

LEAD WITH AMBITION

2025

June 12-13, 2025

Convene Willis Tower
233 S Wacker Street
Chicago, IL

In Person + Virtual

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Lead with Ambition

Seramount's **Lead with Ambition** conference is a premier gathering for all employees, including mid- to senior-level multicultural leaders, HR professionals, and practitioners alike. This event fosters community, equipping participants with actionable career strategies and provides a unique forum for leadership development. Through interactive workshops, best practice sharing, and networking opportunities, attendees gain the insights and connections needed to navigate the workplace and advance their careers—alongside allies and industry leaders.

WHY ATTEND?

Throughout the day participants will have the opportunity to:



Engage in open conversations about the challenges multicultural professionals face and collaborate on real solutions.



Connect with executives, allies, and like-minded professionals to build your relationship capital through interactive skill-building sessions, Intersectional Circles, and structured networking opportunities.



Learn how to develop a growth mindset and architect your own success, and advocate for yourself.



Workshop how to develop best practices to foster an inclusive workplace culture that empowers and uplifts talent with different backgrounds and experiences.

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Day 1 Agenda

8:00 am – 4:00 pm

REGISTRATION

8:00 am – 4:00 pm

BOOK HAVEN: DA BOOK JOINT

Throughout the conference, explore the opportunity to shop a diverse selection of books from Da Book Joint, a Black woman-owned business on the Southside of Chicago committed to literary growth and positive engagement of the youth.

8:00 am – 8:40 am

NETWORKING BREAKFAST

Room: Franklin Gallery

8:40 am – 9:00 am

OPENING PERFORMANCE (Livestreamed)

Room: The Hall

Enjoy a unique opening performance from Kayla Drescher, a Chicago magician and mind reader, who will take attendees on a journey throughout the history of magic and her life as well as dazzle with her own tricks.

Kayla Drescher | Magician

9:00 am – 9:15 am

WELCOME REMARKS (Livestreamed)

Room: The Hall

Subha V. Barry | President | Seramount

9:15 am – 10:00 am

OPENING KEYNOTE: Purposeful Ambition: Redefining Success From the Inside Out (Livestreamed)

Room: The Hall

For many of us the pressure to climb successful career ladders starts early and never really lets up. In today's economy, ambition is often framed as a solo race—internships, growing skills for the next level, side hustles—all in the pursuit of demonstrating exemplar drive and ambition. But what if ambition could mean more?

Drawing from her book *The Ambition Trap* and her work coaching executives at the world's most influential companies, Amina offers a framework for rethinking success and pursuing goals to include joy, inspiration, and collective responsibility. Her talk is a powerful invitation to do big things - not from pressure or performance - but from a deep, internal "yes" that aligns with one's values, a long-term vision, and personal commitments.

Amina AlTai | CEO, Executive Coach, and Author of "The Ambition Trap" | Amina AlTai Advising

Moderator:

Steve Pemberton | Managing Director, Human Resource Executive Board | Seramount

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10:00 am – 10:30 am

NETWORKING BREAK

Room: Franklin Gallery

10:30 am – 12:30 pm

CONNECTION CIRCLES (Livestreamed)

Room: The Hall

In this interactive session, participants will explore the power of transformative community—a workplace culture rooted in intentional relationships, shared accountability, and the daily practice of connection. Through guided reflection, group dialogue, and collaborative storytelling, we'll uncover how our lived experiences will shape our interaction with work and sense of belonging. Together, we'll name simple, human-centered shifts that foster trust and drive excellence. Grounded in the More Connected Humans™ framework, this workshop invites every participant to reimagine what's possible when we lead with connection and not just intention.

