

Celebrating girl power, despite the 'double bind'

By: Veronica Cool August 11, 2015



COOL TIPS

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Aggressive, bossy, obnoxious.... Even the B-Word is used to describe assertive women. But today, we will begin to change the dialogue by becoming positive and strategically supporting and promoting one another.

Whether it's upbringing or expectations, men comfortably self-promote, where women shyly sit back. As inherent nurturers, we are comfortable promoting others, just not ourselves. What better way to celebrate the success and achievement of women than with The Daily Record awards, including the Top 100 Women and Leading Women?

Distinctive in the awards world, where sponsorship, influence and name recognition drive the honoree selection, the Top 100 awardees are selected by a panel of previous honorees, who hold these candidates to tremendously high standards, seeking top performers professionally, legitimate mentors and generous community supporters.

When I was first recognized as a Top 100 Woman in 2006, my brand and visibility grew; folks were so impressed they eagerly reached out to connect and celebrate.

But the biggest benefit was the public recognition of years and years of effort and accomplishments —from graduating college in three years (we didn't have money to pay for a fourth year) Summa Cum Laude to becoming one of the youngest regional managers leading 300 people to participating in some stellar experiences: The White House, transition teams and international trade missions. Are you rolling your eyes? I'm obviously bragging and this is not very appropriate. For a woman.

Should that last paragraph be authored by Victor Cool, it would have been better received. Actually, you would be impressed.

This is the "double bind effect" —tested by New York University professors Frank Flynn, Cameron Anderson and Sebastien Brion. They presented a Harvard Business case to their graduate students, where half of the class received the case under a female name and the other half under a male name — the rest of the information was exactly the same (accomplishments, education, experience).

The male case was praised and complimented for his skills and assertiveness, while the female case was rated much lower, perceived as less kind and more power-hungry. The

double bind is that in order to be a competent leader, one needs to be assertive, but if you are a woman then you are judged harshly. And this opinion came from men AND women. By leveraging the tips below, we can drive internal change while acknowledging how judgmental we tend to be towards our own gender:

- Toot your own horn, directly, indirectly and anyway in between, particularly during salary negotiations. Emphasize your impact to the organization. And celebrate and develop other women.
- Raising your hand and leaning in. Sheryl Sandberg wrote the manual for today's feminist, "Lean In." READ IT. And READ IT AGAIN. Supported by case studies and real life scenarios, she calls attention to the daily behavior, external influences, biases and expectations that derail women. And considering women comprise more than 50 percent of the workforce, the book is a highly effective resource for men as well.
- "Fake it until you make It." One of my lessons from "Lean In" is that men apply for a job when they perceive they have 50 percent of the qualifications; whereas women will only apply when they have 100 percent of the listed qualifications. Let's start reaching, ladies! By these disparate standards, women will always lag in career advancement and development.

Assuming we have the confidence to pursue the promotions, projects or opportunities, the next gigantic hurdle is being paid comparably. Take Mika Brzezinski, who addressed the United Way's Women's Leadership Council recently, on her television come-back and struggles to achieve pay equity after learning her co-host was earning 14 times her pay. FOURTEEN TIMES! In her book "Knowing Your Value," she openly shares her epic failures from demanding an increase, crying, getting emotional, acting like a man and then a victim. In the end, by knowing her value, being organized and prepared, she was able to negotiate a comparable increase.

This special publication of The Daily Record intends to provide tools and motivation like those of Sheryl Sandberg and Mika Brzezinski, with our own local talent and perspective. By reading the journeys of Content McLaughlin, Dr. Mary Teddy Wray and Sheela Murthy I'm inspired and encouraged.

We women need to know our value, self-promote and learn how to negotiate, as well as acknowledge the value and contribution of fellow women. And My Brothers, you men need to be aware of disparate treatments and begin (or continue) to recognize women's expertise and contributions in your organization. Enjoy this special issue and kindly share your own successes with me — I'm always eager to celebrate Girl Power!

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