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*ENGENDERING GENDER COMPETENCE*

Take Charge of Your Promotion  
by  
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# **Take Charge of Your Promotion**

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Understand the Landscape</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Gender Competence and the RISE Methodology</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Step 1: Identify, Assess and Reframe Your Skills</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Step 2: Identify Your Opportunities</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Step 3: Assess Your Organization</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Step 4: Break Through the Barriers</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Step 5: Take Charge!</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Recommended Resources</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>About the Author</b>	<b>37</b>

## Introduction

When I first began my research into women in the technology sector, I was lucky enough to interview Carol Bartz comparatively early in her career. At that time, she was the Vice President of World Wide Operations - and second in command - at Sun Microsystems.

As we know, she left Sun and went on to turn AutoDesk into a world leader and, eventually, held the position of CEO at Yahoo!

In those earlier days in her executive career, I asked her what she thought she brought as a woman to the Executive Team at Sun that would not have been at the table otherwise. Her answer (which she gave me permission to report and quote) was both insightful and instructive. She told me that she did *not* see this as “gender,” but:

- The other executives, the men, always focused on the highest priority problem and picked the highest priority solution to combat the problem – and then fought whatever fires happened as a result later.
- In contrast, she could see all the different ramifications of a problem and the multiple solutions that needed to be implemented in order to simultaneously solve the complexity of the problem *and* prevent the fires from occurring.
- As a result of this difference, she was considered to be “not a team player.”

Not “gender?” In fact, it was *all* about gender - or at least the differences in the ways the genders often look at problems and create solutions.

Not a “team player?” When you *really* look at what she presented as her perspective, it’s a clear definition of what women, or what we will be calling Relational people, perceive it takes to be a team player: A Systems-Thinking, Cross-Functional, Collaborative approach that works for the immediate *and* the long-term.

Most men, looking through what we will be calling an Individualistic lens, see Carol’s approach as: Not following the call of the quarterback or coach; getting into other people’s turfs; stalling the action with a complex solution. This set of Fire Prevention “competencies” goes beyond looking at what is fast (and usually more seemingly impressively daring) Fire Fighting.

All of which opens opportunities for women - as long as you see what you bring for the value it provides. Then, you can do your own Fire Prevention by planting seeds in your work environment, setting expectations by talking about your Relational Competencies describing how you work and produce results. When you are confronted by situations where your contribution isn’t being recognized, you can point to having fulfilled what you projected and teaching those you work with just “what these competencies look like and how they produce results.” You’ll be both able and in a position to point out exactly how valuable your competencies - how you see things and what you say - actually are.

You will learn what shapes Gender Competencies - Relational and Individualistic - and the power that understanding, naming and valuing your Relational Competencies brings.

What all of this means is that whether you’re:

- In college looking toward a future career

- In an organization looking at how to go further and faster from where you are now, or
- Thinking about creating an organization of your own - from micro- to global, you need to:
- Value what you bring to the table, and
- Make sure others see and recognize that value, too.

To get there requires that you take a different look at who you are, how you communicate your different "competencies" and what you want to achieve.

Before we go further, I want to interject a word here about talking about gender differences.

There's a lot of concern in the workplace about talking about gender differences. Catalyst did a study finding that negative stereotypes based on the idea that "men take charge and women take care" exist in the workplace - and that talking about the differences could reinforce those stereotypes.

Throughout this process, what you'll see is that I advocate "reframing" your Competencies. When the differences women bring are reframed as "competencies" derived from their Relational lens, men can recognize for the first time that:

- They are seeing through a familiar Individualistic lens. What they see is not "just the way things are," but an interpretation; a perspective.
- Relational people bring a different perspective and set of competencies that are valuable and that they need that understanding and those skills to work the differences together.

In so doing, men discover "what they know, but did not know that they didn't know" and women discover "what they know and did not know how they know it."

In her *Daily Beast* blogpost "Why Women Should Stop Trying to Be Perfect," Deborah Spar, President of Barnard College, said:

"Let me say what is often forbidden: women may differ from men in a whole range of important ways. In the aggregate, as research has shown, they may be less comfortable with outsize risk than men, and more inclined toward caution. They may be less directly confrontational, and slower to boast of their talents and successes. They may prize consensus over discord and favor personal relationships over hierarchical ones. Rather than wishing these differences away, or pretending they don't exist, we need to analyze them, understand them, and then talk to one another about how best to create a world shaped by a diversity of styles and patterns; a world driven by women's skills and interests and passions as much as by men's."

