

9 Powerful Strategies



**Equipping men
to facilitate women's career success**



Discussion of diversity and inclusion seems to be everywhere in business today. And the message is clear that companies – likely including yours - want more women in the leadership pipeline.

But the truth is, several obstacles may prevent you from fostering women's career success.

In some cases, you may even be *unintentionally hindering* the professional development of women you work with as well as manage. I bet you're curious why.

Why is it that many men, most with good intentions, struggle with how to effectively support women's career development and advancement? [Look below to learn why!](#)

- ⇒ They don't understand how managing women may require a different approach than managing men.
- ⇒ They're unclear about what they should be doing – or doing differently – to support women's professional development.
- ⇒ They feel confused about where, if at all, men fit in when it comes to women's networks and other efforts to support women at work.
- ⇒ They feel discomfort with the topic of gender at work and fear saying or doing the wrong thing. Who wants to be 'that guy?' It seems that ignoring the whole thing is the safest bet.

Do any of those reasons sound like what you, or the men you work with, find difficult?

If so, keep reading!

It's true that men have blind spots and many don't understand women's experience at work. And men are biased in ways that they often don't see.

But this is hardly something about men alone. *Every single one of us* has blind spots and unconscious biases. It's the way our brains are wired. It's biological!

But that doesn't mean we can throw up our hands and give up. That would be the opposite of what Darwin taught us. We know adaptation is the way forward and stagnancy the road to extinction.

And it is possible to move beyond our blind spots and to start seeing what has been invisible. It's possible to understand our biases and to work to ensure that we see each individual as unique rather than the stereotypical version we have in our minds.



The way to move beyond our biases and blind spots requires three key elements:

- the humility to know these universal tendencies influence *all* of us, and that includes you
- the ability to self-reflect and learn about your own patterns of thinking
- the ability to listen - really listen - so as to better understand rather than simply to respond

The point is you can become a *Rockstar* mentor for, and supporter of, women in your organization.

You need the patience to listen closely, the curiosity to learn about women's experiences and perspectives, the interest to observe patterns of behavior and the ability to apply what you're learning. It's through practice - experimenting, trying things, seeing what works and trying again - that will make the mystery of facilitating women's career success get a whole lot less confusing and a whole lot more satisfying.

It's not magic, it's **EFFORT** and **PRACTICE** like so many important things in life!

Turn the page for important tips and strategies to get you started.



Tip #1: Look for patterns

Male allies report that once they began paying attention to particular dynamics at work, they began to see patterns that were related to gender. Patterns like men laughing uproariously at the latest off-color meme while women didn't seem to find it funny. Or patterns like women routinely being interrupted when talking in meetings while men were allowed to speak at length and complete their thoughts. Pay attention to:

- ⇒ who talks and who listens
- ⇒ who's assigned to exciting new projects and who never is
- ⇒ who's invited to important meetings and who is not
- ⇒ who's routinely complimented for their great work and who seldom gets credit

Chances are you'll discover some things you never noticed before.



Tip #2: Consider your assumptions

Women regularly confront the difficulty of having assumptions made about their preferences and ambitions at work. Consider the benevolent male boss, not wanting to increase the stress for a new mom on his team, who assigns her to clients requiring only local travel. Or her male manager who assumes that because she turned down a promotion requiring relocation (given her youngest child was finishing high school), she'll never consider relocation - or worse - she's not interested in advancement opportunities. The key is to not assume but to ask, and to keep asking. Managers aren't mind readers. Things change and priorities shift.



Tip #3: Appreciate how gender norms influence behavior

It's hard to realize the degree to which males and females learn very different rules for *how to behave* and *what brings rewards* while growing up. While girls learn that they're rewarded for being pretty, boys learn that being athletic leads to admiration and status. And girls who tell others what to do are called bossy – or another B word once they become adults – while boys who take charge are treated as leaders to follow. In fact, research shows *taking charge* is THE skill that most significantly hinders women's leadership potential.

It turns out that often it's not what you do, *but how others perceive what you do*, that really matters. Women and men facing the same situation are expected to behave differently just because of their gender. Consider the last time you heard anyone ask a new father-to-be if he was planning on leaving work to stay home with his child?

9 Male Ally Strategies to Build into Your Repertoire

- 1) Make a point of regularly asking women you know, “what fuels – and what discourages - your professional ambitions?”
- 2) If there are few women in the hiring pool, instead of automatically moving forward with the search, go back to the source(s) and insist on more women candidates.
- 3) Help raise the visibility of the women’s network at your office by forwarding their events to men in your circle and asking if he (they) would like to join you.
- 4) When you notice patterns related to gender think, I wonder why:
 - There are so few women in technical jobs here, or
 - Women manage the smaller client accounts on the team, or
 - Fathers with new babies don’t talk about needing flexibility.
- 5) Don’t add to the problem by reinforcing sexist comments at work like, *She’s so hot*. Instead change the direction of the conversation. Simply say, “I prefer not to hear that at the office.”
- 6) Don’t worry if you say something that you’re concerned could have been offensive to your women colleagues. Simply apologize, move on, and try to be more mindful the next time around.
- 7) Regularly monitor equity in assignments and compensation for the teams you manage. Make adaptations as necessary.
- 8) Think of the strengths each woman that you manage brings to the team. Purposefully point out her strengths, and their value, to her and to others in management.
- 9) If you are asked to speak on a panel, ask who the other panelists will be. If there are no women, ask, “Why not?” and, “Could my female colleague take my place to provide a different perspective?”

Let us know how we can help!

