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The feminine side of the Mexico Franchise Trade Mission

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Franchise Trade Missions have always been dominated by men, so perhaps it's a bit ironic that the latest mission heading to macho Mexico is sporting a record number of women development officers.

Past franchise missions have been primarily men, except for a high number of women in the U.S. Commercial Service domestic and foreign ranks. Prior to this trade mission, Yoshino Nakajima, senior vice president and COO of global operations for Home Instead, was the only female development officer on our radar. She attended part of the franchise trade mission to Latin America and was one of the first women to tackle international franchising.

So to have four women pitching their companies to Mexican business people is a welcome trend.

Here's the trade mission make-up:

Mona Musa, U.S. Commercial Service senior international trade specialist, out of Louisville, Kentucky, office led the October 6-10 mission to Mexico City and Monterrey. Martha Sánchez in Mexico City and Belen Gallegos in Monterrey were the in-country leads.

Leslie Hawks international director with Edwards Global Services, represented Title Boxing Club. Before joining EGS, she was

vice president for St Jacques Marketing, and has worked with several large franchise brands. Interesting fact: She's from England, lives in Los Angeles, has a house in France and is a pescetarian.

Michelle McClurg, Edwards Global Services' newly appointed COO, supported her colleague Bill Gabbard with numerous brands that had applied for the U.S. Commercial Services' Gold Key services in conjunction with the trade mission. Interesting fact: When she returns to Denver from the trade mission, McClurg has to deal with hail damage on her car and four houses.

Erika Garza, director of franchise development for Boston's Restaurants & Sports Bar, has been with Dallas-based company a little over a year. She oversees Mexico, South America, Central America and the U.S., and previously worked with several multi-national companies in Latin America. Interesting fact: She designs kids' parties, still takes ballet classes at 39 and travels even when not working.

Along with being director of international new business development for Focus Brands International (franchisor of brands such as Cinnabon, Auntie Anne's Pretzels, Carvel ice cream), Tesla Martinez writes articles on international foodservice strategy, plus other leadership subjects. Interesting fact: She resembles Kat Cole, CEO of Cinnabon, one of the brands Martinez represents, and is passionate about seeing how American brands can leverage their cache in developing countries.

Jackie Coan, international franchise director for Xtreme Lashes, was hired to develop the brand's international program. The Houston-based beauty company doesn't franchise in the U.S. Interesting fact: Coan was born in Singapore and before taking her current position, she and her husband were Action Coach franchisees.

And, yes, there were men on the trade mission as well: Josh Merin, International Franchise Association; Anthony Padulo, Brightstar Care; Al Davis of Boston's; Doug Wong and Dave Demers of Denny's; Bill Gabbard, EGS; Mark Jameson, Fastsigns; Rob White and Chris Grandpre of Mosquito Squad; Dan Hannah, Smoothie King; Hair Parra, Wing Zone; and Donnie Everts, World of Beer.