

6 Ways Women Can Advocate for Themselves in the Workplace

Women make up a tiny minority of leaders in businesses, especially big businesses. For that to change, business leaders (both male and female) need to make a conscious effort to mentor and sponsor women in the workplace.

But that's not all. Women must also hone their ability to advocate for themselves. Use the following six tips to become an unabashed self-advocate—and model leadership to the next generation.

1. Advocate for yourself in salary negotiations. Women are more likely than men to accept an initial job offer without first negotiating their salary. And that trend continues over the course of women's employment. In fact, one study found that [60% of women have never negotiated their pay](#) with an employer. Asking for more money can be daunting, especially in situations where salary ranges are opaque. But it may help to keep in mind that your male counterparts are likely already doing it. Anytime you're offered a job, consider your potential employer's salary offer an opening bid.
2. Document your wins and contributions. Keep a running list of your wins and contributions in the workplace. What are you doing really well? How have you furthered your organization's mission? In what ways do you go above and beyond in your role? During your quarterly or annual reviews, come prepared to point to your accomplishments in a matter-of-fact way. If you want to ask for a raise, you can use this list as a way to demonstrate your value and get paid accordingly.
3. Do a "soft work" self-check. Women frequently take on more of the "soft work" in the office—things like planning social events, setting up for meetings, and acting as a confidante to colleagues. You may volunteer for this work because you genuinely enjoy it. Or perhaps you feel pressured to "pitch in and do your part." Ask yourself: Are you taking on more than you can handle? Do the men in your workplace also pitch in on these "non-mission-critical" activities? If not, take a step back. And if you are in a leadership position, assign some of the soft work to the men on your team.
4. Seek out mentors. Mentorship and sponsorship are both key to women's advancement in the workplace. Unfortunately, all people are more likely to select mentees that remind them of their younger selves. Which means that women are more likely to mentor other women, and men are more likely to—you guessed it!—mentor other men. If your field or organization is predominately male, that puts you at a disadvantage. Don't sit around and wait for a seasoned "elder" to hand-select you as a mentee. Actively approach leaders you admire within your field or organization. Let them know you want to grow professionally and that you'd value their input. By nurturing those relationships, you can grow professionally—and advance your career, too.
5. Embrace continuing education. If you want to advance in your field, be proactive and seek out extracurricular opportunities to learn and grow. Look at the leadership within your organization. What skills or experiences do they have that you don't? If some of those skills can be achieved via continuing education, take the opportunity to close the gap. Then let your manager know you're ready to put your new skills in action in service of your organization.
6. Model self-advocacy for the next generation of women. If you are a mother, aunt, or big sister, consider your commitment to advocating for yourself as an opportunity to model leadership to the next generation. Show them that women can ask for and expect equal treatment. Anything else is unacceptable.