

Viewpoint

You can be roadblock to your own success

Glass ceiling isn't all that holds women back

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How would you react if I suggested you forget the "glass ceiling"? Depends. If you are a woman desperately trying to break through that barrier, you probably want to hunt me down and stone me. If you are consciously or even unconsciously one of the obstacles to women's success you might be saying "hooray."

So hold on a minute, you probably have the wrong idea. That glass ceiling continues to exist today as it has historically. You should not really forget the glass ceiling. Continue the good fight for a place at the boardroom table. At the same time, ask yourself what you are doing to sabotage your own success.

In numerous ways each day women shoot themselves in the proverbial foot in their quest for career success. Ask yourself if you or the women you manage excel in the following areas:

- Protect your valuable time. Do you allow other people, either in person, on the phone or electronically to manage your time? Is it difficult for you to tell others that you are immersed in a project and you need to focus right now?

Until women learn to value their time, energy and resources we will struggle with boundaries and limits. Be focused. Summon the courage to tell those around you, "I cannot listen right now, I'm staring a deadline in the face." Shut your door. Let your voice mail take your messages. Get out of the office if necessary.

- Toot your own horn. Mother always told you, "Don't brag, don't be conceited, and don't be so full of yourself." Tell Mother to be quiet! There is a significant difference between bragging and clueing the world in on your strengths and successes.

If you don't become your own best press agent you could languish unnoticed in the mailroom forever. Let your boss know what you are working on and the successes you are achieving. If they are team accomplishments, acknowledge that and still let it be known how you contributed.

Get your name and picture in the company newsletter. Write an article for your industry publication. If you are promoted or have a significant accomplishment send a notice to the local newspaper.

When complimented resist the urge to shrug it off and say, "Oh, it was nothing." Accept the accolade with graciousness and sincerity.

- Expend less energy. It's OK to assess the time and energy necessary to the task at hand and do no more. Most women have been taught to be perfectionists in all we do.

Gen. George Patton said, "A good plan today can be better than a perfect plan acted on later." One of the underlying fears that nags at some people is the "Imposter Syndrome," that unvoiced sense that we really don't belong here and someone will eventually find us out. Consequently, we keep trying to be perfect, justifying our presence. While we are becoming Ms. Perfect, our male counterparts are doing a good enough job and moving on to the next challenge and the next opportunity.

Learn where and when it is appropriate to take short cuts. Find an area of low risk in which to practice. For example, if you read every word of the industry newsletters, journals and publications you subscribe to, try skimming the headlines for only the interesting and pertinent

articles. At the rest, and after a month or so the guilt of not reading every word will lessen.

Once you've mastered this short cut, move on to the tougher ones. The perfection police will not come and take you away.

Fittes is the founder of Strategies for Women's Growth, a company that specializes in training and keynote addresses geared toward helping women overcome obstacles to their career success. She can be reached at (513) 561-4288, kfittes@aol.com or www.wowunlimited.com.

<http://www.bizjournals.com/cincinnati/stories/2002/09/16/smallb3.html?t=printable>