Introduced by:

Laura Sherbin | Managing Director, Research and Consulting | Seramount

In-Person Facilitator:

Eva Vega | Founder & Chief Connector | More Connected Humans

Virtual Facilitator:

Shenelle Brooks | Associate Director | Seramount

12:30 pm – 1:30 pm

NETWORKING LUNCH

Room: Franklin Gallery

1:30 pm – 1:45 pm

TRANSITION BREAK

1:45 pm – 3:00 pm

BREAKOUT SESSIONS (In-Person)

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Day 1 Agenda

1:45 pm – 3:00 pm

Authentic Leadership: Sharing Career Journeys and Lessons Learned

Room: The Hub

Track: Wellness & Building Community | Inclusion | Leaders for Leaders
Recommended Audience Level: All

Prepare for an inspiring conversation as accomplished leaders share their career journeys, offering insights into navigating professional spaces, overcoming barriers, and finding support. They'll discuss personal successes and challenges, as well as strategies for career advancement, leadership growth, and authenticity in the workplace. Whether attendees are an emerging professional or a seasoned leader, this session will provide invaluable perspectives on resilience, advocacy, and building an inclusive future.

Moderator:

Danielle Korins | Chief Human Resources Officer | Infinite Reality

Panelists:

Shannon Carstens | Partner and Inclusion & Belonging Leader | KPMG

Desiree Dancy | Chief Inclusion & Belonging Officer and Head of Corporate Responsibility | FactSet

Sheila R. Evans | Chief Product & Solutions Officer | MagMutual Insurance

1:45 pm – 3:00 pm

Vulnerability is the Key to Inclusive Leadership

Room: The Forum South

Track: Wellness & Building Community | Inclusion | Leaders for Leaders
Recommended Audience Level: All

In professional settings, vulnerability is often misunderstood and swept under the rug. By sharing personal stories and experiences, Priya demonstrates how vulnerability, when embraced authentically, can serve as a bridge between all individuals. Audience members will leave with an understanding of the impact vulnerability can have on breaking down workplace barriers, fostering a sense of belonging, and ultimately driving positive organizational change.

Facilitator:

Priya Nalkur | President | RoundTable Institute

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1:45 pm – 3:00 pm

Talent Development Planning in a Changed Talent Landscape (Livestreamed)

Room: The Hall

Track: Leaders for Leaders

Recommended Audience Level: Mid-Level, Senior-Level

As disruptive technology and federal policy continues reshaping the higher education landscape, its influence on corporate talent strategy—particularly in early career and nontraditional pipelines—is becoming increasingly clear. This session will examine how organizations are adapting their approaches to talent attraction in response to these shifts. Attendees will explore the implications of changes in higher education on access and career readiness among emerging talent and the technology innovations adapting to these shifts.

Introduced by:

Sonia King | Executive Director of Account Management | EAB + Seramount

Moderator:

Glen Buickerood | Associate Director, Partner Development, Forage | Seramount

Panelists:

Sally Amoruso | Chief Partner Officer | EAB

Ashley Hicks | Managing Director, Forage Account Management | Seramount

Michelle Lewis | Associate Director, Talent Acquisition | KPMG, LLP

1:45 pm – 3:00 pm

ONE-ON-ONE LEADERSHIP COACHING [By Appointment Only]

Room: The Forum North

Professional leadership coaches conduct 25–35-minute meetings/consultations with attendees and share advice and tips on how to solve issues in their workplaces and in their lives. Leadership coaching offers a wonderful opportunity to address challenges, embrace personal action steps, and accelerate growth and the attainment of career goals. This experience is meant to serve as an introduction to what a coaching relationship may provide you and act as the first step in a continuous coaching journey.

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1:30 pm – 2:45 pm

Communicating Courageously (Virtual)

Track: Leaders for Leaders

Recommended Audience Level: Mid-Level, Senior-Level

Effective communication is key to building trust, fostering inclusion, and navigating the complexities of today's workplace. In this session, participants will explore their personal communication styles and strengthen the adaptive skills needed to approach challenging conversations with clarity and confidence. Using practical tools and guided reflection, attendees will learn strategies for impactful, empathetic communication across teams and contexts—and leave with a personalized action plan to apply their insights in everyday interactions.