This Gender Competence approach to understanding, reframing and working with differences makes a huge difference. It illuminates what you now know with archetypes of skills rather than defining with stereotypes.

Happily for you, this discovery process of reframing your differences not only leads you to greater success faster, but, most importantly, it gives you the ability to take charge of your future in ways you may never have thought possible. Even better, because this is all about skills, even as you're improving your own, you're acting as a model to the men and women with whom you work - helping them *expand* as well as build their skills, or "competencies," too. As you take charge of your career, you will be reframing what taking charge looks like. You will take charge of preventing fires and

building partnerships. As you succeed in your career, you will be changing the workplace and the world.

There are 5 Steps to the process that take time and thought and action. Give yourself the time you need. Your goal isn't to "finish" the Steps. It's to use the Steps to achieve and exceed your goals.

That's definitely worth the time!

You'll also see that there are tools, tables and worksheets to assist you throughout the Steps - all of which are provided within this document as well as in the accompanying Toolkit. They are designed to be printed out, rather than annotated on screen - because, as you'll find, that particular mind-body connection gives even greater strength to your resolve and toward your success.

So, let's get started!

## Understand the Landscape

As I continued my research into women in the technology sector, at Sun Microsystems I interviewed men executives - in particular, asking them what their perceptions were about why women were not being promoted. A pattern became clear that went like this:

Banducci: "Why aren't women being promoted?"

Executive: "They're not ready yet."

Banducci: "What would 'ready' look like?"

Executive: "They would be competent."

Banducci: "What would competent look like?"

Executive: "They would be able to get to the heart of the matter. Women keep bringing in all this peripheral stuff."

The "peripheral stuff" the executives were referring to was a form of the systems thinking Carol Bartz was describing: the inclusion and willingness to weigh equally and find interconnections (what we call "high context" factors) as part of the solution-seeking, decision making process, beyond the focus and prioritized thinking of more Individualistic people, mostly men. When not identified as systems thinking, to many men, this comprehensive, integrated thinking is 'scattered and all over the place.'

Which takes us to taking a look at your organization and what competencies, leadership and "who gets promoted" tend to look like.

When you look at your organization, chances are you know exactly who is the most successful. It's:

- **The Priority-Driven Decision Maker** who takes on highest priority problems with highest priority solutions then fights the fires that may arise, or
- **The Firefighter** who swiftly and boldly attacks the emergencies that *do* arise, or possibly
- **The Customer-Focused Expert** who always knows *exactly* what's best for the customer.

Chances are these people are recognized, rewarded and promoted regularly. Chances are also that they're men who model these and other Individualistic competencies.

That's not - by any means - because women *can't* do what those men do. Many women do - and have made very successful careers from doing so.

It's that you bring something else to the organization - something that not only doesn't seem to need rousing music playing in the background as you dramatically 'swoop' in with your solution, but also makes men think women are slightly, if not completely, off the wall.

What you bring to the organization is:

- **Integrated complex thinking and patterns** that identify new, creative opportunities and innovations, as well as

- **Proactive, systematic and comprehensive emergency prevention** that keeps the problems from growing further and often from occurring in the first place, and
- **Customer- and User- focused viewpoints** that incorporate your customers' and users' perspectives - including *their* customers' perspective - into design and decision-making processes.

Are these skills just as valuable - under some circumstances, sometimes even more so - than the Individualistic competencies of the men? Yes.

Are they rewarded and recognized for their value? No.

Why? Simply, because men and women often see things differently. In effect, they use different "lenses" as they look at their worlds and what the needs are.

Whether based on brain science or anthropological studies, most men and women operate with different mental models. It's those models that create the lenses through which we all see. Most important of all is that while those models or lenses can be assigned a gender, they are *not* biologically - male and female - specific.

That's your opening for ongoing promotion and success.

The more you take the time to observe and understand the mental models and skills that go with those models - then use them accordingly - the faster you'll have the tools you need to take charge of your promotions...now and in the future.

## **Using “Gender Culture” to Build Your Promotion Opportunities**

When you look through those mental models - the shared norms, paradigms and rules by which men and women succeed - what you're looking at are Gender Cultures. These Cultures are what I call the Individualistic and Relational lenses through which men and women view people and their work and the world.

What's most important to understand about them is that *they are unconscious*. By the time you're using your lens to look at how you'll succeed - starting in school and all through your work - that model has been embedded into your thinking.

