



DON'T GET MAD. GET AHEAD.

Old-school stereotypes, bumner headlines, and sad-trombone statistics about working women never fail to piss us off. Enough is enough. We're showing you how to rise above all that negativity and land the position you deserve. Someone's gonna need new business cards.

BY CARLIN FLORA

THE PAY GAP

We've all heard the awful numbers: Pew Research pegs the pay gap at 84 cents to a man's dollar; a White House report has it even wider, with women at 78 cents. And apparently, it will be 118 years—nope, not an exaggeration—before men and women earn equivalent salaries for the same work, the World Economic Forum estimates. We say: not acceptable.

A growing number of companies agree and are already implementing change. Gap made its figures public in 2014; shareholders of Walmart pushed for greater salary transparency last year. And global consulting firm Accenture now identifies pay discrepancies, guides women through all stages of their careers, and has pledged to grow the percentage of females it hires to at least 40 percent by 2017.

Legal reform is on the rise too: California's Fair Pay Act, which went into effect in January, puts the burden on public and private companies to prove they haven't discriminated against women. If two people do comparable work, companies will be expected to pay them the same. "The law makes it clear that you have to look at the substance of what people do, not just their titles or positions," says Jennifer Reisch, legal director of Equal Rights Advocates. (The new law has employee's backs in another way: by ensuring that they can openly discuss salaries with coworkers without fearing for their jobs.) Following California's lead, New York enacted the Achieve Pay Equity bill last year, says Reisch, and Washington, Colorado, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island are expected to do the same soon.

All good news, but ultimately, the onus is on you to understand—and level—the playing field. Start by educating yourself. Resources like Glassdoor and Payscale can give you a baseline for your industry, as can talking to your peers. Yes, we've been socialized to view discussing wages as gauche, but it can provide much-needed context. "Women are hesitant to ask," says Margaret Ann Neale, a professor of management at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. "They don't want to feel bad if they're underpaid, and they don't want their friends to feel bad if they make more. But this fear maintains our disadvantage." Make a pact with a few trusted pals on your career path to continuously share details about your compensation. Neale did just that with a group of 10 women who earned Ph.D.s in business 25 years ago and vouches that the openness has benefitted each person.

Then comes negotiating. Men are four times more likely than women to ask for a raise, which can snowball over time, as a higher starting salary predicts subsequent salaries and, thus, accumulated earnings. Maddeningly, we often get punished for using the same exact words—verbs like *earn*, *deserve*, *justify*—as a male counterpart. Getting around this status quo is a matter of collaborative problem solving: "Present ideas that help your manager while also getting you what you want," Neale advises. When she was negotiating with Stanford, she noticed that the department was having trouble securing jobs for grads. She proposed lab space and other benefits she would need, in addition to a salary, and explained exactly how the resources she requested would solve the university's issue.

JAMIE CABREZA (DESKTOP); OLEG GOLOVNEV/SHUTTERSTOCK (BUSINESS CARDS)

OFFICE DRAMA

“Are you lazy or just incompetent?” That’s one of the zingers Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos has hurled at employees. Sure, he’s been called a jerk, just as Steve Jobs was, but both men are largely lauded for their accomplishments—their outbursts justified as necessary to get results. If a woman takes decisive action to improve the bottom line—such as when Jennifer Hyman, cofounder and CEO of Rent the Runway, made organizational changes that led to 2 percent of her employees leaving—the criticisms are framed as personality problems rather than “eccentric genius” characterizations. In Hyman’s case, stories of former staffers “suffering from PTSD” even surfaced in the press, overshadowing her bold leadership.

Dubbed the “likability bias,” it’s a sad fact that while success and likability are linked for men, they are negatively correlated for women. A man can assert himself and be labeled “confident” or

“strong,” while even in 2016, an assertive woman is called “ballbuster” or “bitchy.” Contradictions much?

However unintentionally, we women feed into and uphold these stereotypes: A Gallup poll found that 40 percent of us prefer a male boss, compared with 27 percent who’d opt for a female. But here’s the data-driven truth—a review of over 80 studies from Northwestern University found that men and women can be equally effective leaders, with women being particularly effective at the helm of female-dominated enterprises.

