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## 5 Tips on Women Empowering Other Women

by Rayona Sharpnack



"For young women and women of color, the discriminatory tendencies of some men...are not the only issue. What cuts deeper is the lack of support they get from established white women and one another." –Ancella Livers and Trudy Bourgeois, [Harvard Business Review](#).

When was the last time you championed a female colleague publicly? Don't criticize yourself if you can't remember, just notice it. Then, instead of waiting around for men (the ones with power) to recognize a female colleague's good ideas or how likely she would be to succeed in a new assignment, you can take the power into your own hands and speak up on her behalf.

Here are five tips for practicing the empowerment of other talented women in your organization.

1. Recognize and reject any early social programming that left you with bias against other women. Take the 10-15-minute [Implicit Association Test](#), administered by Harvard. Be willing to be surprised and interested by the results. Look at them as information, not criticism. We ALL have bias.
2. Once you become conscious that not all your reactions to your female colleagues are supportive, you can literally change your mind by choosing a new truth to live by. I call this "shifting context." For example, if women at your organization are undervalued and/or underrated, you could choose to adopt the principle of 100% responsibility: If something is happening on my shift, I probably have something to do with it, whether I realize it or not. What am I doing or not doing that is perpetuating it?

You can transcend your context by no longer being just an observer of various forms of unfairness toward women, and deciding to be an active part of the solution. You can consciously choose to act with and

for other women every time the opportunity arises. You can give someone a hand up or go the extra mile to clear her path. You can remind yourself at every turn that we women will stand - or fall - together.

3. You can consciously choose to take a higher path: I am going to be an encouragement, a support, and a warrior for the other women in my organization. I am not going to unconsciously uphold a system that keeps women from becoming their best and brightest selves. Speak to another woman's virtues so she doesn't have to (and thus get dinged for "boasting"). Help another woman get credit for her ideas. When a woman suggests something during a meeting and it's ignored until a guy repeats it, you can say something like, "You know, when Ana first mentioned that, I was quite impressed." Advocate for another woman to be given a stretch assignment. Point out the qualities she has that would make it a good fit.
4. Along those same lines, you can find a way to dismiss yourself from any conversation that is negative gossip about a female colleague. Not listening to gossip or petty assessments about other women's appearance or work style is a powerful way to diminish our overall cultural disempowerment of women. Our voices and ears are important tools for building, not tearing down, another's reputation.
5. When it comes to power, the saying "use it or lose it" applies. Expand your power (and manifest your good judgment) by coaching, recommending, and bringing other women into the limelight.

Actions like these will contribute to an organizational culture of women for women - *and it will help your company attract much-needed female talent.*

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