

## Sink or SWIM

*Lauren Ankeles, Marine Graham, Roberta Pittore and Priyanka Ramamurthy*

How could a sunny February afternoon take such a turn for the worse? The clock ticked in the MIT Sloan Student Life Office (SLO), where the three Sloan Women in Management (SWIM) club co-presidents and two conference directors were gathered.<sup>1</sup> SWIM's 3<sup>rd</sup> annual conference, 11 months in the making, was scheduled to take place the next day. A winter storm was looming, with weather predictions varying widely from three to 50 inches of snow in the next 48 hours. It was almost 2:00pm and a decision had to be made – setup was slated to begin in minutes, and speakers were boarding their flights for Boston. Should the conference be canceled, modified, or go forward as planned?

SLO Associate Director Marco Esquandolas looked at the five women seated in front of him and asked, "Ladies, what is your final call?"

### Background on SWIM

The Sloan Women in Management club was founded in the 1980s and had become one of the largest clubs at MIT Sloan. The organization's primary goals were to create an inviting and supportive community for all Sloan women; advance the careers of current female Sloan students; work with faculty, administrators, and the greater business community to increase opportunities for women in business; and, attract top female students to MIT Sloan.

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<sup>1</sup> The Student Life Office provides programs and services to foster a graduate student community based on collaboration and contribution. This includes oversight of student organizations and support on student events and initiatives.

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This case was prepared by Lauren Ankeles, Marine Graham, and Priyanka Ramamurthy (MBAs, Class of 2013), and Senior Lecturer Roberta Pittore.

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In an effort to meet all of these goals and cater to the broadest set of women, SWIM hosted a variety of year-long programming including networking events, speaker series, professional development workshops, mentorship programs, and community building events. In addition, the club held three flagship events, one of which was an annual conference where students could dialogue with leading women in business. As of February 2013, SWIM had approximately 300 members,<sup>2</sup> 550 Facebook fans, 640 Twitter followers, 270 LinkedIn group members, and 300 individuals on the alumnae mailing list.

The annual conference had quickly become the organization's largest event, despite its inception just two years earlier. After the relatively small-scale initial conference featuring panelists primarily from the MIT Sloan community, the 2012 conference directors sought to create the gold standard in women's business conferences. The "Innovating through Adversity" 2012 conference brought several renowned speakers including Fortune 500 CEO Laura Sen (BJ's) and VP of Google Local/Maps/Localization Marissa Mayer to a sold-out crowd of over 400 attendees. All who participated hailed the conference a tremendous success. Male and female students who attended agreed that of the roughly 30 annual MIT Sloan conferences, SWIM's was the best conference of the year.

There was strong support and interest from the administration due to the high profile of 2012's conference. As SLO Director Christine Pugh noted, "The 2012 conference knocked it out of the park – probably based on some learnings from the 2011 conference. I heard it was just phenomenal, enough people really raved about it that I'm very confident in saying that."

### **The 2013 Conference Leadership Team**

The 2013 SWIM club co-presidents, Rachel, Lea, and Tarini, were eager to build on the previous year's success and, immediately after their election to their leadership roles in February 2012, they began planning for the 2013 conference.<sup>3</sup> As the conference was the club's largest event of the year, Rachel, Lea, and Tarini agreed that they wanted to maintain the previous year's structure of heavy involvement with the event, taking on the roles of conference CFO, COO, and CMO, respectively. They would next need to select two directors who would oversee the content of the conference, including selecting the theme and speakers, motivating a large team to execute the event according to their vision, and serving as the masters of ceremonies for the event.

The 2013 conference directors, Janet and Merrill, were selected in March 2012 by all of the co-presidents, both past and present, and the previous year's conference directors. According to Janet, "I

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<sup>2</sup> Members include women from various Sloan programs (MBA, Leaders for Global Operations, Master of Finance, Sloan Fellows, Executive MBA).

<sup>3</sup> Names of people from MIT Sloan have been disguised for the purposes of this case.

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was thinking through my next year's goals. Something I wanted to do was make a substantial impact on Sloan. There were lots of ways I could do that. I decided that one of my goals would be to work on the SWIM conference which has a very tangible output with a group of people I really respect."

The theme for the 2013 conference was set as "Dare to Fail: Taking Risks When it Matters Most." Soon after deciding the theme, the directors finalized a shortlist of keynote speakers, began brainstorming speakers for panels, and scheduled meetings with relevant Sloan faculty and administration.

