



Women in Professional Firms

Course workbook



Why are we doing this?

“Take every opportunity someone gives you, no matter how small it may seem at the time or even if you feel you can’t do it, just take it on and run with it.”

Key report findings:

This workshop has been devised to help women in professional firms advance in their careers. Our latest research report, based on interviews with leading female professionals, highlighted three main areas where women face particular challenge in terms of career progression:

- Knowing their worth
- Developing a professional ‘persona’
- Raising their profile

Through practical and interactive exercises, we will explore these key themes and examine the tools and techniques successful women have used to excel in the professional arena.

Session outcomes:

Participants will have:

- Evaluated and articulated their signature strengths
- Explored new ways of engaging with clients and building professional relationships
- Identified appropriate strategies to help build their professional profile

Know your own worth

“Be yourself and never try to be anyone else. Whatever background you come from, whoever you are, you do have something to offer.”

Differentiating yourself from your colleagues is not easy, especially at the start of a professional career. Research suggests that in these early stages young women in particular are less confident about themselves, not always aware of the weight of their achievements or the contribution they are making and can also be reticent about promoting themselves internally.

Why is it important to understand and develop your own strengths?

The strengths philosophy

“Individuals are able to gain far more when they expend effort to build on their greatest talents than when they spend a comparable amount of effort to remediate their weaknesses” (Clifton & Harter; Investing in strengths, 2003)

This philosophy was echoed by professional women interviewed by SPA:

“It is important to focus on your thing. The thing you do best. Finding an area of expertise which complements your personality and skill-set is essential. So many people are unhappy in later life because of the career decisions they made early on. It is important to realise that the working world is more fluid today - you don't have to stay in the same firm and in the same line of work for your entire life. So find out what you are really good at, what works for you, be honest with yourself and craft a career to suit you. This way it will be easier to climb the ladder.”

“I put my success down to knowing what my strengths are and knowing how to use them. If you can identify what you do well, differently and better than others then you will become naturally able to spot opportunities to progress. Through doing this, you gain confidence. Young women need to be much more self-aware and confident about their abilities and potential to succeed.”

“Be yourself and never try to be anyone else. Whatever background you come from, whoever you are, you do have something to offer. Finding what is special about you will push you forward. The barriers you perceive are the barriers that you put there yourself.”

Strengths to get you thinking...

Achiever

Have stamina and work hard. Satisfaction from being busy and productive.

Activator

Make things happen by turning thoughts into action. Often impatient.

Adaptability

Able to 'go with the flow' and take things as they come.

Analytical

Search for reasons and causes. Consider factors that could impact a situation.

Arranger

Able to think how all resources can be arranged for maximum productivity.

Belief

Hold core values that are unchanging. From these values comes purpose.

Command

Have presence. They can take control of a situation and make decisions.

Communication

Find it easy to put thoughts into words. Good conversationalists and presenters.

Competition

Measure progress against performance of others. Strive to win first place.

Connectedness

See links between things.

Consistency

Treat everyone in the same way.

Context

Enjoy thinking about the past. Understand the present by thinking about its history.

Deliberative

Take care in making decisions or choices. Able to anticipate obstacles.

Developer

Able to recognise and cultivate the potential in others.

Disciplined

Enjoy routine and structure, able to create order.

Empathetic

Able to sense feelings of other people by imagining themselves in their situation.

Focused

Take a direction, follow through and make corrections to stay on track. Can prioritise.

Futuristic

Inspired by the future and what could be. Inspire others with ideas and visions.

Harmony

Look for consensus and seek areas of agreement.

Ideation

Fascinated by ideas. Can find connections between seemingly disparate phenomena.

Includer

Accepting of others. Show awareness of make an effort to include others.

Individualization

Understand how unique and different people can work together productively.

Input

Have a craving to know more. Like to collect and archive information.

Intellection

Intellectual ability. Introspective and appreciate intellectual discussions.

Learner

Desire to learn and improve. Enjoy the process of learning.

Maximizer

Seek to transform something strong into something superb.

Positivity

Have enthusiasm that is contagious. Get others excited about their ideas

Relator

Enjoy close relationships and working with others to achieve a goal.

Responsibility

Take ownership. Committed to stable values such as honesty and loyalty.

Restorative

Adapt at dealing with problems. Good at figuring out what is wrong and restoring it.

Self-assurance

Confident in their ability. Confident that their decisions are correct.

Significance

Seek importance in the eyes of others. Independent and want to be recognised.