That's good news in two different ways:

1. Gender Cultures are observable because the lenses call forth behaviors consistent with the interpretation of the world shaped by each lens. Behaviors are skills or competencies that are learned and can be enhanced. As you become aware of them - changed, exchanged, or as we will discuss "synergized" - you recognize under what circumstances each has strengths and when you have reached points of diminishing returns
2. Your organizational culture is also a learned set of behaviors that you can create, model and lead - no matter what your gender is or the prevailing gender of the organization might be.

All of which means that there is nothing stopping you from enhancing your own skill set while recognizing the skill sets of others to determine how best to position yourself to:

- Be recognized and rewarded for the perspective, value and successful results you bring to the organization, and
- Achieve and exceed your career goals.

The more you understand how this works, the faster you'll be able to make your skills, your set of Gender Competencies, visible - and recognized. So let's start by taking a look at what makes up those lenses and behaviors that constitute Gender Cultures.

## **What Women and Men See and How They See It**

According to brain science and behavioral findings, men's brains are more compartmentalized than interconnected. On the application side, men perceive their skill at prioritizing as essential and as a key competency of leadership. As a result, the lens through which they see the world is what we call Individualistic. It's based on:

- Independence and status, or
- Who's up and who's down, or
- What's the highest priority and what is lower or lowest.

It's hierarchical, compartmentalized and mutually exclusive. It's not bad or good. It's simply their lens.

In contrast, women's brains - according to brain science and behavioral findings - are more interconnected than compartmentalized. This Relational lens is based on:

- Interdependence and connection
- How we connect, and
- Including everyone or everything.

On the application side, Relational women often do not see their skill as a skill. They perceive the skill and knowledge they bring as "common sense" (perhaps another function of being "connected") which puts them into a position of undervaluing their own contributions. They don't even have to wait for others to do so.

That's bad news, specifically, because women are doing this to themselves.

It's hard enough that, because so many organizations have a prevailing Individualistic or what has been called "male" culture, the skills and competencies that women bring - which are *not* those valued by men - are either invisible to or ignored by the Individualistic decision-makers.

Blame it on their lens. It makes them *unable* to see the value you bring.

Many women do realize their competencies are not recognized causing them to be systematically filtered out of the organization's decision-making. Eventually these women leave the organization taking their competencies, intellectual property and business relationships with them. Research shows that it costs companies minimally 150% of an annual salary just to replace that woman - not counting the expertise she took with her.

Your presence in the organization has that much value to the enterprise. Your contributions have even more value.

That's why it's particularly important that women know how to effectively speak of their value and not undervalue their own contributions by thinking that their thinking is "common sense."

It's not. Otherwise everybody would be doing what you're suggesting - and which never occurred to anyone before you. That's why the expression, "There's nothing 'common' about common sense" is so very true. What is mistaken for common sense is, in fact, a highly valuable and, too often, scarce commodity - your set of Relational Competencies.

You have those skills and abilities - and now, more than ever, you have a window in which to use them to your benefit.

## Why Now is the Time to Take Charge

There are three global trends for women that are the equivalent of the movement of tectonic plates. They are:

- Research on women in business
- Legislation for women in business
- Trends for women in the technology sector.

Even though they're interconnected and impact each other, we'll take them one at a time.

### Research on Women in Business

There are more studies being done around the world on women in business than ever before. That's because women are building businesses faster than at any time in history and, simultaneously and conservatively, represent over two-thirds of the buying decisions made at any time.

A Catalyst report linking corporate performance with the number of women on Boards found that Fortune 500 companies with three or more women on the Board gain a significant performance advantage over those with the fewer. The performance benefits included:

- + 73% return on sales
- + 83% return on equity
- + 112% return on invested capital

Similar findings come from a McKinsey Report that found that companies with the highest percentage of women show the best performance. In comparing the top-quartile of companies in terms of share of women in executive committees against companies that have all-male executive committees, McKinsey found that the former companies exceeded the latter by 41% in return on equity and 56% in operating results.

At the same time, however, the numbers of women who are making it into the executive suite - and particularly the C-suite and Boardroom - aren't getting better at all. In fact, in some *developed* countries, the World Bank estimates that it will take at least 70 years to achieve gender balance in the Boardroom.