The past presidents warned Rachel, Lea, and Tarini that they experienced significant tension the previous year over who had final authority in the decision-making process. Despite this warning, the same dynamic quickly developed with the new team. The co-presidents wanted be included in all key decisions, believing they needed to have a say in the selection of speakers and topics, both for the purposes of the conference, as well as to ensure integration with the SWIM brand and overall organizational strategy. The conference directors felt that they were being micromanaged for an event that they were directing.

As the SWIM leadership team headed off for the summer to five different cities to pursue internships, expectations were set that Merrill and Janet would focus on recruiting speakers, and Rachel, Lea, and Tarini would work on sponsorship, operations, and marketing (including ticket sales), respectively. The five loosely agreed to check-in calls, though specific dates and milestones were not set.

Maintaining contact during the summer proved challenging, as the group of five were in different time zones and had different work schedules. Throughout the summer Merrill and Janet continued to chip away at speaker recruitment without much success. Despite sending out multiple keynote requests, they continued to hit dead-ends due to scheduling conflicts and non-responses. On August 10 the first keynote was confirmed – Four Star General Janet Wolfenbarger – and the team breathed a small sigh of relief. As they all geared up to return to campus in the fall, however, there was still significant concern from the entire team about the lack of progress that had been made over the summer in finalizing speakers.

Shortly after General Wolfenbarger was confirmed, the group faced yet another unanticipated setback. Merrill, whose summer internship had been at a start-up, had been offered significant equity to leave MIT Sloan and continue in her role at the start-up. On August 20, she sent the following email to the co-presidents:

...I am nothing less than obsessed with this event – and with working with Janet and each of you – and I seriously considered returning to school JUST to direct the conference. However, that didn't seem like the most logical decision, and I ultimately didn't feel that giving up my stake in

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the company was worth the conference, regardless of how amazing the conference is going to be.

I do, however, have a proposal... I would like to ask to continue to co-direct the conference with Janet. I am committed to this event's tremendous success, am passionate about the theme, and will work incredibly hard to develop speakers and panels that are worthy of SWIM. I've spoken with Janet, and she is in support of this.

While it was not clear how involved Merrill would be moving forward, the co-presidents agreed to this arrangement. They were concerned about finding an alternate director given the late stage in the planning process and trusted that Janet and Merrill had discussed managing their time appropriately. The five-person team committed to weekly meetings to ensure that communication lines would remain open and progress would continue.

### **Conference Planning**

Despite these challenges, the team maintained a positive outlook upon returning to campus for the fall semester, and worked hard to harness the energy of the first year MBA students. The annual conference was historically a crucial way to engage new students and identify future leaders for the organization. Committees were created to focus on speaker recruitment (led by Merrill and Janet), marketing (Tarini), operations (Lea), and sponsorship (Rachel).

### **Speaker Recruitment**

Over the course of the fall semester, it became increasingly clear that Janet and Merrill were struggling to find speakers. The plan had been to secure at least two keynote speakers by the end of the summer, and then form teams of first year students to take the lead in recruiting four to five speakers for each of the two panels.

The panel teams were moving forward with mixed success. Speakers were responding well to the theme of failure, but were unable to commit to the conference date. This had a significant effect on the rest of the conference planning, particularly the marketing team, which struggled to accurately frame the conference. With Merrill on leave from MIT, a disproportionate amount of work was placed on Janet.

Though angry words were never exchanged, tension grew between the conference directors and the co-presidents. While the presidents had each other to rely on, Janet shouldered much of the pressure on her own, searching for a way to push forward and maintain an energetic exterior to keep the conference team engaged.

By the end of November 2012, the panel teams were pushing out multiple speaker requests and tapping all of their networks for introductions. The team scrambled to finalize the conference agenda

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before they left for winter break, as everyone would be spread out traveling the globe until the beginning of February. By the end of December, nearly all the speaking engagements were confirmed.

On January 23, 2013, with two weeks left until the conference, original keynote General Wolfenbarger canceled her participation due to government budget-cuts. The team, exhausted from the search for speakers, scrambled once again to fill the gaps in the lineup and manage the fallout from attendees who had bought tickets intending to hear the General speak. The co-presidents were convinced that there was no way to find a keynote at this late date, but to their surprise a new keynote speaker who was a growing force in the venture capital world was quickly confirmed. This was just what the team needed to sell their last few tickets.

