

PowerTalk: Strategies for Women Leaders

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PowerTalk has been especially designed for women leaders who want to leverage Return on Investment (ROI) in their careers and life experiences and take the next leap. Each month PowerTalk focuses on key strategies that will increase your leadership resiliency. Answer the questions posed in italics at the end of each section that outlines a suggested strategy. Then use these suggested strategies *today* to enhance your tool kit or even rewrite the script for your future.

The focus of this issue is *strategic relationship management*, a skill often underutilized, despite the strong interpersonal skills of women leaders who are busy "getting the job done."

While many women earn respect and credibility by honing their technical skills and delivering results, too often they fail to realize that leadership roles are less about technical proficiency and more about *strategic relationship management*.

Do you believe that time is your most precious resource and that the most important investment of this resource is in tasks directly related to accomplishing specific work? It's a myth that gives many women a cognitive blind spot regarding the potential value of time invested in building strategic relationships. If you don't fully invest in building such relationships *now*, you will lack the alliances, networks and relationships critical for leadership advancement and your future success.

"It's a myth that the best use of your time is always related to getting the job done"

Here are two strategies you should invest in right now. Stop at the end of each suggestions and jot down ways to demonstrate new behavior.

1. Build a personal advisory board

network of individuals who have the skills and strengths required in roles to which you aspire. Be sure to objectively assess the skills and experience of potential advisors rather than succumbing to the "likeability" factor.

Create this group of advisors BEFORE you need them. For example, one client selected a number of individuals she identified as role models. Through networking, she identified a retired president who could give her advice in key areas that were not her strengths, such as the impact of global technology and crisis management. Another advisor, a CFO, was willing to share experience in managing large complex budgets, and a third advisor provided expertise in organizational development issues such as large scale change initiatives and reorganizations. My client tapped into these advisors as she was preparing to interview for a senior level leadership position. Later, after being appointed to that role, she continued to call on these advisors periodically. Why do such advisors say yes? Believe it or not, most leaders are actually flattered to be asked and enjoy mentoring. And, it surprises some women to find that some mentors actually seek their advice and counsel in ways that create meaningful quid pro quo relationships.

Can you think of individuals who might become part of your personal advisory network? Assess their skills, what you want to learn and call them.

2. Manage your calendar differently

Conduct your own calendar audit. *Is your calendar aligned with your priorities? If not, where do you need to practice purposeful abandonment or learn to say no?*

For example, do you really need to be at every meeting or conference on your calendar? Instead, delegate to someone on your staff or provide a professional development opportunity for a colleague. Use that open time on your calendar for developing new long term relationships. Are you committing time to meet and learn from individuals in your personal advisory network? Do you spend time with colleagues who demonstrate competencies you value or hold roles to which you aspire? Do you meet periodically with others who can broaden your sphere of influence?

Are you serving on boards that are no longer a fit with your values or future aspirations? Consider resigning or completing a board term and then utilizing that dedicated time to serve on a different board to gain exposure to new ideas, test your leadership skills and build your network. Are you in a professional development rut? Get out of the rut of going to the same conferences and professional development seminars in your discipline or areas of expertise. Broaden your perspective by attending events that stretch your thinking, or better yet, are attended by more senior level administrators. Where is your calendar underdeveloped? Jot down your ideas and then act.

Each month, PowerTalk will tackle issues such as multitasking and how it can become a weakness, enhancing your ESP, the myth of balance, confusing success with happiness, the myth that hard work will result in increased compensation and promotions, adrenalin addiction as well as other topics requested by readers.

Next month, Dr Kaufman will debunk the myth that traps many talented women-- the belief that hard work alone will result in pay increases and promotions.

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