Businesses are realizing that this isn't good business. Theresia Gouw Ranzetta, a Managing Partner at Accel Partners (a venture capital firm in the Silicon Valley), when interviewed for the Bloomberg Television program "Women to Watch" said:

"For the first time, I find male co-founders and male co-founding teams who are explicitly looking to bring women into the executive team or the founding team. And, believe me, that is not some sort of 'I wanna be kumbaya' diversity. It's 'I looked at the data and it turned out that two-thirds of my most valuable users are women. We've got to get women into the Boardroom here.'"

The more that the research - whether institutional, academic, government or anecdotal - shows these trends for women, the more the doors open for your promotion. The more you are able to articulate what it is that you bring that is different that can account for producing those different results - as well as what you have in traditional competencies - the more you will stand out as a candidate.

Women who can dispel the mystery of what women bring to the table become resources for the men who are concerned about being in the dark and making a mistake or saying something wrong. You can become a powerful asset rather than a potential liability. You'll become a different kind of hero: one that disarms the topic of gender and becomes a proud peacemaker and asset builder.

### **Legislation for Women in Business**

The previously cited research and the slow-growing numbers for women's promotions to date have led to the second trend: increased legislation around the world *ensuring* that women are being promoted.

While this is a contentious issue - men and women both either seem to hate or love the idea - various countries have decided that the only way to create gender balance in the C-suite and, particularly, the Boardroom is to legislate it.

The reason is simple: productivity and profits.

Liselott Kilaas, Managing Director of Aleris AS (Norway and Denmark) states the need clearly in her Foreword to the Deloitte Global Center for Corporate Governance report, "Women in the Boardroom: A Global Perspective":

"Ultimately, Board diversity is about combining alternative and complementary views that in the end, lead to better Board decisions. In this context, increasing female Board participation is but one of several measures, but certainly an important one."

Knowing the need - and to address the known inequities - countries including but not limited to Norway, Spain, France, Italy and Australia either are or have taken significant steps to ensure that women are represented and, most importantly, contributing on corporate Boards and in the executive suite.

In light of the gender differences, however, the key factor is speaking about and demonstrating your Relational skills that have previously been invisible, unarticulated and undervalued. You speak about them as Competencies so they show up with merit, are valued and are incorporated into creating a Gender Competent corporate culture that knows how to utilize and synergize the differences. At the same time, by expanding your skill base and building your Individualistic skills - thus being able to translate your thinking into their language - you'll gain confidence in *all* your skills.

When you build these skills and take advantage of the legislative and business agendas that are opening up opportunities for you that were previously unavailable, you'll get the promotions you seek moving toward and into the C-suite and Boardroom.

Even better, you'll demonstrate that it's not because you or any other woman is a woman that they want you. It's because you'll have opened up new possibilities for them. You're just that good.

When you get there, it's no time to stop speaking out about Relational Competencies. Recently, I attended a talk at Stanford University about getting more women on Boards. One of the panelists, a woman on the Board of four companies, was asked what she brought to the board.

She answered, "Common sense." There was a hush in the audience. She was then asked if she would advocate for more women on the Board.

She responded, "No, I have to recommend based on experience, knowledge, and skills."

When I pulled her aside at the reception afterward, I told her the Carol Bartz story and asked her if Carol's "systems thinking" was what she called "common sense."

She said, "Yes," and saw my point immediately to call her contribution "systems thinking."

When I asked her if she could advocate for other "systems thinkers" on Boards, she immediately said "Yes."

### Trends for Women in the Technology Sector

All of which leads us to the trends that are now apparent in the tech sector.

The reason I did my research on women in tech is because the sector not only "changes the world" in its products and services, but it also foreshadows the changes that organizations worldwide will be adopting and experiencing. Some more quickly than others - but, ultimately, the changes occur.

All around the world, K-12 and higher education is transforming to interest, engage and retain girls and women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM).

Research has shown that girls and boys have the same aptitude for math. Jo Boaler, Mathematics Education Professor at Stanford, has found that the difference is that girls want to *understand* math, not just be given a formula to use. She says, "Girls have a higher standard for understanding." In classes where students learn math through collaboration - working together with classmates to solve complex, multi-dimensional, open-ended problems - boys and girls perform equally well in math and both boys and girls score at higher levels than students who learn math traditionally. Yet, when girls ask questions of teachers and professors to satisfy their "higher standard of understanding," the teacher will often think and even say, "I think you are in the wrong field."

Girls often do not have an aptitude for spatial relationships but when given a short class designed to develop these skills, they do. Often, what interests girls and women in these fields is the social application - what science, technology, engineering and math can do to benefit people and society.