### Marketing

In 2012, an aggressive marketing campaign had led to a sold out conference (400 tickets) nearly two months prior to the event. For the 2013 conference, the directors wanted to sell 500 tickets, at a slightly higher price – \$25 for students and \$50 for professionals. The main challenge for the marketing team, however, was not the price point, but that marketing needed to begin before speakers had been confirmed. Falling steadily behind 2012's numbers, Tarini commented, "I don't even know why the current attendees are buying tickets. Right now, I'm just selling air." To compensate, the marketing plan from the prior year was beefed up to include social media, outreach to other schools, and mailing lists targeting professionals. December was a busy month for ticket sales thanks to the team individually emailing over 100 professionals in the area, including every female professor associated with MIT Sloan, launching an aggressive social media campaign, and revamping the promotional material each time a new speaker was added to the roster. However, ticket sales still lagged behind the previous year, and Tarini checked daily as the fear of a half-empty event continued to grow. The weekend before the conference, the team confirmed that the event was sold out.

### Operations

The conference event space, the premier location on campus and a highly sought after venue, had been booked in June 2012. Lea formed a team to help with operations including vendor management (catering, facilities, custodial services, security, furniture rental, audio-visual needs, lighting, videography), day-of logistics management, and preparation for the VIP dinner, traditionally held the night before the conference to welcome speakers and thank corporate sponsors for their support. Students who had been active participants in conference planning were also invited to attend. To cut costs and improve logistics, the team opted for a new dinner venue close to campus, which meant building new relationships with vendors and planning the budget, menu, and event space from the ground up. A non-refundable deposit had been put down to hold the space, and the final payment for the dinner, estimated to be \$3,000, would be due upon completion of the VIP dinner.

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During the planning period, the leadership team identified a major glitch – a classroom in the same building as the event venue, traditionally used as an overflow space for conference attendees, was booked for a class during the conference. Preparations had to be adjusted accordingly to accommodate the reduced seating and inflow of non-conference attendees that would be coming through the building entrance.

By the end of January, all of the work orders and purchase orders had been set up, though no formal contracts had been signed, and vendors were scheduled to begin arriving at 2:00pm on Thursday, February 7 to set up (**Exhibit 2**). The MIT Sloan administration had agreed to host an alumnae breakfast at the conference. In-kind donations had been solicited from coffee and pastry shops in the area, who would be delivering items on the day of the conference. However, on January 24, the MIT administration notified Lea that they could no longer sponsor the alumnae breakfast as originally promised due to budget constraints. With just two weeks until the conference, the team scrambled yet again to adjust.

### Sponsorship

The sponsorship team, led by Rachel, began planning for the conference in late June 2012. Initially a small group worked on drafting promotional materials that would be shared with potential sponsor organizations and would provide a summary of the 2012 conference, the vision for 2013, and information about the benefits of sponsorship. With this information in hand, the team began reaching out to the prior year's conference sponsors to gauge their interest in sponsoring once again. The team had a fundraising goal of \$40,000. This amount, in addition to the revenue from ticket sales, would enable them to cover all conference costs and have a buffer, which could be applied to the following year's conference should the funds not be required. While many of the previous year's supporters were interested in partnering with SWIM again, many companies did not have the same budget resources available to them, and as such the sponsorship team was hard pressed to raise enough money to fund the conference. Rachel turned to the first year student committee to help brainstorm a list of new sponsor organizations and reach out to their network of contacts. Despite getting off to a slow start, a driven first year student stepped up taking on virtually all fundraising tasks and, in late January, signed the final sponsor, bringing the fundraising total to \$38,000, enough to fund the 2013 conference.

Miraculously the week before the conference, speaker recruitment, marketing, operations, and sponsorship were all coming to a successful close.

### Final Preparations

#### Monday, Feb. 4

Five days to go. On Monday, February 4, students arrived back on campus after their January break, ready for a new semester. The energy level was at an all-time high as the full conference team, 20

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members strong, assembled to discuss final details on the event that was now 11 months in the making.

Much like a dress rehearsal, the operations team walked through all events for the week, hour-by-hour, to finalize last minute details. The marketing team confirmed that the event was officially sold out with 500 tickets disbursed (**Exhibit 3**), and the sponsorship team officially closed out their sponsorship efforts with \$38,000 raised, confirming that the conference would easily break even on costs (**Exhibit 4**). All 15 speakers had recently been confirmed and information on their travel logistics was being collected. Outside of the five-member leadership team, most students had been focused on their own assignments until now, and this was the first time they were able to see the breadth of work that had been completed to date. At the meeting, final decisions were collectively made regarding social media strategy for the day of the conference, speaker biographies were approved for the programs, and signs for the event space were designed and sent to the printers.

### **Tuesday, Feb. 5**

On Tuesday, between and after classes, the co-presidents focused on last minute details for the conference including printing nametags, determining the room-flow for the event space, communicating with the photographer, assigning handlers for VIP attendees, and setting up interviews between speakers and members of the media. Volunteer assignments, that took into consideration both the schedules and personal interests of 50 student volunteers, were confirmed.