Strategic

Create alternative ways to proceed. Can quickly spot relevant patterns and issues.

Woo

Love meeting new people and winning them over. Satisfaction from making connections with others.

(Clifton & Harter;
Investing in strengths, 2003).

How do you perceive yourself?

Using the following list below to help you (if necessary):

- A) Write down in the left hand column five words that describe how you perceive yourself
- B) Write down in the right hand column five words that describe how you would like to be perceived

Quiet, confident, professional, self-aware, astute, assertive, expert, intuitive, perceptive, expressive, responsive, persuasive, influential, decisive, imaginative, serious, friendly, responsible, sensitive, conscientious, warm, empathetic, nervous, self-analytical, emotional, inferior

How you perceive yourself?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

How you would like to be perceived

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Critical Incident - Identifying your strengths

Consider a time when you have had a positive impact on the outcome of a work situation (internal meeting/presentation/defused a problem/idea generation/helped someone else). The situation was aligned to your natural strengths and your actions had a positive impact on the outcome.

What was the **situation**?

What was the **outcome**?

What did you **do**? (Consider the actions – your individual strengths - that created the outcome)

Did you receive any **positive feedback**? if so, what was it? If not, who can you approach for feedback?

What **strengths** were used?

How can you **capitalise on this strength** in your current role?



Who needs to know?

In the space below, list three people who need to know about your strengths

When and how you could approach them/demonstrate your strengths

How could you use this as a springboard for further opportunities?

Inspirational women at the TOP

(Courtesy of the Financial Times <http://womenatthetop.ft.com/interactive-graphic/top-50>)

1. Indra Nooya, chief executive, Pepsi Co

"Be a lifelong student. Don't ever think you've arrived, and remember that what you don't know is so much more than what you do."

2. Andrea Jung, chief executive, Avon Products

"You learn more from bad than good experiences – that's how you grow."

3. Guler Sabanci, Sabanci Group

"I've been part of a team, and leader of the team. But wherever I've been I have worked as if that was the only opportunity I had. I've never looked beyond that."

4. Irene Rosenfeld, chief executive, Kraft Foods

"Exposure to a diversity of disciplines has been exceptionally helpful to me. The ability to think and make decisions using analogies from one area to another is really important."

5. Dong Mingzhu, chief executive, Gree Electric Appliances International

6. Ursula Burns, chief executive, Xerox

"Where you are, is not who you are."

7. Yoshiko Shinohara, chief executive, Temp Holdings

8. Ellen Kumann, chief executive, DuPont

9. Cheung Yang, chief executive, Nine Dragon's Paper

"Success came from my character."

10. Patricia A Woertz, Chief executive, ADM

8.

11. Chanda Kochhar, chief executive, ICICI Bank

12. Cynthia Carroll, chief executive, Anglo American

"I believe in my judgement. When people tell me it can't be done, you just do it."

13. Angela Ahrendts, chief executive, Burberry

14. Carol Mayrowitz, chief executive, TJX

15. Ann Lauvergeon, chief executive, Areva

"Young women can see it is possible to get to the top because they can see I am here."

16. Ofra Strauss, chief executive, Strauss Group

17. Gail Kelly, chief executive, Westpac

18. Annika Falkengren, chief executive, SEB

19. Nancy Mckinstry, chief executive, Wolters Kluwer

20. Carol Bartz, chief executive, Yahoo

Cultivate a professional persona

“I think it is important, whether you are a man or woman, to look well turned out. Even if you are not interested in fashion, it is important to always look polished, particularly if you are in an advisory capacity.”

Did you know that people make a decision about you in 7 seconds? It is difficult to change this impression once it has been cast. Research has shown that successful people are not only aware and confident of their own strengths, but they are also aware of how they come across to others and can adapt accordingly. They understand how to cultivate a professional persona. This can be made up of many factors including:

- Self confidence
- Attire
- Body language
- Verbal language
- Speech patterns/tone
- Understanding those around you (self-awareness)

Fashion a favourable first impression

Fit in?

“I think a suit is still the best option. This way you look smart without people remembering what you wore which isn't a bad thing. You don't want too much focus on you and your style rather your professionalism and work. My clothes are functional and don't really need noting.”

“What you wear and how you hold yourself can really make or break you. You have got to look professional - that doesn't mean scruffy and it doesn't mean tarty. I have had some uncomfortable conversations with juniors in the past but it has worked. They have gone out and bought a couple of new suits, they have felt better, more confident and have given a better impression to the team and client”

Stand out?