Many technology companies such as Google, Oracle and Texas Instruments, as well as technical women's organizations and universities, have programs to put women engineers as role models together with young women and girls,

President Obama and Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton initiated Tech Women to build technology alliances between women engineers of the Middle East and women engineers in the United States.

This all goes to say there's a lot of attention on the importance of women in these sectors. And, these sectors touch all sectors

Back to Theresia Gouw Ranzetta of Accel Partners for a moment. She said about the Silicon Valley:

"It's a meritocracy here. So it's a lot more about what you do and what you bring to the table than what you look like."

Though I certainly have Graduate Engineering students in my classes who are still grappling with wanting to be able to dress more like a woman or less like a woman without reactions in their workplace and women who find they have to point out to their bosses that they want choice assignments and promotions, the critical determinant of what is merit is the *perception of competency* - which you can now model in your workplace. Adapting to the meritocracy can also be adapting the meritocracy to your Competency and expanding everyone's skills.

What all of this together means for you is that the trends are all in support of where you're going in your career. Now, by taking charge and giving yourself the credit you deserve for the contributions you bring - while presenting them in a way that men can understand and appreciate - you'll find that there's nothing to stop you from achieving all you ever wanted.

So, let's get started on your skill building.

## Gender Competence and the RISE Methodology

In its simplest form, Gender Competence is the ability to understand, observe and act upon and within the different lenses and mental models used by men and women. It's a skill set. Most importantly, it's not biology-specific. In the field of cultural psychology, Marcus and Conner, at Stanford, have identified eight cultures that influence what they call the Independent lens and the Interdependent lens: East/West, Global North/South, Gender, Religion, Class/Education, Race: White/People of Color, US Region. This informs us about exceptions to biological differences. Ultimately, it is in identifying the other's thinking, perception and communication styles that gives us the best estimate of whether someone is Relational or Individualistic. As we teach others about our competencies and they become more the norms of our organizations, more diverse people will be able to make their contributions.

I had one student from Sri Lanka who said, after identifying how to speak about Relational Competencies, "I left all my Relational Competencies on a shelf in Sri Lanka, because I did not think I could work in this way, in this country."

Let's go back to those men executives I interviewed. On a day-to-day basis, because they were operating exclusively within the lens with which they were most comfortable, the women with whom they worked - and the contributions those women brought - were undoubtedly being misinterpreted and therefore neither listened to nor valued.

It wasn't intentional - and it certainly wasn't personal. It just was - because they had no Gender Competence. They had only one limited lens that they were not aware of as a lens. What they saw was what they knew as reality.

By learning and understanding the skills involved - and the way they play out both individually and organizationally - you won't react when it seems that your contribution is being ignored. In those cases, you'll have the ability to immediately see what's happening and act accordingly to ensure your contribution resonates for your listener and you get the credit you deserve.

Not only is there a personal win in improving your Gender Competence skills, there are organizational wins, too...like increased innovation, productivity and retention of valuable people. As a result, the more and better you differentiate yourself with this skill set, the more visible your contributions - and the more likely your promotions.

How you expand and increase your Gender Competence is by:

- Recognizing that there are differences - rather than making people (including yourself) "wrong" when what you're really dealing with is "different"
- Understanding the differences in the world views, paradigms and cultural lenses that make up the skill sets
- Identifying the subsequent behaviors that come with those different skill sets - including and most apparently demonstrated in communication
- Framing the skill sets in language of "Competencies" which can make them identifiable, useful and valued inside the Individualistic lens that values, skills, objects and action.
- Adapting and expanding your own skill set of competencies while adopting and synergizing aspects of the other Gender Competence skills so you can be most effective.

That's the plan. Now let's look at the specific skills.

## Applying the RISE Methodology

We know that there are differences and that they're unconscious until they become conscious. Most importantly, we know that along with the lenses, there are skills that can be learned. That gives you the foundation to look at the gender-ascribed differences themselves and how you use them to get where you want to go - now and as you continue to build your career.

That's where the **RISE** Methodology comes in.

**RISE** stands for:

**R** elational  
**I** ndividualistic  
**S** ynergy  
**E** mpowerment...

...and is the set of skills and outcomes that positively impact how you relate to others within and outside your organization.