Late that afternoon, murmurs began that a snowstorm was approaching, but in New England, predictions of inclement weather were an ordinary occurrence. Weather reports were vague, varied, and contradictory across networks (**Exhibit 5**). The conference team continued operating according to the original schedule, knowing that since 1997 MIT had closed only twice due to snow. As Janet remarked, “Boston is Boston. There is really no way of knowing so let’s just keep going. It’s just go go go. There is a lot to be done.”

However, as night approached, weather predictions became more distressing.

### **Wednesday, Feb. 6**

Forty-eight hours before the start of the conference, weather predictions across different networks began to indicate the possibility that a major storm would hit the Boston area some time on Friday. Starting at 8:00am, the team began operating on two streams: (1) continuing to prepare for Friday’s conference with the finalized set of speakers, and (2) identifying alternate local speakers should flights be canceled.

At 9:00am, an email was exchanged among the conference leadership team:

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Weather looks like it'll be ok in the AM on Friday but get steadily worse for the evening. Hopefully this means speakers will be able to arrive and leave without issue. Here is a status report on travel plans:

Traveling in:

- Alison Gerlach: Arriving Thursday night
- Julia Hu: Flying in from San Francisco Thursday afternoon
- Julie Sygiel: Train in from NYC Friday morning
- Sandie O'Connor: Switched flight to Thursday night due to weather concerns
- Maura O'Neill: Flight from DC Thursday evening

In case of contingency for above speakers:

- Christina Chase can move to Panel #2 (I'll ask her today)
- 2 of 3 speakers on Panel #1 are local, even if Julia can't make it
- All Keynotes are flying in...this is a tough one. I know an MIT professor who could possibly do a talk last minute (I'll ask today)

Thirty-six hours before the event, the conference team sent a message to all attendees notifying them that the conference would continue as scheduled and reminding them of key logistics (**Exhibit 6**). Since Monday, the team had been receiving emails from people on the waitlist for tickets, asking if there was anything they could do to get off the waitlist. Worried that people might be scared off by a potential storm, the marketing team began releasing tickets from the waitlist although the event was at full capacity. The remainder of the day unfolded rapidly:

- *4:47pm*: One of the corporate sponsors of the conference and a core sponsor of SWIM emailed to say their three representatives, who were coming from upstate New York, would not be attending due to the weather forecasts. There was no mention of any implications for sponsorship funds.
- *7:14pm*: New weather reports indicated a stronger storm than earlier anticipated and in response, Christine Pugh, SLO director, contacted the leadership team requesting a meeting for the next day to discuss contingencies should MIT close (a historically rare occurrence).
- *8:35pm*: Attendees began emailing the conference team to ask about postponement and cancellation options, and when they would get their money back. These emails trickled in throughout the night and into the next day (**Exhibit 7**). They were not sent any response.

### **Thursday, Feb. 7**

T-minus 24 hours. Thursday morning began early, though none of the presidents or conference directors had been getting a full night's sleep that week. The team pushed forward, operating under the assumption that either the conference would continue as planned, or face speaker cancelations.

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Before, between and during classes, texts and emails were fired off rapidly between the conference directors, presidents, and within each conference committee. At 7:33am, Tarini wrote, “If I keep getting so many emails from ticket attendees asking if the conference is cancelled, I will have a legit breakdown. I’ve gotten nearly 100 emails this morning. Let me know what they say at the 9am meeting.” Rachel responded with, “According to my latest weather stalking this thing will go on. Snow won’t get bad until afternoon.”

At 9:00am, Lea, Rachel, and Merrill attended a meeting at the SLO, at which time multiple contingency scenarios were discussed. The following email was sent to the entire leadership team to summarize the meeting and next steps:

We talked about a couple of different scenarios with Marco Esquandolas, Christine Pugh, and Sharon Knope this morning:

- A. Move forward as planned – expect some speakers not to make it, and low attendance. Potentially hold a half-day conference.
- B. Cancel the conference this afternoon. Marco Esquandolas is doing some recon for us today on whether MIT is likely to close, but there is no indication that this will happen yet.
- C. Wait to receive notification of MIT closing tomorrow (likely late tonight or early tomorrow morning; could be either full day or half day closure).