“You need to dress in a way which makes you feel confident and you can do this with colour! Don't submerge your personality. I think personality can get you somewhere. If you want to be different, don't be like everyone else. It's ok to stand out. It is not a frivolity, it is about taking a different approach.”

“Don't play it too safe - take advantage of the more relaxed dress code for women to wear different colours, dresses, high heels. This will make you stand out from the crowd when everyone else is wearing black.”

*“Toughness doesn't have to come in a pinstripe suit.”
Dianne Feinstein, politician*

Food for thought

Dress

1. Do you:

- Dress differently enough for work?
- Have at least one 'good' suit for special occasions?
- Study the dress habits of upper-level management in your business?
- Check for loose buttons, drooping hems, holes or runs in tights, spots or stains on clothing, scuffed shoes or creases each time you choose an outfit for work?

2. Do you:

- Look the same at work as you do at home?
- Just grab anything in the wardrobe to put on for work?
- Think there is no point in getting 'good clothes' for work?
- Often find a ladder in your tights after you have got to work?

3. List some items that you could purchase which would make you feel more confident/comfortable in a professional setting...

Body language

Harvard University research has shown that women are more alert to body language than men. Additionally brain scans have shown that women have greater capacity for evaluating people. Women have 14 -16 areas of the brain to evaluate others' behaviour versus a man's 4- 6 areas. Still, women tend to exhibit less confidence in the work place through their body language.

How can body language give the wrong impression?

Eye contact	Avoidance of eye contact can be interpreted as a sign of low self-esteem or weakness. How often do you ensure that you keep eye contact with all members of a meeting while talking?
Posture	Women tend to carry their heads lower than men, walk with more erratic steps and slump their shoulders inwards. These characteristics can be seen as 'weak'. A powerful posture is spine and head straight, with a good walking stride. Think of a confident woman you know - how do they walk?
Smiling	Women smile more than men from infancy. They smile more in both business and social situations. Smiling has the advantage of communicating warmth. However too much it can make a person appear subordinate. Mirroring the smiling of peers in business situations can help control this.
Proximity	This is the use of space to define territory. Men tend to spread out more at a meeting table. Women are more likely to 'shrink' into themselves keeping their elbows and knees in. Which do you think communicates more confidence?
Hand shake	Women often give softer handshakes and are more reluctant than men in coming forward to shake hands. In a business context this can result in loss of credibility. Research has shown that women who are open to new ideas used firm handshakes while men used the same handshake - open to new ideas or not. How firm is your handshake?

When we use body language that communicates a lack of confidence, people read these body signals subconsciously which can lead to the discounting of even the most persuasive, credible verbal comments.

Food for thought

Body language

1. Do you:

- Stand tall, shoulders back and head up?
- Always make eye contact when talking with others?
- Avoid folding your arms close to your chest in conversation?
- Take your full space at a meeting table?
- Smile a similar amount to others in the conversation/take note of their body language?

2. Do you:

- Wait until another person looks at you before making eye contact?
- Wait until invited before moving into a group?
- Wait until you are invited before shaking hands?
- Doodle when you are not speaking?
- Fiddle with things that are to hand?
- Keep elbows and knees crossed when sitting in a group?
- Smile more than peers in meetings/discussions?

Tone of voice

Many people equate a strong voice with power and authority. Sometimes women are susceptible to voice patterns that distract from their credibility. These can be improved through practicing to talk with a strong, clear, relaxed and varied tone.

Watch out for:

- High pitched tones (especially when nervous)
- Talking too fast (especially when nervous)
- Childish tones
- Monotonous tones (vary the level of your voice when appropriate)
- Tones so soft that it is difficult to hear
- Bringing the tone upwards at the end of sentences to make it sound like a question

Top tips for dialogue:

- 1) When a client or colleague asks you a question – stop and think before answering – then answer the question slowly, succinctly and precisely.
- 2) When you are being spoken to – show in your body language and facial expression that you are listening – this will ensure the same behaviour is returned when it is your time to speak.
- 3) Try not to interrupt or speak over others – this is pet hate for many professionals and can dispel any previous credible impression you have made beforehand.

“It is important, even if you are the youngest person in the room that you don’t act like it. If you are too softly spoken you are at a disadvantage – choose your words carefully and learn how to project your voice and sound more confident.”

Language

Women communicate with more words than men. This adds detail, but it can also make a point less powerful. Say these sentences without the adjectives/questions/disclaimers – do they become more powerful or effective?

