

Rail Professional

Feel the fear and do it anyway

If you aren't confident of your own skills and capabilities, who else will be? In general, women in business could do with enhancing their levels of this vital belief.

Adeline Ginn explains

We have all felt that gut wrenching feeling that comes with walking into a room of executives

awaiting your presentation; or the one that puts you off approaching your line manager to discuss a promotion. Fear is not uncommon in business. Business is about taking risks, and taking risks can be daunting. At some point though, we all have to cross our fingers and take a leap to get to where we want to be.

According to WISE, this is much easier for one half of the population than the other. Its study found that females have a greater level of fear of failure than their male counterparts when it comes to seizing business opportunities. Often, this is due to women questioning their ability to identify, assess and act on an opportunity.

The International Labour Organization found that the number of women in senior and middle management positions around the world has increased over the last 20 years but women are still



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under-represented in top management. Yes, it can be argued that there are still not enough flexible options for women higher up the career ladder, and that there is an emotional tug between a woman's home and work life. But there is also a wider issue at hand.

Women in Rail

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Sheryl Sandberg

Most women who are in business today began their careers with smaller responsibilities and progressed upwards when their confidence levels matched their capabilities. Studies believe this is because most women don't naturally dispose themselves to higher positions in the same way men do. But why is it, that in an age with role models such as Sheryl Sandberg and Angela Merkel, a lot of women are not backing themselves to spearhead many of the important

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decision-making positions?

It's not just the problem of women being too sceptical of what they can achieve; it's also that men haven't been sceptical enough to understand this. A Women Corp Survey has shown that while 51.7 per cent of women think lacking in confidence holds them back – only 17.9 per cent of men consider that this could even be a problem. This is worth mentioning as men who have aspiring women in their teams can only offer sufficient guidance and support if they understand that this is an issue that many women face.

This lack of female gusto has been analysed by the likes of Sheryl Sandberg who tackled the 'ambition gap' in her book *Lean In*. Katty Kay and Claire Shipman also attributed female self-doubt as a prime reason for men dominating business boards after interviewing some of the world's most business-savvy females. Even Katty herself noted that with a top university degree and an ability to speak several languages, she didn't believe she had the intelligence to compete for journalism's top jobs. Similarly, even Sheryl Sandberg admitted that 'there are still days I wake up feeling like a fraud, not sure I should be where I am.'

A confidence booster

For both women and men, self-confidence is the most essential trait for business success. If you don't believe in yourself, how can you convince someone else to put their faith in you? Confidence issues can plague a variety of business tasks, especially dealing with people. For some, networking can be as intimidating as executing policies, planning strategies and making decisions that affect the company. These decisions need confidence behind them in order to be executed effectively, efficiently and professionally, as you need to be confident of your own capabilities.

Networking is akin to this. Both men and women need confidence to successfully wear the face of the business they are representing. Personal networking is just as important, and vital to an individual's career progression. Building up a personal network with the help of sites such as LinkedIn, and putting yourself in the uncomfortable position of facing a room of professional associates you don't know, is crucial to enhancing career options.

A Bullhorn Reach Report suggests that 97 per cent of users registered with LinkedIn use it to source candidates for jobs. According to the Taylor & Francis Group in London, you have as little

as 50 milliseconds to make your first impression and impress those that are viewing your page. Offline, there is more of a science to meeting people. It becomes more about how you treat someone rather than focusing solely on how you put yourself across.

Women in Rail's event last month aimed to make both men and women in the rail industry masters of this art. By tackling common concerns, the event aimed to equip everyone with the confidence to chat, charm and circulate their way to securing any opportunity that may come their way. After an afternoon of networking, the event was followed by an evening of cocktail making to put those new skills into practice.

We network every day, be it a room full of name badges, or meeting new people at a party. We therefore encourage everyone to sign up to similar opportunities to ensure we all have the confidence to release our potentials.

Adeline Ginn is founder of Women in Rail and general counsel at Angel Trains.

Visit www.womeninrail.org

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