### \*TO DO\*

- 1) Now – Janet/Merrill reach out to speakers now to get latest news on travel plans
- 2) Now – Merrill check in with MIT Sloan Dean to update him on contingency plans
- 3) 12:30PM – Lea check in with Marco for update on MIT closure status
- 4) Until a decision is made, Tarini should not respond to any emails from attendees

As of 11:00am, the speakers team had identified local speakers, should confirmed speakers face travel delays or cancelations. At 11:30am, conference discussions were temporarily put on hold while Rachel and Tarini attended a SWIM event on personal finance and career decisions for women, unrelated to the conference. It was a longstanding goal that the conference not detract from SWIM’s general programing at any point during the year. As a rule, at least one, if not all three, of the club’s presidents attended any of the events the club held. Lea was not present, as she was initially planning to print the 500 nametags needed for the next morning. As a last minute decision, the team decided to hold off on this task, and she instead checked in with Marco to see if he had received any more information regarding the likelihood of an MIT closure.

While waiting for Marco to return to his office, Lea emailed the operations committee and the conference leadership team at 11:53am with an updated operations schedule and the following

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message suggesting she had received some good news: “For now, please notify all vendors that we are moving forward as planned - I will let you know immediately if anything changes!” However, at 12:36pm, Lea sent a short, cryptic, and concerning text message to the co-presidents: “Just spoke with Marco - Can you come now?”

### **Decision Time**

During the many months of planning, each member of the leadership team had visualized dozens of possible scenarios for the conference. In some, there were no attendees, the food never arrived, or the speakers forgot their talking points. In others, the room was packed and the crowd was on their feet giving thunderous applause for a life- and career-changing event. After so many setbacks, it was finally all within reach, and it was going to be glorious. Except now, there was a new and unprecedented scenario to consider – canceling the conference for a potentially monstrous snowstorm, when there was not a cloud in the sky or a snowflake on the ground.

At 1:30pm on Thursday, February 7, SWIM’s three co-presidents and two conference directors, who had been in varying states of misalignment and frustration for so long, met with Marco in his office to sort through their options. Weather reports had been monitored from different networks. Now, there was every indication that a storm would hit Boston at some point, but most networks expected the storm to hit after 12:00pm on Friday, while others said it could be as late as Friday night. It was simply too early to tell.

Janet and Merrill collected a status update of where each speaker was, and when planes would begin taking off toward Boston. They confirmed that all 15 speakers were unfazed by weather reports and were ready to attend the conference the next day, regardless of the potential snowstorm. One had already changed her ticket to fly in earlier to avoid any airport closings, and a second could not be reached as she was already on a flight from London.

At precisely 2:00pm, vendors would begin setting up the venue and SWIM would be liable for the costs. Further, if MIT closed, the rental fees would triple from a one-day rental to daily rentals through the weekend, when the rentals could be picked up. Lea did a back of the envelope calculation and quickly saw that if the conference was canceled after vendors arrived, the costs could increase significantly. The catering company had already warned her that it was too late to cancel the perishable food items that had been prepared for the conference – it was unclear what percentage of the \$13,000 catering bill would be recoverable. Lea knew what her vote was, but she was curious to see which way her two co-presidents were leaning.

The MIT administration had not yet closed the Institute, and would not comment on if they would. MIT rarely closed its doors, but if it did no events would be allowed on campus, including the conference.

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What would happen if the conference was not canceled, and MIT closed later that night? What if the conference was canceled, MIT did not close, and the storm only hit Friday night? What would be the fallout with attendees and corporate sponsors? Rachel was particularly concerned about the ramifications for the sponsors, whom her team had worked so hard to secure. Would SWIM's reputation be impacted? Would they be able to secure sponsorship funds in the future? Tarini wondered if attendees would show up for the conference, even if it was not canceled, and if they did, was there a risk of them being snowed in? If the team opted to cancel the conference, would they be forced to give back ticket revenue, and, if so, how would that affect the bottom line? Could they really give up on the event that they had sacrificed for and had devoted the last year of their lives to? The entire conference revolved around the theme of coming to the brink of failure and still finding a way to succeed. With graduation around the corner, there would be no second chances.

Given that most weather forecasts suggested that snowfall would only begin at 12:00pm Friday, and would not escalate until early evening, Merrill began championing the idea of a half-day conference. Could they run the events concurrently instead of sequentially, giving attendees the option to choose which speaker to hear from? Since the event space would be set up for one speaker at a time, would it even be feasible? Would attendees show up for a conference that only lasted three hours, and if not, would low attendance be disrespectful to the high profile speakers?

The conference directors and co-presidents narrowed it down to three choices:

1. Cancel the conference before 2:00pm, thus saving operational costs that would otherwise be incurred.
2. Hold a half-day conference with concurrent speakers.
3. Wait until Thursday night to make a decision, based on more accurate forecasts and updates on speaker travel plans.

