

# Being A Woman In Business

By Amanda Davie

## 1. Familiarise yourself with “Little Miss Worth It”.

Much of what holds us back is internal. Many of our negative emotions or self-criticisms are fear-based and historically served to keep us safe when we were little girls. But they have no place in our adult lives and careers. Instead of your inner “Little Miss I’m Not Good Enough” nurture more self-worthy older sister: “Little Miss Worth It”. Be optimistic, confident and consider what’s possible. Catch and reframe that negative feeling or belief into a positive goal statement: what do you want to achieve as a talented and deserving woman in business?

## 2. Help yourself, speak up and ask for help when required

Don’t sit around waiting for your boss or employer to offer you growth opportunities. Seek them out. Don’t leave the meeting or conversation without having your say. There’s no need to be rude and interrupt. Bide your time, listen to others, and then confidently ask for permission to give your perspective (it’s a rhetorical question!) or ask for help or buy-in. And make a pact with other women on the team to bring one another into the conversation more.

## 3. Be your own sponsor

You could ask someone to recommend you *and* you could do it yourself. Get comfortable self-promoting. A child would confidently ask “What about me?” when worried about being left out - so why don’t we as grown women? Ask whether you can be considered for the job, opportunity or speaker slot. And if a “yes” isn’t forthcoming, follow-up with a “Why *not* me?” and a brief pitch. At worst you’ll get some valuable feedback and experience. And talking of which...

## 4. Receive feedback as a gift.

Asking for feedback has been challenged in feminist circles of late, because many women can internalise it and it can impact on their sense of self worth. But remember: you’re Little Miss Worth It and all feedback is data and you get to choose how you respond (not react) to it. Consider all feedback as an opportunity to learn something, and not necessarily about yourself, it’s often more telling of the person giving it.

## 5. Build and maintain your own support team.

Being a woman in business can be lonely. Loneliness can lead us to consider “Is it just me?” or to retreat, hence further isolating ourselves. Make sure you are regularly seeing and talking to trusted friends inside and outside of work - people who will listen, support and challenge you with love; people who will always be on your side and who know how brilliant you are.

6. **Know your strengths and values and invest in being the best version of yourself.**

Few women truly understand how powerful they are. So if you don't yet know what your strengths are (are your innate personality traits that many of us don't take the time to identify or acknowledge, let alone harness), now's the time. Equally as powerful are our values, our non-negotiables, the things that matter most in life (and sometimes more than work). Invest time in knowing what armoury you already have, and commit to continual self-improvement. Get yourself a mentor or coach and put the work in. Personal growth is a key success factor.

7. **Learn how to manage conflict**

Conflict is a natural part of life. Avoiding it is one ineffective mode of managing it. A far better mode is to increase your assertiveness and your desire to collaborate. Start with the common ground, identify a win-win, lean into the discomfort and apply self-control! And don't give up!

8. **Learn how to negotiate**

Some of the best diplomats and negotiators are female - let's face it we've had to negotiate to survive for millennia! Start with your emotional intelligence skill set - your listening skills, empathy, optimism and adaptability skills. And don't compromise on what you believe is right, equitable or just.

9. **Do not tolerate any form of prejudice or microaggression**

I know, I know, it's easy for me to say, it's not my job or reputation that's at risk. But if we all took that view we'd all be victims of abuse and tolerating abuse would be the template and legacy for younger women, incl. our daughters. In a still-patriarchal world microaggressions permeate workplace conversations. Some are so subtle that sometimes we women don't even hear them. But we can sense when we're being othered. Start by educating yourself. Learn what a microaggression is, and then apply your moral compass and Little Miss Worth It to every conversation - if you hear something that is not okay, say it's not okay and ask the other person to retract it.

10. **Never, ever, ever miss an opportunity to help another woman.**

The Margaret Thatchers and Queen Bees of the world never got this memo. And I expect they're lonely as a result (and/or a long time dead!). It's a competitive and cut throat world out there, but that is no excuse for women not being allies to one another. We have to stick together and raise one another up. We've got a long way to go before we should ever feel greedy or threatened by the talents of other women in business. There is plenty of success to go around!