



Women must believe in themselves

Dr Jobs

What do I have to do to be heard over men in meetings and how can I stop them from hijacking my ideas?

You're in a meeting and put your idea forward yet it doesn't even make it to the whiteboard, let alone into the budget. That is, until one of your male colleagues picks it up, reframes it and claims it as his own to great fanfare from the rest of your team.

Does this sound familiar?

Men and women are amazingly different when it comes to self-promotion. Men seem to be much more direct, dropping by their boss's desk, booking meetings and catch ups or sending emails to make sure their boss knows they are ready for their next promotion or to convey other needs like time off for study, travel or family commitments.

Women are much more reticent to come forward, and tend to remain in the background unless they manage to secure another job altogether or they decide the work-family-life balancing act is so out of kilter, the only option is to resign.

Men make their wishes far clearer

and are very upfront in coming forward. Women tend to be less forthright so it's hardly surprising that men get first look in at promotions and senior roles. Men have inbuilt self-confidence. Women need to work at it.

A recent survey of working women undertaken by sphinx (sphinx.com.au) revealed 27 per cent of respondents turned down an offer of a promotion due to a lack of confidence in their ability to perform the role.

If a woman's confidence isn't at its best, nor will her perceptions be of herself and her skills and her ability to take on a new role or promote herself generally or convey her ideas in meetings.

Not unlike having bar presence when it comes to getting served, having good meeting presence can make all the difference to whether you and your suggestions are heard and adopted.

Here are five tips for making sure your voice is heard.

1. Be clear. Just as being heard is a common issue for women, male colleagues say regularly they don't hear what it is that women are asking for. Keep it brief – focus on the key outcome or results your idea will deliver.

2. Avoid using meetings to launch new ideas. Syndicate them before-

hand if possible with colleagues to get their buy in. This way you'll already have supporters in the meeting.

3. Wait for the right moment to contribute. Wait until other people have had their say and look for the gaps so that your solution, when offered, is the most obvious solution on the table.

4. Own your ideas. When you've raised an idea with colleagues in catch-ups or meetings, follow up with an email outlining your key points. If you're in the meeting and someone hijacks your suggestion, repeat your initial points and point out the resemblance to your own idea.

5. Be persistent. Don't expect to get a yes on the first try. It takes an average of three to four attempts to get a yes, so manage your expectations accordingly.

Practise these points before you're next due to attend a meeting, have something to say and try to get your input noted. You have to believe in yourself and be confident in what you have to say.

Put simply, women often just don't believe in themselves enough.

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