While initially on the table, rescheduling was not an option for the team. With only three months left before the conference leadership team graduated it would be impossible to find a date that worked for all, or even most, of the speakers. Additionally, because the venue had no availability in March, April, or May, the team would need to find a new location for the conference. They would in effect be planning an entirely new conference in one-quarter of the time it took to plan the initial conference. For these reasons they knew rescheduling would not work.

In his facilitator role, Marco Esquandolas remained an impartial observer, telling them,

The way I look at clubs on campus is that it is your chance to practice management. You put this all together. You know best if you should cancel or go forward. In all my years here, this situation is unprecedented. If it is canceled, it will be devastating. If there is a storm, it will be devastating. If there is no storm, it will be devastating. I will support whatever decision you make.

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The women discussed their options at a rapid pace, knowing the minutes were winding down. How would speakers react if the conference had to be canceled after they had already flown in? Would companies expect sponsorship money to be returned? What was best for the safety of attendees? How much of the setup cost would be sunk if they postponed the decision? If first year students never got to see a conference executed, what would a cancellation mean for the legacy of SWIM? What alternate venues could accommodate the conference if MIT closed? Would it even snow?

The only thing they were sure of was that whatever decision they made would have a long-lasting impact on the event and organization that they were so dedicated to.

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### **Exhibit 1      Conference Agenda**

8:00AM – 9:00AM	Registration Opens Networking Breakfast Alumni Breakfast (MIT Sloan Graduates)
9:00AM – 10:00AM	Introduction by MIT Sloan Dean Schmitteltein <b>Morning Fireside Chat:</b> Maria Cirino (.406 Ventures) Moderated by Bill Aulet (Martin Trust Center for MIT Entrepreneurship)
10:00AM – 10:15AM	Coffee Break
10:15AM – 11:15AM	<b>Spotlight: Leadership and Gender: Does it Matter?</b> <i>Exploring male and female leadership styles across industries</i> Nancie Fernandez (Deloitte), Julia Hu (Lark Technologies), and Martha Samuelson (Analysis Group) Moderated by Emilio Castilla (MIT Sloan)
11:15AM – 11:45AM	<b>Case Study:</b> Vanessa Green (FINSix)
11:45AM – 12:45PM	Networking Lunch
12:45PM – 1:45PM	<b>Afternoon Fireside Chat:</b> Sandie O'Connor (JP Morgan Chase) Moderated by Shari Loessberg (MIT Sloan)
1:45PM – 2:45PM	<b>Spotlight: Risking the F-Word</b> <i>Redefining the fear of failure for women</i> Alison Gerlach, Catharina Lavers Mallet (King.com), and Julie Sygiel (Dear Kate) Moderated by Christina Chase (MIT Sloan)
2:45PM – 3:00PM	Coffee Break
3:00PM – 3:30PM	<b>Case Study:</b> Tamar Dane Dor-Ner (Bain Consulting)
3:30PM – 4:30PM	<b>Closing Keynote Speaker:</b> Maura O'Neill (USAID)

### **Exhibit 2      Conference Operations Schedule**

<b>Wednesday 2/6/13</b>	
11:30 AM	Gift bag assembly begins in SLO
1:00 PM	Lea picks up keys/elevator pass from Kevin Davis at Media Lab
5:00 PM	All bags in SLO storage
<b>Thursday 2/7/13</b>	
1:30 PM	Prior event at venue ends

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2:00 PM	Venue is available to SWIM
	Facilities men arrive to break down prior event
4:00 PM	SWIM team begins to drop off completed gift bags
	Facilities men depart (expected 2hr setup)
5:30 PM	Florists drop off flowers (expected 5:30 - 6pm)
6:00 PM	Furniture vendor 1 delivery arrives (expected 6pm)
	Furniture vendor 2 arrives to reset stage
6:30 PM	Venue lobby doors officially locked <i>Lea to provide access after to doors and freight elevator</i>
	Lighting arrives (expected 6:30pm)
7:00 PM	<b>VIP DINNER STARTS</b>
	Furniture vendor 2 departs
8:00 PM	Furniture vendor 1 departs (expected set no later than 8pm)
	Lighting departs
9:00 PM	Official reservation for the night ends (SWIM members still on site)
10:00 PM	<b>VIP DINNER ENDS</b>
10:30 PM	SWIM team schedule run through (including A/V and Video planning)
11:00 PM	Venue freight elevators will no longer operate
<b>Friday 2/8/13</b>	
5:30 AM	Venue freight elevators begin operating <i>Lea to provide access</i>
7:00 AM	Pastry pickup (separate from catering)
	SWIM conference organizers begin to arrive
	2 day custodians arrives
	Lighting arrives

