in the North Carolina chapter that I'm friends with and, you know, I think they've, you know, definitely seen that it has happened in the past. and you know the awareness and knowing that yeah just having them having you know like you saying something to them is you know what I would want you know I mean if I'm not if I don't do it myself you know having you say it is you know supportive and we you know appreciate it.

So let's talk about some fun stuff. Tell us about Ascend appraisers.

So Ascend appraisers is a membership group for women that I started with my oldest daughter Marissa. She's 31 and she's a yoga teacher on the beach in North Carolina and she does social media marketing. And so together, you know, I just feel I wanted to connect with women. I love women appraisers. I was chapter president in of the Ohio chapter

in 2021 and I started Ladies Who Lunch zoom meeting because it was literally right pandemic time, right? So, I got a bunch of women on a call every month and it was so cool to connect with them and I was trying to figure out where to take that and my daughter was like, "Well, let's just make a membership group and go on a retreat." So, we formed a membership group about two years ago and the first thing we did is go we went on a retreat to Miami and we got about 10 women all across the country. I barely knew two of them. It was the coolest thing ever. And it was literally the most diverse group of appraisers I've ever been with, even though they were all women. Um, geographically, racially, but also in terms of their designations and their specialties. Like, it was phenomenal. And so, it was a really exciting start. And it's grown slowly because I have a full-time appraisal business. But we are now, we have the membership group. We do dinner parties all across the country, pretty much wherever I am. We've done Denver, Chicago, New York City. I try to attach them to region meetings for or LDAC with the Appraisal Institute because there's a lot of women in one place there. We've gone on two retreats, one to Clearwater and then the first one to Miami. And I hope we're going on another one in October.

And then I finally like I've been trying to figure out what women need. You know, we have free Zoom meetings, virtual happy hours once a month that anyone can join whether they're a member or not. And I've been really exploring this book club concept where we talk about money through books. Appraisers seem to be a little busy for that and they don't seem to love it as much as I do. But, you know, I think women don't have a lot of places where they can talk about money and finances and wealth building and how to run your business. And then I've got this amazing mastermind group that we just started last month. And I have eight women in a cohort in this mastermind that I call step away from the form, the residential upgrade. And I rolled it out in the Clearwater Retreat with two residential appraisers a year ago. And both of them were able to, you know, create a narrative appraisal and sell it to a client for far more than what they, you know, do with a mortgage lending appraisal. And so it's really teaching women how to upgrade their business and provide a narrative appraisal that often commercial appraisers provide and for a much higher fee, right? And residential appraisers should be doing that. So I'm really excited about that. And then we're going to do a marketing mastermind group. And then we also have our corporate connector and we're gonna have Jessica Belaloo, MAI, who is an aviation expert and she's gonna come to our virtual meeting on May 9th and talk about both aviation appraisals which is super exciting because apparently it's an opportunity for residential appraisers to value these fly-ins which are like subdivisions with air strips and Jessica gets requests to do those appraisals all the time all over the country and she doesn't do residential. So, it's an opportunity for residential appraisers to connect with her. And for commercial appraisers, she has a consulting business where she does aviation consulting that's non-valuation consulting. And so, for commercial appraisers to think about ways to expand their practices beyond appraisal services, every one of these dinners, it's magical. You get women together who do not know each other. I'm always nervous because it's always like 50/50 commercial residential and I'm like what are they gonna have to talk about? This is terrible. I only have, you know, I've got three of these and four of those and it's always there's so much to talk about that I mean it's unbelievable the variety of topics from

personal, kids, work - you know everything. How to get an MAI was a topic at our last meeting as well as how to upgrade to a commercial license as well as ma jang and you know gluten-free diets. It's the whole gamut.

Now I was going to ask about the membership. What do you get if you're join and are a member of Ascend?

I'm not going to know the numbers because this is all my daughter's department, but it's like \$500ish dollars a year and you get 15% off dinners and retreats. You get previews of these things, these mastermind groups that we I kind of try them out on the members before I put them out and try to sell them to the world. You get the monthly book club and at these mini mastermind sessions like this session we're going to have with Jess coming in and giving a talk in May. And you get to be part you get to say you're part of our community.

And Vanessa, what's new with the Women's Initiative Committee? As Warren said, WIN.

Right now, we are finishing the pilot phase of the WIN mentorship program and we'll be getting feedback on that and kind of putting together, you know, an analysis on how that was. But I know that the people who have participated have enjoyed that and found value in doing that. And we have an article coming out in Valuation Magazine. We have been working to connect and grow the WIN network trying to get, you know, like I'm putting together a directory to find out what chapters and what regions have a WIN committee and what chapters and regions want one and how I can help. And so, you know, I have a call with one chapter in a couple of weeks to, you know, see how we can help them create that. There's a region that's putting together a WIN group, you know, and trying to connect and then hopefully ultimately collaborate so that we can just grow this amazing community of women because we, I feel like we're so isolated. It's like satellites of different WIN networks. And you know, now that the national committee has been around for a while, and I don't know why other national committees aren't connected to their counterparts at the chapter level, but it's something that I really would like to do in, you know, in any way that I can so that we're all working together and fostering that growth. And so yeah, just trying to get more exposure for the committee itself and you know provide as much support to women as we can for WIN groups for leadership opportunities for you know getting more young women appraisers in the door.