If you’ve had either B-word slung your way, know you can change perceptions and still be true to yourself. For one, always deliver feedback (good or bad) in a one-on-one setting. Today’s open-concept offices mean everyone can hear everything, which can leave employees on the receiving end of your comments feeling exposed and flustered. Second, sometimes strong women (who’ve been told they’re “too” strong) overcompensate by either going totally sweet or full-on nuclear. Ask an objective colleague if they think you’re missing something in your delivery, says Lauren Zander, cofounder of corporate consulting and coaching firm The Handel Group. (If you’re on the other side of the coin—dealing with a coworker who’s known as a

“bitch”—consider whether it’s actually nastiness or just a straightforward, no-BS approach. And always ask yourself: Would you be making these same judgments about a man?)

One more office-drama factor to remember: If you want to work your way up the ladder, you’ve got to make the right connections—you need to make allies, not just besties, economist Sylvia Ann Hewlett has found. Love Jeff but know he’s a slacker? Grab lunch but don’t make him your workplace confidante. Create a list of key players and strategically build your crew in a way that helps you rise. If you don’t get along with certain essential people, find ways to change the rapport. You and Donna have had a few tussles? Engage her by asking about something personal (her new condo, for example), and get a quarterly meeting on the books (avoiding meetings is a bad idea, even if they’re difficult—face time is the only way to break through with crucial team members).

SINGLE WOMEN’S STRUGGLE

At *WH*, we make no secret of the fact that we’re advocates for working parents (hello, #PaidLeavePays!), and thankfully, there’s been a cultural movement toward helping create a more humane work-life balance for career women. But there’s a whole other demographic that struggles with that delicate balance too—simple in a different way—and it’s a growing group: According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, about 50 percent of American adults are single (and more of them are women), and the U.S. Census Bureau shows that as of 2014, 47 percent of women between ages 15 and 44 have never had children. That’s the highest percentage of childless women since the bureau started counting in 1976.

Of course parents need support in order to raise children well while staying in the workforce, but single women also need wiggle room to pursue outside interests. Problem is, they’re often thrust into the role of “workhorse.” Take Molly Shepherd, 31, a fund-raiser for Emory University in Atlanta, who faced this situation in a previous job. “The organization was family-oriented, which was great for parents working there, but it wasn’t set up so the staff could support one another when someone was out,” she says. Shepherd resented how her own out-of-office passion—a sketch comedy group she cofounded—wasn’t taken seriously: “People would comment in a negative tone, ‘You seem really committed to that theater.’ Meanwhile, moms were talking all the time about what their babies were eating, and no one said to any of them, ‘You seem too committed to your son.’”

Neale recommends approaching the situation not as a war between parents and the child-free, but as another problem-solving collab—one you can ideally work out directly with your colleagues. Tell your cubemate you’ll gladly cover for her when her kids are sick but would love a hand when you’re stuck with a

sudden task the night you’ve planned a dinner party. That’s what Shepherd eventually did: She switched employers and now, once all her work is done, is able to run off and build a stage for a show while her boss holds down the fort. In turn, Shepherd happily picks up the slack when her boss needs to go to a parent-teacher conference.

THE NEW AGEISM

We’ve all seen the headlines about the age-based bias that Baby Boomers are facing, but a far more insidious kind is impacting Gen X women in their prime promotion years. A study from Development Dimensions International and The Conference Board’s Global Leadership forecast found that millennial women leaders are more satisfied with the pace of their career progress than their Gen X counterparts. The latter have more experience, so why are they not breaking through to that higher tier?

According to a LeanIn.org and McKinsey & Company survey, the biggest gap between men’s and women’s likelihood of advancement occurs when employees transition from managers to senior managers or directors. And that typically strikes during our thirties and forties. One hundred percent of men—seriously, 100 percent of men that McKinsey polled—who wanted that next role believed they’d get it compared to just 79 percent of women. The issue is partly rooted in specific industries, with the tech field particularly guilty of slighting both Gen Xers and millennials. Company culture appears to be the main culprit, as 72 percent of the women perceived bias in their performance evaluations, and a third felt excluded from social networks at their jobs.