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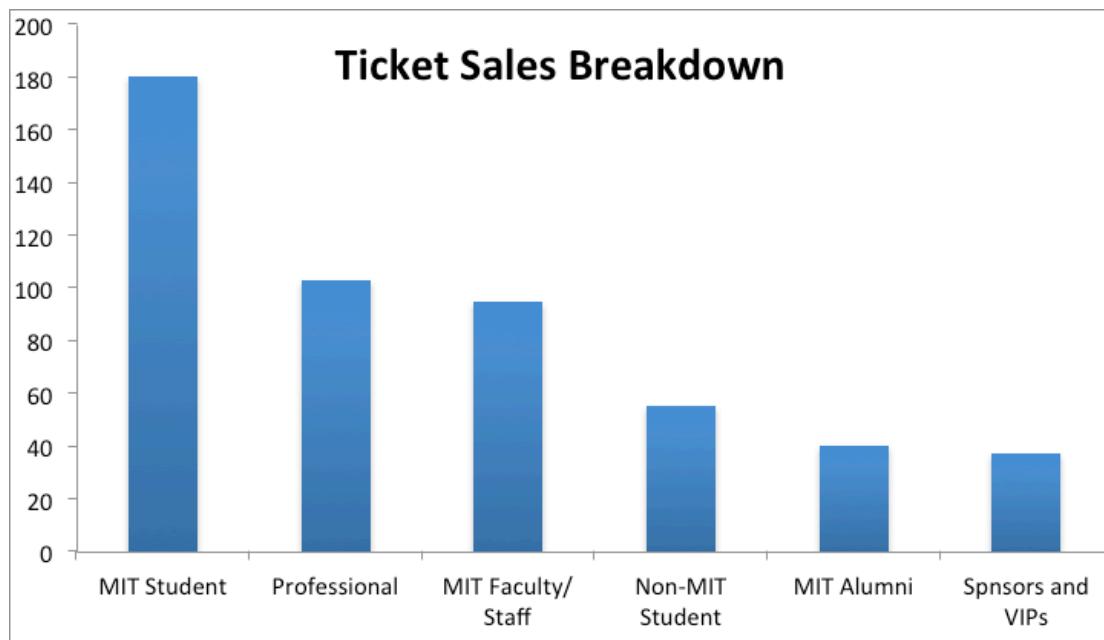
7:15 AM	A/V and Video Production arrive (expected 7-7:15)
7:30 AM	Caterer arrives to set up breakfast (server on hand all day)
	SWIM conference volunteers scheduled to begin arriving
	VIP Room check
	Venue lobby doors unlocked
8:00 AM	Official start of conference agenda
	Registration for Conference/Breakfast begins
9:00 AM	Caterer arrives to set up AM snack
9:30 AM	Coffee delivery
10:30 AM	Organizers sign up to fill holes in networking lunch (if needed)
10:45 AM	Caterer arrives to set up lunch
1:15 PM	Caterer arrives to set up afternoon snack
4:30 PM	Official Conference Agenda ends
	Day custodians depart
	Caterer expected to begin clean up
5:00 PM	Caterer departs
5:30 PM	Facilities arrives for venue reset
	A/V and Video Production depart (expected)
	Lighting departs (expected)
6:30 PM	Venue lobby doors locked
7:00 PM	Furniture vendor 1 delivery arrives for pick-up
	Furniture vendor 2 arrives for stage pick-up
7:30 PM	Facilities departs after reset (expected)
8:00 PM	Furniture vendor 1 departs (expected)
	Furniture vendor 2 departs (expected)

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TBD	Final SWIM volunteers depart with supplies, etc.
11:00 PM	Night custodian arrives (has full access to the building)
11:00 PM	Venue freight elevators stop operating
7:00 AM	Night custodian expected to depart

**Exhibit 3** *Ticket Sales Breakdown*



**Exhibit 4** *Sponsorship Funds Raised*

Sponsorship funds totaled \$38,000.