Now I was on the Women's Initiative Committee several years back. I think the second year that it was in effect. I do want to see the winds regionally and chapters and nationally all get together and have like one focus and one, you know, one goal because it seems like everyone has their own little thing. They're doing their own networking, but there's not a set schedule or there's no plan in the future for what are we going to do, what is our takeback, how are we going to give back? And I'd like to see more of that.

And I know you have the mentoring group. How's that going?

So, it's going really well. we are, you know, as I said, we'll be wrapping up the pilot phase in the next, I think, month or so and then kind of compiling, you know, the information we get from that, you know, but I think it's, you know, it's a small group and it was initially just a grassroots effort to get people involved and I actually have more mentors than mentees. So, but I know that a lot of people have asked for this type of program. Anytime people reach out, they're like, you know, I think a mentorship program would be great. And yes, it would be. And we do have that in the works. And so, um, you know, we're hoping that we can do something larger scale, but so far the feedback's been great. And, you know, it's really just talking. It's about talking to someone who, you know, can listen to you and you're not worried if you know they're your supervisor and they're concerned are you not working enough or you know like you know just you can just complete be completely open about your career and you know what you need to do to flourish in the profession. Ohio has a project team for WIN and we don't actually have a committee. We have a project team and I am on that project team and our first and so far only event has been a dinner which we did at my office in as a joint ascend appraisers WIN dinner but we had women from all over the state come and it was fantastic and there was one woman who I think trainee who is a PAREA participant found a mentor at that dinner and she had been to several meetings in Columbus and had tried to find a mentor. Like she had been actively looking for one and she came in and was connected with a woman who was eager and near her market small market area and eager to hire her. So that was super exciting and I think Ascent Appraisers started by marketing to Appraisal Institute members like we really targeted and SRAAS originally for several reasons. One is because those are the people that I know. Another is because I really wanted a base of the best women in the industry. And now that we have this residential mastermind, we're really starting to reach out to other appraisers who aren't institute members. And I feel like it can be a great pipeline. If we can bring them into Ascend Appraisers like we are always talking Appraisal Institute stuff. Vanessa knows that and meeting institute members. I feel like we could be a great pipeline to bring women into not, you know, not just to support them in the in the profession, but bringing them into the institute as well. And ultimately, I'd like to see a mentorship program where it's one of the drop downs on the Appraisal Institute website where you're like a new appraiser. You want to join the Appraisal Institute and one of the benefits is being part of a mentorship program to help steer your career. Like having that as a member benefit would you know I mean if we're looking at member growth, I think that that's one way to go about it.

So I have a question for all three of you in your positions of leadership that you're each in it's highly likely that you might get a call one day out of the blue from a woman who says I'm thinking of getting into the appraisal profession. Give me one specific piece of advice that you would give to that person.

Get a commercial license. I talked to so many residential appraisers who it's very challenging to upgrade and they really wish that they had gotten a commercial license. So don't think that entering as a residential appraiser is a stepping stone to a commercial license. Find a commercial mentor and get the commercial license because you can always do residential.

My advice would be to start attending chapter events and get to know people because that is how I mean I had a prior trainee that that's how he got hired was he was at a chapter event. Nobody knew him. So you know just making yourself being in the place where people who are hiring are is you know it's hard to do better than that.

That is so true. We had at our Ohio chapter event right after the pandemic. A young woman trainee had just gotten a trainee license came to our chapter meeting before our economic seminar. Literally walked into a you know almost a party, right? A room with flowing alcohol and lots of food, which was our installation meeting by herself and walked out with a job.

Yeah. And Vanessa stole mine. I would definitely say go to events, chapter events. Another thing to do is attend classes in person. One thing that we are all lacking is social interaction with everyone else in the world. So attending classes in person is the number one thing I think someone entering in the profession could do.

I was actually surprised, Emily, that you said the commercial thing because that's a good one. I guess I would have not thought that it was, you know, skewed a certain way, like more residential or more commercial, but I think I would agree with that.

I'm allowed to agree with one, right, that I cannot come up with my own that, you know, get that commercial license or at least go into it thinking you're going to get to commercial and then you can always do residential as well. Because I've always said the difference between commercial and residential is a personality to me. It's the type of way that you conduct work. You know, if you're okay with having things on your desk for 6 months, I am not. That's why I don't want to do any commercial work, residential, get them in, get them out, get them in, get them out. That's more my style. So, yeah, I really liked Emily's that initially with the hopes of getting your commercial.

