



Women in Professional Services: Breaking the Barriers

Programme Overview - why is this programme needed?

Despite equal numbers of men and women entering professional services, there is a problem in the retention and promotion of women: organisations are losing some of their best talent and the majority of Boards, Partners and senior leaders remain overwhelmingly male, particularly in larger firms.

Crucially, the promotion and retention of women is no longer perceived as simply a social issue. Business leaders recognise there is a clear business case for tackling barriers to equality. Research estimates that better engagement of women and efforts to unlock women's talent in the workplace could benefit the UK economy to the tune of £23bn annually.ⁱ

Further research has also shown that organisations in which women are more strongly represented at board and senior management level outperform those where they are notⁱⁱ and that listed companies with male-only boards in the UK, US and India alone are foregoing potential profits of \$655bn.ⁱⁱⁱ

While the problem is widely recognised, there is no single cause or solution. Research from McKinsey, The World Economic Forum and industry bodies suggests there are a number of obstacles that perpetuate gender inequality at the top of organisations. They include structural barriers, limited work flexibility, organisational culture and mindset. In addition, all the research points to the fact many women feel they are 'holding themselves back' - this means different things to different women.

This one-day programme for women explores these issues, examining how unconscious bias, stereotypes and the learned behavioural tendencies of women and men shape expectations and behaviour at work.

It provides a positive context in which to look at the practical mindset and behaviour changes that women can make to accelerate their advancement and it examines strategies for navigating the obstacles. Participants are also challenged to become change agents within their organisation and industry to help shape an environment where more women thrive and succeed. A solid evidence base of current industry and psychological research supports the programme.

Learning Outcomes – what is the focus?

The programme focuses on three key areas which are important for anyone working in professional services to master, but with which research suggests women tend to feel less comfortable:

Presence and status: An understanding of the key behaviours required to demonstrate credibility, build influence, create executive presence and impact how others perceive you

Self-advocacy: The ability to develop your own brand, engage others in your work (network), put yourself forward for opportunities and manage others' perception of your potential

Negotiation: The essential skills for effective negotiation in your role, how to ask for what you need and techniques to help others recognise your value, now and in the future

We will also examine what organisations can do to support women in these three areas and how participants can become a change agent to encourage positive organisational behaviours.

Learning Modules*

Self-advocacy

- Articulating your aspirations
- Internal and external networking
- Developing personal brand
- Sponsorship and mentorship
- Developing a point of view

Becoming an agent for change

- Developing compelling arguments
- Influence and persuasion
- Dealing with resistance and conflict
- Coaching others

Presence and status

- Meeting presence
- Linguistic style
- Modulating personal status
- Giving and receiving feedback

Building resilience

- Personal resilience assessment
- Time management
- Managing stress
- Decision making
- Managing conflicting priorities

Negotiation

- Seeing the world as a negotiable place
- Persuasion vs. negotiation vs. bargaining

Follow up coaching

- Ongoing coaching and mentoring beyond the learning event
- Continued support to aid transition into the executive ranks

Programme Duration*

The programme is run over one day with the option for additional coaching after the programme to ensure continued progression and development beyond the 'learning event'.

**Please note that the learning modules and programme duration are given as a typical guideline, however, all programmes are tailored to meet clients' specific objectives.*

ⁱ Women & Work Commission: Shaping a Fairer Future – A review of the recommendations of the Women and Work Commission three years on, 2009

ⁱⁱ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills: *Women on Boards, 2011*

ⁱⁱⁱ Grant Thornton International Business Report: *Women in business: turning promise into practice, 2016*