

MOBILITY MAVENS:

Harnessing the Power of Collaboration in ITS Marketing

By **MAUREEN TAYLOR**, IMSA Director of Marketing & Conference

WE'VE ALL HEARD THE SAYING, “There is strength in numbers,” and the Mobility Mavens have taken this concept to new heights. Founded by Trisha Tunilla, SVP of marketing at Q-Free, this dynamic group is made up of seven female marketing professionals working in the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) industry. While respecting company confidentiality, the group focuses on general marketing strategies and professional growth.

In addition to Tunilla, Mobility Mavens includes:

- **Bethany Craig**, senior marketing communications specialist, Q-Free
- **Mindy Gillespie**, head of communications, Yunex Traffic
- **Lauren Jochum**, head of marketing, Flow Labs
- **Svitlana Lebedieva**, product marketing manager, Western Systems, Inc.
- **Julie Perdichizzi**, product marketing, LYT
- **Caryn Vorster**, director of communications and technical writing, Applied Information Inc.

Tunilla conceived the idea for the group after realizing she was already connected to this group of knowledgeable women. The diversity of backgrounds is one of the group's strengths. For example, Caryn Vorster comes from an engineering background.

“Trisha approached me about a year ago with the idea of having this powerhouse of women come together to discuss marketing, communications and branding in the industry,” Vorster said. “My background is in engineering, and sometimes I feel out of my depth. However, I also have the ability to communicate technical things to non-technical people. It's a space to share ideas, get inspired and think beyond the usual – especially with people outside your day-to-day circle who bring fresh perspectives.”

Mindy Gillespie and Tunilla had previously collaborated on panel presentations for various trade shows and saw great results. Despite being competitors, Gillespie welcomed the opportunity to expand her marketing team without hiring while furthering the impact of her company.

“We are all passionate about mobility, the environment and safety,” Gillespie said. “Together, we can do more.”



From left: Bethany Craig, Jarin Ratanapeanchai, Caryn Vorster, Mindy Gillespie, Trisha Tunilla, Svitlana Lebedieva and Julie Perdichizzi.

The group provides essential support for those new to the industry. Julie Perdichizzi started at LYT after several years in EdTech and did not know anyone in the field. Mobility Mavens helped her navigate the industry.

Svitlana Lebedieva echoed the sentiment, emphasizing the importance of communication in transportation safety. “The industry is doing great things out there on the streets, but often, the final customer does not have any communication about how safety measures are saving lives,” Lebedieva said.

Diversity also extends beyond professional backgrounds – it includes varying levels of industry experience.

“Having members that are relatively new to the industry brings a fresh perspective to us lifetimers that have been around 15 + years,” Tunilla said. “Oftentimes, we don't think about those things anymore.”

Lauren Jochum agreed, adding that she wished the group had been around when she first started in the industry at ITS

America, saying it would have been a game changer. She also emphasized the value of hearing a female perspective in a traditionally male-dominated field.

As marketing professionals, they face the same challenges as others – leveraging artificial intelligence, evaluating marketing platforms and finding ways to engage their audience.

Most of the group's members work in software and manufacturing. However, Lebedieva works for Western Systems, a manufacturer and distributor, which gives her a unique perspective on tailoring messaging for both audiences.

While they refrain from discussing trade secrets and upcoming product launches, the Mobility Mavens share general best practices for storytelling, campaign success and post-project communication strategies.

"We are all involved in dealer events, so being able to improve upon the event and relay information more effectively – those are the types of skill sets we discuss. It's a win-win for all involved," one group member noted.

Submitting abstracts for 10+ industry conferences is also a collaborative effort. The group has developed a tracking sheet to stay on top of deadlines and submissions. Each abstract reflects the unique voice and experience of the presenter, ensuring a balanced, vendor-neutral session.

ITE was one of the first conferences where Yunex, Q-Free and others co-presented. While some companies may have initially questioned the need to co-present with a competitor, Tunilla said there is enough business for all involved and the sessions have been well received.

"It makes for a more well-rounded session if an attendee hears perspectives from multiple vendors," she added.

"If the group is presenting on a topic like transit signal priority, we are presenting on the benefits of the system," Vorster said. "It's up to the agency to determine which solution they want to use. As presenters, we communicate how it will improve safety, efficiency and mobility for public agencies and the general public."

Mobility Mavens are also mindful of overall industry branding and awareness because of the need to recruit a diverse workforce and the next generation.

"As more technicians near retirement age, how do we incentivize younger technicians to get into this field?" Tunilla asked. "As marketers and communicators, it's our job to communicate all the cool stuff we do. Everybody around the world relies on what we do, and yet, we continually undersell our industry."



Lauren Jochum, head of marketing with Flow Labs, and a member of the Mobility Mavens, interacting with mixed reality technology.

Personal branding sessions have been at the forefront of recent discussions among the group. Whether you are with a public agency, a vendor or a consultant, knowing how to talk about the industry and build excitement could go a long way in recruitment.

For women looking to build a network similar to the Mobility Mavens, Bethany Craig advocates getting involved in young professionals' groups that many associations offer.

"Getting involved and participating in in-person events helps you to build your network. Then those people connect you to others. You have to start somewhere and take a little leap of faith, even if it is outside of your comfort zone. Sometimes all it takes is just that first step," she said.

About Mobility Mavens



MOBILITY MAVENS

Mobility Mavens is an informal group of marketers in the ITS industry who focus on cross-company collaboration for industry-wide marketing excellence. It is great for bouncing ideas around without discussing competitive specifics. There is no formal membership process – each member contributes by taking initiative, sharing expertise and actively engaging in industry-related discussions. If you're in the ITS industry and passionate about making an impact through communication, this is a space to connect, collaborate and exchange ideas with others who share that drive.