Facilitator:

Mollie Teitelbaum | Associate Director, Learning Solutions and Advisory | Seramount

2:30 pm – 5:00 pm

VICTORIA'S SECRET "UNDERCOVER" WEAR TEST PROGRAM [By Appointment Only]

Room: Wacker Gallery and Studio

"Undercover" is Victoria's Secret's wear testing program which relies on real-life feedback from their product testers ("Agents") to improve the fit & comfort of their products before they reach Victoria's Secret & PINK stores. Though they test a variety of products, their program primarily focuses on bra wear tests, and they require all bra testers to have a professional bra fitting by a member of their Technical Design team to ensure their testers are wearing the correct size. Limited spaces are available – learn more about their program & book your fitting appointment!

3:00 pm – 3:15 pm

TRANSITION BREAK

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Day 1 Agenda

3:15 pm – 4:15 pm

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP PANEL: Future of Leadership

(Livestreamed)

Room: The Hall

Track: Inclusion | Leaders for Leaders

Leadership is evolving—who creates it, who consumes it, and how it shapes our workplaces and communities. This dynamic panel explores the shifting landscape of leadership, from the distinct strengths of leadership styles to the critical need for inclusion and trust. Our speakers will dive into the erosion of trust in leadership and strategies for rebuilding it, the power of bottom-up and aspirational leadership, and what it means to lead with intention in today's complex world. Join us for a thought-provoking discussion on what leadership looks like now—and where it's headed.

Moderator:

Matt Klinger | President, Research | EAB

Panelists:

Steve Pemberton | Managing Director, Chief Human Resources Officers – Product Lead | Seramount

Ripa Rashid | Managing Director of CDOC | Seramount

Paul Sullivan | Founder | The Company of Dads

4:15 pm – 5:00 pm

NETWORKING RECEPTION

Room: Jackson Gallery & Terrace

Wrap up the first day of the conference with a lively networking reception where connections spark and the energy flows! Enjoy refreshments and great company while being wowed by live magic from our opening performer, Kayla Drescher — the award-winning magician behind Magic in Heels.

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Day 2 Agenda

8:00 am – 3:30 pm

REGISTRATION

8:00 am – 3:30 pm

BOOK HAVEN: DA BOOK JOINT

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8:00 am – 9:00 am

GIVING BREAKFAST

Room: Franklin Gallery

Attendees will have the opportunity to make a meaningful impact by assembling menstrual hygiene kits for individuals in need, in partnership with The Period Collective, a Chicago-based all-volunteer non-profit that promotes menstrual equity.

8:00 am – 9:00 am

ONE-ON-ONE LEADERSHIP COACHING [By Appointment Only]

Room: The Forum North

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9:00 am – 9:20 am

WELCOME REMARKS *(Livestreamed)*

Room: The Hall

Bridgette Scales | Managing Director, Advisory | Seramount

9:20 am – 10:10 am

OPENING KEYNOTE: Playing at Your Peak: Performance Principles for Workplace Success *(Livestreamed)*

Room: The Hall

A seasoned sports psychologist who serves as a sport psychology consultant for the Chicago Bulls, Dr. Wendy Borlabi shares new and customized approaches to high performance on the individual and team levels rooted in mission, purpose, and a deep understanding of mindset and its role in achievement.

In this session, Wendy opens audiences' eyes to the mental barriers that stand in the way of success and provides the same tools and strategies she has shared with elite athletes and Fortune 500 companies to help anyone in any industry adopt an athlete's mindset to identify strengths and weaknesses within themselves and their teams, set meaningful goals, capitalize on opportunities for innovation and growth, and challenge themselves to perform beyond their best when the lights are shining brightest.

Wendy Borlabi, Ph.D. | Director of Performance and Mental Health | Chicago Bulls

Moderator:

Shyama Venkateswar, Ph.D. | Senior Director, Learning Solutions | Seramount

10:10 am – 10:30 am

NETWORKING BREAK

Room: Franklin Gallery

10:30 am – 11:45 am

BREAKOUT SESSIONS *(In-Person)*

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10:30 am – 11:45 am

Brilliant Resilience: Navigating Challenges while Excelling in the Workplace

Room: *The Hub*

Track: *Wellness & Building Community | Inclusion | Leaders for Leaders*

Recommended Audience Level: *Early, Middle*

Join Leidos for an interactive workshop on helping employees navigate their workplace on managing mental health while advancing their careers, identifying the problem, and then exploring what employees can do.