Too many adjectives:

“That is a very **very** good idea”

“I am **really** pleased with the overall outcome”

Questions at the end of sentences

“It went well today, **do you know what I mean?**”

“It’s time to finish now, **don’t you think?**”

Disclaimers before an opinion

“**I am not 100% sure** but I think it would be good to go with Wednesday”

“**I do not want to come across as pushy**, but I need the report today”

Modifying phrases

“**I am a little bit** concerned about timings”

“It’s **sort of** something you might be able to use”

Apologies

“**I’m really sorry to keep asking**, but could you include me on the email notification?”

“**Sorry for the inconvenience**, but we need this ASAP”

“In meetings, women tend to be more apologetic in their tone than men. For example they will say “I think we” or “maybe we should” instead of “let’s do this”. Women need to learn to be more clear cut and authoritative.”

Food for thought

Language and tone

1. Do you:

- Try to match the loudness of your voice to others in the group?
- Speak clearly and slowly even when you are nervous?
- Avoid sounding apologetic?
- Use concise clear sentences when trying to get your point across?

2. Do you:

- Give too much information when answering questions?
- Often rush your words when saying something negative?
- Avoid sounding pushy by adding a small upward inflection at the end?
- Ignore the volume of others in the conversation?
- Sound younger than you are on the telephone?
- Try to talk down your point so that you do not come across as overbearing?

3. What could you do anything differently?

“Have a couple of points that you want to make. Perhaps three, not too many. Those who don’t find this easy, you just need to relax, you need to chat it through in advance. Imagine you are talking to a friend about it. Practise so much that you don’t need to look down at your notes; eye contact is crucial. If you learn it inside out your delivery will follow. Have three points from each page to prompt you, no more.”

Making a positive impression in meetings...

1) Prepare

- What's the agenda? (Has this been circulated beforehand?)
- Who's attending?
- What is expected of you?
- What are the objectives/desired outcome?
- Identify the decision makers

“Identify decision makers and work to impress them (with your idea) – real decisions are not taken in collective groups. If you want something go and talk to the people whose support will make it happen.”

2) Consider

- Your attire
- The impression you want to make
- Your input - rehearse your 3 key points
- The personalities of the people you are meeting with

“Make sure you know who is doing what, and make sure you take your fair share of responsibility. Be alert to clarifications, for example be able to clarify something by saying ‘I will make sure that happens,’ this is something really practical that will have an impact and you can show that you have taken responsibility for something and can make it happen.”

The start of a meeting

- Think about where you are going to sit to maximise the impact of your contributions
- Think about how you are sitting, is it portraying a confident image?
- Turn your phone off
- Clear your head and give the meeting your undivided attention
- Be open minded and ready to listen
- Introduce yourself and others
- Use a firm handshake

“Understand other peoples' agendas. In meetings women tend to think about their own experiences of the person in question and how to work with them as an individual rather than in a more formulaic way that men sometimes have. So women will come at a problem from a different angle and perspective that can really help.”

During a meeting

- Use questioning to obtain information and establish common ground
- Non-contribution is not an option
- Use other people's names as much as possible
- If your job is to take notes then summarise; check and clarify understanding
- Curb the urge to interrupt
- Lean forward; establish eye contact with the speaker
- When speaking, make eye contact with all attendees
- Try to mirror (as appropriate) the mood of others; if the topic is serious smile less.
- Do not rely on others to interpret what is said, clarify ambiguity
- Use verbal encouragement to demonstrate listening

Round up

- Summarise what has been said
- Clarify next steps and actions to take away
- Give business cards if appropriate
- Firm handshakes when you depart

“I see women frequently get more information out of clients in a professional environment than men do, simply by listening. Embrace this skill if you have it or learn to become a better listener.”

Summary

	7% Verbal What	55% Non-verbal Body Language	38% Verbal How
Good meeting skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarising • Clarifying • Asking questions • Allowing others to finish • Bringing others into the conversation • Verbal encouragement • Demonstrate listening • Use names 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use silence • Nod • Smile (when appropriate) • Lean forward • Eye contact • Sit up • Use open gestures • Use a firm hand shake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pitch • Pace • Volume • Should be the same as the client
Behaviours to avoid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interrupting • Talking over • Being defensive • Using long sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pointing • Slouching • Yawning • Doodling • Smiling too much • Shrinking' in on yourself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shouting • Talking too quietly • Rambling • Keeping monotone

Adapted from the work of Albert Mehrabian (1971)

Working with different people

Socialising with clients is an important part of a professional's working life, but how is it achieved without compromise or misinterpretation, particularly when interacting with different genders, cultures or ages?