5 organizations donated \$5,000 each and were promised:

- Dedicated table with students interested in your company at networking lunch
- Recognition on SWIM website
- Twitter and Facebook mentions beginning 2 weeks before event
- Company profile on SWIM website

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- Company profile listed in conference program
- ‘Thank You’ from SWIM leadership at opening and during event

3 organizations donated \$3,000 each and were promised:

- Recognition on SWIM website
- Twitter and Facebook mentions on day of event
- Company name and logo listed in event program
- ‘Thank You’ from SWIM leadership at opening of event

3 organizations donated \$1,000 each and were promised:

- Recognition on SWIM website
- Company name and logo listed in event program

2 organizations donated \$500 each and were promised:

- Recognition on SWIM website

### ***Exhibit 5 Local Weather Reports, 2/5 – 2/7***

#### **Tuesday, February 5**

*No mention of snow*

#### **Wednesday February 6**

On Wednesday afternoon, Brad Panovich, a meteorologist in Charlotte, N.C., tweeted to more than 15,000 followers: “*So Boston could get either 51” of snow or 3.5” of snow.* The ensemble mean is 24.” He was citing the Short Range Ensemble Forecast of the National Centers for Environmental Prediction, a model that gave a small chance of both extremes. “But still possible,” Panovich tweeted.

***February 6, 2013, 2:23 PM ET***

***The Wall Street Journal***

#### ***Weather Journal: Snowstorm of Uncertainty Nears***

“... the coming storm looks to be as close to a meteorologist’s worst nightmare as can be imagined, and here’s why: Warm air at the coast will stifle snow accumulations, while just a few miles inland the parent storm could produce hefty precipitation totals. The general rule of thumb is that an inch of rain equals 10 inches of snow, so any inconsistencies are greatly magnified. The result is shaping up to be an extremely tricky storm outlook, especially more than 48 hours in advance — an eternity in weather forecasting. But as the National Weather Service in New York City warns: “There is the potential for this to be the strongest winter storm of the season.”

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### **Thursday, February 7**

“Better get ready. National Weather Service forecasters say this morning that not much has changed about their forecast for the snowstorm that will wallop Massachusetts on Friday. It’s still expected to be a doozie, possibly one for the record books. Forecasters have issued blizzard watches for much of the state, warning that the storm may drop as much as 2 feet of snow, which will be whipped up by high winds and gusts that could reach 65 miles per hour in some areas.”

***February 7, 2013***

***The Boston Globe, Metro Section***

***Snowstorm may bring 30 inches as anticipation builds in Mass.***

“The nor’easter forecast to slam the state Friday is creating a perfect storm of expectations, fueled by increasingly dire weather reports and flurry of tweets relying on the reams of raw data available online. Based on different models used by the National Weather Service’s Storm Prediction Center, there were 22 different forecasts of how much snow could be dropped on the region by Saturday, ranging from 3.44 inches to a little more than four feet. A look at the predictions is below, along with sizes of items for comparison.”

### ***Exhibit 6        Email to Attendees (2/6)***

**Date:** Wednesday, February 6, 2013 6:30 PM

**Subject:** Message to attendees of 2013 Sloan Women in Management Conference Dare to Fail

Thank you for registering for the [Sloan Women in Management Conference](#) taking place this Friday, February 8th! We are thrilled to share this event with you. With less than two days to go, we wanted to remind you to bring your ticket, in electronic or paper form for a quick and easy registration. Join us at the Networking Breakfast from 8-9AM before our first speaker takes the stage (the incredible [Maria Cirino](#) of 406 Ventures).

We are very excited to welcome you and our [fabulous speakers](#) to MIT on Friday morning ([directions here](#)), snow or shine.

Registration will available all day, beginning at 8 AM.

We look forward to meeting you on Friday.

Best regards,  
SWIM Conference Team

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### **Exhibit 7      Selected Emails from Conference Attendees (2/7)**

**Date:** Thursday, February 7, 2013 7:20 AM

**Subject:** RE: Message to attendees of 2013 Sloan Women in Management Conference Dare to...

Thanks for the welcome, but it looks like Boston is going to get wiped out by a winter storm! What are your alternative plans??!!

---

**Date:** Thursday, February 7, 2013 7:35 AM

**Subject:** RE: Message to attendees of 2013 Sloan Women in Management Conference Dare to...

Good morning.

Given the impending blizzard, will this conference be rescheduled? Thanks!

---

**Date:** Thursday, February 7, 2013 12:44 PM

**Subject:** Please reconsider rescheduling due to storm

Hello,

I am writing with the hope that your team would reconsider rescheduling tomorrow's conference. I certainly respect all of the difficult work that goes into scheduling speakers, logistics, food, etc., but reports have been broadcasting all day about the Mayor of Boston asking people to be off the road after 12 p.m., and numerous companies telling workers to stay home tomorrow. I am pregnant and not excited about sitting in snowstorm traffic tomorrow evening; at the same time, I don't want to forfeit my registration investment either, since I am starting my own business and funds are tight.

Thank you for your consideration.