Moderator:

Nichelle Wash | Director, Research Development and Member Advisory | Seramount

Panelists:

Tashi Carpenter | VP, Culture & Employee Engagement | Leidos

Stephen Mallette | Director, Culture, Organizational Development | Leidos

10:30 am – 11:45 am

Building Your Scaffolding: Creating Support You Need to Achieve

Room: *The Forum South*

Track: *Wellness & Building Community | Leaders for Leaders*

Recommended Audience Level: *Early- and Mid-Level*

You've got the vision—now let's power it forward. In this dynamic workshop, you'll design the structures, relationships, and practices that fuel your momentum and keep you aligned with your goals. This session will help you activate the support you need, let go of what's holding you back, and step boldly into what's next.

Kailei Carr | Founder and CEO | Asbury Group

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10:30 am – 11:45 am

Leading with Confidence in Times of Change *(Livestreamed)*

Room: The Hall

Track: Wellness & Building Community | Leaders for Leaders

Recommended Audience Level: All

In a world defined by constant change, impactful leadership requires courage, resilience, and a commitment to growth. This session shines a light on how one leader harnesses the power of family, community, and a growth mindset to champion lasting inclusion.

Through personal stories and powerful insights, panelists will inspire attendees—whether just starting out or well into their leadership journey—to reflect, adapt, and invest in their own continuous development. Attendees will leave energized to build the skills that not only elevate their current work but also prepare them to lead with purpose into the future.

Moderator:

Carmen Arce | Chief Operating Officer | The Partnership

Panelists:

Tanjia Coleman, Ph.D. | President | Reimagine Organization Development, Inc.

Crysta Dungee | Head of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion – Americas | Takeda Pharmaceuticals

Jennifer Ingram | Senior Vice President, Community Values Impact and Innovation | MidPen Housing

Shijuade Kadree | Senior Director of Culture and Workforce Strategies | Micron Technology

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10:30 am – 11:45 am

Mentorship and Sponsorship in the Workplace Today *(Virtual)*

Track: Leaders for Leaders

Recommended Audience Level: Mid- and Senior-Level

Both mentorship and sponsorship play critical roles in career and leadership development. Through interactive discussions and examples from executive coaching and leadership development experiences, the session will highlight how mentorship and understanding the evolving nature of leadership are vital for professional growth.

This session will also emphasize the importance of leveraging the resources and visibility provided by sponsorship relationships, which are essential for a protégé's career success. Participants will learn how sponsorship can bridge critical gaps in career advancement for all groups through candid feedback, network expansion, and advocacy for career-enhancing opportunities.

Moderator:

Juliana Huffman | Associate Director, Assessment and Strategy Team | Seramount

Speakers:

Rumbi Petrollezzo | Senior Director, Assessment & Strategy | Seramount

Ash Varma | President | Varma & Associates

10:30 am – 11:45 am

ONE-ON-ONE LEADERSHIP COACHING [By Appointment Only]

Room: The Forum North

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11:45 am – 12:45 pm

NETWORKING LUNCH

Room: Franklin Gallery

12:45 pm – 1:00 pm

NETWORKING BREAK

Room: Franklin Gallery

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1:00 pm – 2:15 pm

1:00 pm – 2:15 pm

1:30 pm – 2:45 pm

BREAKOUT SESSIONS (In-Person)

Organizational Wellness Programs

Room: The Hub

Track: Wellness & Building Community | Inclusion | Leaders for Leaders
Recommended Audience Level: All

In times of change and challenge, prioritizing wellbeing is more important than ever. This session will explore practical strategies to support personal and team resilience. Learn how a dedicated Wellbeing Support Advisor role has been embedded within the organization to provide real-time support, reduce burnout, and build a culture of care. We'll also explore the Having REAL Conversations initiative that touches on empathetic leadership and wellbeing moments. Attendees will leave with actionable strategies to promote self-care, boost morale, and foster connection within their teams.

