

Women in Leadership

Working Through Barriers and Biases

Challenges

Women in leadership face challenges in three areas:

- Societal: Women are perceived as less effective at “take charge” behaviors. Women also face higher standards and lower rewards than men.
- Organizational: Women suffer a lack of role models, exclusion from formal networks, not having a sponsor, and being evaluated for promotions differently than men.
- Self-imposed: Women are more likely to underestimate their leadership abilities, and fear rejection.

Inward-Focused Leadership Skills

To improve your self-development as a leader:

- ✓ Be authentic
- ✓ Develop strategic relationships
- ✓ Get a sponsor
- ✓ Find balance

Three Kinds of Networks

Effective leaders build three types of networks.

- Operational: People that help you complete work efficiently.
- Tactical: People outside your direct control who can help you reach key organizational objectives.
- Personal: People outside your organization who can help you with personal growth and advancement.

Outward-Focused Leadership Skills

Improve your interaction with others through:

- ✓ Leadership communication skills
- ✓ Influencing others
- ✓ Negotiation skills
- ✓ Building and maintaining a strong team

Negotiate Strongly

Preparation is key to confident negotiating.

- ✓ Show yourself and back up requests with data and by explaining your value.
- ✓ Focus negotiations on meeting common goals.
- ✓ Use silence after making a request.
- ✓ Don't apologize or play the victim.
- ✓ Aim for respect first and friendship later.

Exhibit Executive Presence

Executive presence is the ability to command attention without pretention.

- Use strong and clear language.
- Communicate with passion and energy.
- Pay attention to your tone of voice.
- Display confident body language.
- Avoid behaviors perceived as weak.

Influence Others

- ✓ Rational appeal: You must be able to present a coherent argument with facts and logic.
- ✓ Emotional appeal: You must be able to connect with others by knowing what is important to them.
- ✓ Likeable: Demonstrate the traits of likeability—show interest in others, use “we” more than “I,” treat everyone with respect, be humble and able to laugh at yourself.

Build and Maintain a Strong Team

Women have an inclusive problem solving style, making them natural team leaders.

- Find top performers.
- Establish systems and structures.
- Invest in training and development.
- Build esprit de corps, but avoid silo mentality.