It might appear that this data points more to sexism than ageism, but experts say you can’t talk about one without the other. Elissa Shevinsky, 36, a cofounder of JeKuDo Privacy Company, has been part of many conversations among female colleagues who’ve had to battle the assumption that, given their age, they’re going to focus on a family, not the office. Then there’s this: Not only are Gen X women at the age where they’re having or caring for their own kids, but some are tending to elderly parents, making it tough to stay on a fast track at work. If you feel like you’re caught in that zone, Zander advises “moving the unsaid to the said.” Speak *way* up if you want to snag big projects—don’t allow your managers to make assumptions. “Men look around, they raise their hands and say they’d be excited to have that next role,” says Lareina Yee, a principal at McKinsey. You could be working really hard, but you have to “tip your chin up,” says Yee, and realize that your work doesn’t speak for itself—you do.

Just as important as raising your hand? “There needs to be someone there to *notice* you raising your hand and say, ‘I see your potential. I’m going to create opportunities for you.’ If that isn’t happening, it’s hard to advance to that next level,” says Yee. “A lot



of women don’t have people to help create those opportunities.”

To that point, Hewlett and her colleagues conducted a study focused on the “marzipan layer,” right below the exec suite, and concluded that the barrier to women moving up from there was a lack of “sponsors,” or people who truly advocate on your behalf and open doors, versus mentors who advise you generally. Men aren’t afraid to make these types of connections explicitly because they could be beneficial; women shouldn’t be either.

Relatedly, the LeanIn.org and McKinsey report found that while women’s and men’s networks are similar in size, men have predominantly male networks, while women have mostly female or mixed networks. Makes sense, but guess what? If more men are currently in leadership than women, women need to strive to bring more men into their networks to recruit the most effective sponsors. Target a higher-up you admire and ask if you can meet on an ongoing basis, says Zander. Then find out what he or she needs and how you can help. Win-win. ■

LORENZO BRINGHELI/TRUNK ARCHIVE

MOUTHING OFF

At work, there’s small talk—and then there’s *small-minded* talk. Certain statements get tossed around off-handedly as part of casual workplace conversations without much or any thought to the actual implications. But as inclusivity and diversity coach Simma Lieberman points out, they’re riddled with bias. We ranked four common offenders from just-plain-wrong to WTF.

“I wouldn’t have guessed you’d be interested in X topic area.”
Back up the Stereotype Express for a sec. Even if it’s not as basic as a female colleague working on a traditionally male beat (or vice versa), it’s best not to presuppose what does or doesn’t strike someone’s fancy. “A better way of coming at the situation is to ask something like, ‘What got you interested in that?’ or ‘What led you to this project?’” says Lieberman. “You’re not inflicting judgment, and you’re giving the other person a chance to share her perspective.”

WRONG —●— WTF?

“You don’t really want that job, do you?”
Uh, we’re guessing said person wouldn’t go after the gig if she couldn’t see the positives there. “What you’re really saying is, ‘I don’t think you should do that,’” says Lieberman. “Instead, enter into the conversation with something more neutral like, ‘What attracted you to X position?’”

WRONG —●— WTF?

“She only gets ahead because she communicates like a man.”
Okay, so we know that historically men tend to be more direct and forward, which can be useful in certain scenarios, but this phrase is insulting to other women in that it suggests it’s the only way to advance. “To really be successful, you have to be fluid,” says Lieberman. “It’s much smarter to think of communication in terms of styles, not gender, because you can apply those to various people in different situations.”

WRONG —●— WTF?

“She slept her way to the top!”
Rumor mongering plus slut shaming? Come on, people—this double whammy should’ve died in the ‘80s along with stirrup pants. Alas, it’s still used with shocking regularity. “What this translates to is that if I’m a woman and you’re a woman and you get a position that I wanted, I can’t acknowledge that maybe you were more qualified,” says Lieberman. She points out that the dismissive barb is rooted in that generations-old fear that there’s not enough success to go around. Since we all know that’s false (right? right??), it’s time to recast the convo: Grab coffee and pick her brain for strategies you can crib. Chances are, she’ll be game to share her tips.

WRONG —●— WTF?