And I will say, Vanessa, too, going to chapter events, that's always going to end up with something positive. Somebody new that you've met, a job, somewhere in between, there lies a bunch of other stuff that can happen, but go to those chapter events.

Yeah, I'm seeing a lot of chapter events. Not people are less inclined to go cuz they say they know everyone else. But when you're looking for trainees, when you're looking for a supervisor, when you're looking to get additional work or if you're looking to if you are a banker or you're looking for to add people to your list, that's where you make your connections. I think that is the number one place where people get to have these relationships and from there work is shared, knowledge is shared and I think we should get back to that. Something that we've been missing for a few years now and I think we need to get back to that.

And Emily, you had said that for Ascend you do open your monthly meetings out. Is there a way for people to register so they can get on your mailing list?

They can email me at [emily@ascendappraisers.com](mailto:emily@ascendappraisers.com) and we have the first Friday of the month at 3:30 we have a virtual happy hour. So it's coming right up this Friday. We send out an email every week. I think we have like a big group and a small group. We have what we call friends of a but you know they that nobody understands what appraisers talk about. I mean we all know this right? You get to a professional meeting and you find some people who understand what it is that you do on a daily basis. And so it's a space for that for people in the industry in the profession to connect but it's also a place where women are kind of sharing their personal struggles in terms of work life balance you know time, kids. overwhelm, husbands, discrimination, irritation, whatever it is, and so while men may be welcome, I don't think it's probably not a space that they want to be in. We always give you guys an opportunity kind of as we're wrapping up to if there's anything that's just you know burning sit still sitting on your sticky note that you wanted to cover that we you don't feel like we did absolutely this is the time.

I'm chapter services chair for Region 5 and we are focused on enhancing the connection between the WIN committees in the region for sure that is we found three areas to focus on which is scholarship university relations and WIN and it something that all the chapters were very interested in working on and so we're going to take them one at a time with scholarship going first but connecting the win chapters as Vanessa was saying like is something that Region 5 is pretty dedicated to making happen.

Yeah, and Vanessa can you tell us about the playbook the win playbook that you have that's available to chapters and regions? I don't think we touched on that today.

Yeah. So, we have a chapter resource guide that kind of just gives you ideas and kind of steps to take to create a WIN committee in your chapter or region, but different things work for different chapters and different regions. And so, it's really just a guide, but also, you know, you do need people behind it who want to start doing that. So, trying to get women excited about this and you know, and a lot of women are about trying to start one in their chapter.

Emily, you mentioned something about October for Ascent. Are you thinking about doing it in San Diego when the joint regions meet?

I was actually. I'm speaking at the ASA convention in Puerto Rico and I was thinking about going there, but I have attached our Clearwater retreat was attached to the Clearwater joint region meeting and I do think that that is a great way to get people to go to one place at one time. So, I don't know yet if we're going to do San Diego or if we're going to do Puerto Rico, but it'll be attached to some other meeting that people will be at. Also, the other thing though that I'm doing that's totally different from WIN is coaching. So, my mastermind group, I'm really coaching women to help them go take their business to the next level. So,

I'm not mentoring them as you would traditionally mentor as a trainee or an appraiser. I'm not teaching anybody how to appraise, like that is not what I want to do. But I want to teach them how to market their business differently, how to find other clients, how to create a nicer product, a narrative product to sell to attorneys and for litigation purposes and you know for I do a lot of title appraisals in residential like for title insurance claims.

So, we're also as a member benefit, we're launching and we don't quite have it yet, but kind of a monthly group coaching session where you can come on and get kind of like encouragement and support. The mentorship program is fairly open-ended in that way because it's really what are the goals? The mentee gets to set the goals and so what are their goals and then as the mentors we help facilitate that for them and you know whatever it stage of the appraisal uh profession that they're in.

I would like to add a couple things. We do have our spotlight award, women's initiative spotlight award coming up. So you know we'd like for people to submit nominations of women you feel should be highlighted in our profession. And we also are trying to push the leadership resource registry. There are three national committees where there are no women at all other than Paula as president. The audit committee, the strategic planning committee, and the body of knowledge committee. And that's according to the website, as far as I could tell, no women other than Paula. And that's a problem. Those are major committees that make big decisions. And so the more women we have on the leadership resource registry, the more that can be considered for roles on these national committees, but also get involved in your chapter in your region. And you know, if you can't get into national, start there.

Wow, Vanessa, I didn't realize that about those committees. I'm seeing it now, but thank you for pointing that out.

Vanessa, Emily, thank you so much for being here today on the Face Value podcast. Wonderful information. We appreciate you so much.

Tonia, if somebody had an idea as great as this today and they wanted to let us know about it, how would they do that?

They can email us at [facevalue@appraisalinstitute.org](mailto:facevalue@appraisalinstitute.org). So, please do that. Reach out to us. Give us your ideas that we are here to talk to you. We're open to your ideas, suggestions, and hope to see you on our next podcast.