Make the boundaries clear

"Make a clear line between work and non-work life. Be careful not to blend the two, especially with older men – do not be tempted to go for a one-to-one drink with colleagues or clients if you do not feel it is appropriate. They will know then where you stand."

Don't bluff small talk

"I have taken clients to racing days and been the only woman there. Joke about the fact it is not your thing – don't pretend to be something you are not or to have knowledge you don't."

"If you don't know what is going on in a (cricket) match say so, ask questions and engage with the client in the same way. Take the opportunity to learn. Be honest and upfront about what you know."

Steer conversation to a topic that suits you

"Talk about what you know. My husband supports a particular football team so I have tapped into his knowledge on that. I can talk about local football now – take conversations into your territory and have the confidence to change the direction of a conversation if it is not suiting you."

Perception and reality: what would you do differently?

Watch the two video-based case studies:

Video A -

Informal meeting with a client in social setting – what would you do differently and why?

Video B -

Meeting at work – what would you do differently and why?

Raise your profile

Our research identified profile raising as one of the most challenging areas of development for young women. Our interviewees suggest that if you want to get ahead you have got to do more than work hard. Being successful today requires an advanced level of proactivity and initiative:

- Be proactive about building a network externally (with women's only and mixed networking groups)
- Be aware of the opportunities 'to get noticed' internally through (PR, CSR, Groups, Committees, Events)
- Identify and get in touch with someone who could act as a mentor and champion your interests

"There are so many opportunities in large firms that you may not know about, but by being flexible and looking for opportunities to develop and learn you will set yourself apart later on."

"Get to know the company, the leaders, and how it all works. Getting ahead is about going the extra mile for the person you are directly working for, making their life easier, and this will take you a long way. Think about what would be useful. What would save time? Demonstrate commercial awareness – suggest solutions ahead of highlighting problems."

"The main thing is to be very good at your job. Without that you have nothing. If you are not very capable you will not get off first base. But first base is not enough if you want to go the extra mile. You have to build your own profile, get out there, do speaking, networking, write columns, begin to write a professional profile that sits you outside your firm so that people know who you are"

"Young men are very good at talking about their achievements, especially in front of clients. Women tend to shy away from this, thinking that it is bad form or boastful. Nevertheless, it is a truism that unless you shout about your achievements, no-one else will. You should always have a handful of case studies up your sleeve that credentialise you effectively: that say, I've been there, done that, and added very specific value along the way. Demonstrate your skills and strengths through transactional examples, don't just assert."

Ten key ways to raise your profile

1. Know your stuff
2. Develop specific expertise (a niche)
3. Assist your line manager
4. Develop internal relations
5. Participate in internal activities – women's network, marketing, events, probono, CSR
6. Embrace the extracurricular – writing, speaking, committees, boards
7. Bring in the business
8. Use social media effectively
9. Network
10. Identify and cultivate mentors and champions

Your A-list

Network analysis

Name of Contact	Who introduced you?	Who have you introduced this contact to?	What is the strength of your relationship? (1 weak - 5 strong)	When did you last make contact with this contact? Days/weeks/months

Exercise:

Jot down in the space below all the professional and personal contacts you have. Consider how you could nurture these relationships more, make valuable introductions within your network or get in touch with someone you have lost touch with. Remember a successful network needs constant input and proactivity from you to stay active. This will help you to identify the areas (personal or professional) where you may need to invest more time in building.



How can you improve your network?

Research has shown that those who are able to progress more quickly in their careers take a strategic approach to networking. They have diverse and open networks consisting of links to various groups. Additionally, they understand which people and which networks will support their careers.

What are the opportunities to improve your network at your firm and externally?

Who is head of Public Relations at the firm and what are their current initiatives?	
Who is responsible for events and marketing within your firm? What events are coming up that you could attend?	
Do you know who looks after the Business Development for the firm and how could you contribute to their annual targets?	
What clubs/groups/committees/organisations exist within the firm both professionally and socially that you could get involved in?	
Talk to your colleagues and seniors about external networking groups/associations/groups they have found enjoyable/interesting/beneficial	
Carry out some research into professional associations/boards and committees that you could join to add an extra string to your bow outside of work	