Moderator:

Mija Lieberman | Associate Director, Advisory | Seramount

Presenters:

Lindsay Fazio, Ph.D. | Director, Wellbeing & Vitality | Endeavor Health

Lesli Marasco | VP, Global Benefits & Well-Being | AbbVie

How to RISE and Shine Above It All

Room: The Forum South

Track: Wellness & Building Community | Leaders for Leaders
Recommended Audience Level: All

Crawford captivates and engages as she unpacks the realities and potential growth that can emerge from work burnout. She explores the importance of self-acceptance and self-care, emphasizing that prioritizing your well-being is not a selfish act, but a courageous and necessary step toward living a fulfilled and purpose-driven life. Through personal storytelling, she illustrates how adversity can serve as fuel for empowerment. Crawford blends education with entertainment, offering practical models and concepts that all leaders can immediately apply to step into their power and lead with authenticity and resilience.

Facilitator:

Joyel Crawford | Executive Advisor and Bestselling Author of *Show Your Ask!* | Crawford Leadership Strategies

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1:00 pm – 2:15 pm

Building Your Leadership Capacity for Non-Profit Boards *(Livestreamed)*

Room: The Hall

Track: Leaders for Leaders

Recommended Audience Level: All

This session explores what it takes to serve effectively on nonprofit boards, with a focus on the leadership skills and mindset required to contribute meaningfully. Participants will gain insight into the qualities boards seek in members, how to align personal and professional strengths with board responsibilities, and actionable strategies to build readiness for impactful board service.

Introduction by:

Joan Sheridan Labarge | Managing Director | Seramount

Moderator:

Subha V. Barry | President | Seramount

Panelists:

Tiffany Davis | Chief Inclusion & Diversity Officer | ADP

Melissa Donaldson | Global Head of DEI | Morningstar

Perika J. Sampson | Founder / Principal | Sampson Dearborn Consulting

Warner Santiago | Global Head of DEI | Takeda Pharmaceuticals

1:00 pm – 2:15 pm

The Multi-Dimensional You: Navigating Your Profession with Purpose and Alignment *(Virtual)*

Track: Wellness & Building Community

Recommended Audience Level: Early- and Mid-Level

A transformative journey allows humans to uncover the truth about the choices available to them in every moment, empowering them to create peace and calm, regardless of life circumstances. Through guided practices, they experience firsthand how to access this inner equilibrium and explore whether they are more intellectually or emotionally driven in their responses. Simone and Selina will introduce foundational tools for participants to begin to cultivate the skill of remaining neutral and centered, even in the midst of emotional or situational chaos.

Facilitators:

Selina Maitreya | Founder & CEO | Your Choice Coach

Simone Sloan | Executive Strategist | Your Choice Coach

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2:15 pm – 2:30 pm

NETWORKING BREAK

2:30 pm – 3:25 pm

FIRESIDE CHAT: Beyond the Suit: Executive Presence Reimagined (Livestreamed)

Room: The Hall

Track: Leaders for Leaders

Join us for a candid fireside chat that redefines what executive presence truly means in today's workplace. Featuring a seasoned legal professional and previous Chief People & Culture Officer at Major League Baseball, this conversation moves beyond outdated notions tied to appearance or speech. Instead, we'll explore how executive presence is built through subject matter expertise, emotional intelligence, adaptive communication, inclusive leadership, and strategic networks. The session will examine how the term executive presence can now be re-imagined as a set of accessible, learnable behaviors that empower all leaders.

Michele Meyer-Shipp | CEO | Dress for Success

Moderator:

Subha V. Barry | President | Seramount

3:25 pm – 3:30 pm

CLOSING REMARKS (Livestreamed)

Room: The Hall

Subha V. Barry | President | Seramount