20 Common networking mistakes

1. Networking as a random activity, i.e. without a clear strategy or objectives
2. Losing sight of your ultimate goals
3. Relying on networking as the only way of achieving your goals.
4. Having a hidden agenda - be honest and open
5. Being too demanding, negative or clingy
6. Expecting too much of others - be realistic and remember you are dealing with human nature
7. Being impatient - results usually take time
8. Mixing business and pleasure too overtly
9. Being insensitive to others' needs
10. Failing to follow up actions / leads
11. Contacting people only when you need something
12. Not saying thank you or showing your appreciation in an appropriate way
13. Being passive – do not wait for things to happen
14. Going for quantity not quality in your relationships
15. Having poor self-marketing materials (verbal or written)
16. Trying to do too much / spreading yourself too thinly
17. Not keeping in touch with people
18. Having poor communication skills
19. Trying to network in a way that doesn't fit your personal style / personality
20. Not doing it at all - we can all think of reasons not to network, but not networking is not an option

“Networking is good but you can spend too much time doing ‘women’s’ networking and forget that 80% of the people you work with are not women. However, these events will give you confidence, introduce new people new people into your circle and give you a support network but that cannot be at the exclusion of the rest of your colleagues and clients”

“If women want to build their profile they need to build a network outside of work. Join a group linked to work but not full of your colleagues or clients. This way if you go to future networking events the chances are you will know someone there.”

Coping mechanisms for shy networkers

- **Take one step at a time.** Do not think you have to become a networking master overnight
- **Do not assume you are being a pest or bothering people**
- **Rely on your supporters** to help your motivation and keep your thoughts positive, even when discouraged or rejected
- **Be a leader.** Find leadership roles to develop your leadership skills, both inside and outside work
- **Think about your successes.** Keep in the front of your mind those situations where you excelled
- **Do not go it alone.** Ask a colleague to attend events with you, but do not spend all your time with them
- **Do not underestimate the power of listening**
- **Enlist a spokesperson** to make initial contact for you if you need to
- **Do not get stressed by the small stuff.** Small talk is exactly that, 'small'. You do not need to be witty or profound. Mundane questions and comments can break the ice, e.g. 'this is a good turnout' or 'what do you know about the speaker / event organiser etc.?' Opening conversations with a question is a good way to get the ball rolling
- **Like minds.** If you find group interactions difficult others will too. Look out for like minded people and approach them.
- **Make the most of what you say.** Remember, what you know is just as important as who you know
- **Rehearse again and again.** You are likely to have the same types of conversations repeatedly when you are networking, e.g. conveying information about your firm. Streamline what you say
- **Get out there.** Move out of your comfort zone. Make time to meet and interact with people in different environments
- **Share your information and knowledge and work collaboratively.** Do not think you have to be self-sufficient and do not think it is only appropriate to contact others when you need help

Coping mechanisms for shy networkers (continued)

- **Attend events that have a purpose and be strategic in selecting them**, e.g. training, lectures etc. rather than purely networking events. Interactive events are particularly good as they have a defined agenda that will include structured networking opportunities
- **Write**. If you find verbal communication difficult, write instead (make the most of your strengths)
- **Be positive**. Do not assume you will fail or be rejected and that all networking is awful
- **Be comfortable in your own skin**. Be comfortable with who you are and how you appear to others.
- **Remember, networking is a skill that can be learned and learning new skills takes time**
- **Just do it**. Networking can be difficult and provoke anxiety and stress but at some point you have to abandon all excuses and just get on with it

The importance of trusted and experienced mentors

Research has shown that having a mentor is instrumental for the career success of young women in terms of earnings, promotional opportunities, procedural justice, social integration and career satisfaction. Young women have reported drawing on role models from various domains, internal and external, both male and female.

Studies in Canada showed that young female lawyers with male mentors earned significantly more than those with female mentors, although those mentored by women reported greater career satisfaction, intent to continue practicing, professional expectations being met and less work-life conflict. Why do you think these findings were made?

Do you have a mentor? Could an unofficial or formal mentor help you?

If you do not have a mentor, who could you ask and how could you ask them?

“Be aware of your champions – people who look out for you and will create those opportunities for you. I never had a formal mentor in my career but when I look back there are definitely people who championed my interests and with hindsight were very valuable. People are shy about reaching out and overtly asking for help. It is important to recognise that this is the way of the world. It is about identifying opportunities and ways to progress.”

Action Planner

Know your own worth

Thinking about your personal strengths, formulate a personal brand statement and identify where, when and with whom you can use it.

Cultivating a professional persona

While looking at dress, body language, tone of voice and language, you identified some things that you could do differently. When and where you are going to put this into practice?

Raising your profile

A) Internal - identify possible mentors

B) External - identify individuals, associations and networking groups which would help raise your profile

Further reading...

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