### Relational and Individualistic Competencies

The key to your success using the **RISE** Methodology comes from your ability to recognize and act upon the first two components: Relational and Individualistic Competencies. Those *are* the Gender Competencies that you're working with and within every day. There is a strength and a point of diminishing return for both sets of competencies.

Relational Competencies are most often ascribed to women. They're based on:

- Emphasizing connection and interdependence
- Sharing information
- Inductive reasoning; collaborative building of an idea
- Doing many things at once
- Integrated, organic, systems-oriented thinking
- Decision-making driven by values.

In contrast, the Individualistic Competencies most often ascribed to men are based on:

- Emphasizing status and independence
- Giving information only as needed
- Deductive reasoning; Devil's Advocate
- Doing one thing at a time
- Linear, step-wise, compartmentalized thinking
- Decision-making driven by logic.

A full constellation of Competencies are derived from these foundational differences as you'll see on the following table.

## The Gender Competencies

Individualistic Competencies	Relational Competencies
<p>Transactors: Work is a series of transactions with others in which they exchange rewards for services rendered or administer punishment to inadequate performers</p> <p>Competitive in context of conflict External adversary</p> <p>Win/Lose Zero-Sum Game Thinking</p>	<p>Interactors/Transformers: Getting others to transform their own self-interests into the interest of the group through concern for broader goals; sharing power</p> <p>Competitive in context of relationship Internal excellence</p> <p>Win/Win Synergy Thinking: “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts”</p>
<p>Logical Thinking/Mechanistic Systems Linear</p> <p>Data-Driven Prioritized, discreet units Narrowly focused; low context</p> <p>Either/Or</p> <p>Separate disciplines</p> <p>Logic-based decision-making</p>	<p>Systems-Thinking/Organic Systems Parts are interrelated/connections</p> <p>Relationships between objects and human experience Connecting the dots; high context</p> <p>Both/And</p> <p>Interdisciplinary</p> <p>Values-based decision-making</p>
<p>Deductive reasoning: Oppositional to “bullet-proof” ideas</p> <p>Devil’s Advocate/Defend your thesis</p>	<p><b>Inductive reasoning: Work together to build ideas</b></p> <p><b>Collaboration/Angel’s Advocate</b></p>
<p><b>Firefighter</b></p> <p>Tells/Acts as a hero Acts and speaks from “I” and “I know”</p> <p>Views Customer Service as a problem center</p> <p>Acting on one thing at a time</p>	<p><b>Fire-preventer</b></p> <p>Listens and Asks/Other-focused Acts and speaks from “We” Gets into the shoes of the customer and the customer’s customer Views Customer Service as a resource for improvement and innovation Acting on many things at once</p>
<p>Universality for continuity Rules and rights</p>	<p>Flexibility for dealing with change Guidelines and responsibility</p>

Individualistic Competencies	Relational Competencies
<p><b>Goal-oriented for producing results</b></p> <p><b>Negotiates:</b> Who wins/Who loses Who's up/Who's down Power</p>	<p><b>Process-oriented for continuous improvement</b></p> <p><b>Negotiates:</b> Making connections How we all win Policy</p>
<p><b>Strategic thinking tied to goals</b></p>	<p><b>Strategic thinking tied to process and a future that has not been created</b></p>
<p>Self-reliant; autonomous</p>	<p>Cross-functional; collaborative</p>
<p>Shares information as-needed as currency/commodity</p>	<p>Shares information as given/empowerment</p>
<p><b>Compartmentalizes</b> <b>Teamwork: Each member plays a role or position</b></p>	<p><b>Creates webs; integrates</b> <b>Teamwork: All members put all problems on the table, find solutions and divide responsibilities</b></p>
<p>Developing people by promoting people</p>	<p>Developing people by teaching, mentoring</p>
<p>Independent, directive decision-making Individual intelligence</p>	<p>Inclusive, empowering decision-making Collective intelligence</p>

Neither set of Competencies is ‘better’ than the other. Both add value to the workings of an organization in their own way. Typically, however, it’s the Individualistic Competencies that are most visible, identifiable and rewarded in organizations.

That *doesn’t* mean that you have to wholly adopt the Individualistic Competencies in order to succeed. But you *do* need to recognize that your Relational Competencies are often perceived by your Individualistic colleagues as incompetence, inconsistency or simply ‘not as good as’ *their* skills and leadership abilities.

How do you cross that chasm and get them to see what you bring? By actively naming the Relational Competencies, designing how they can work along with Individualistic Competencies and creating Synergy of both - for and within yourself and your organization.

## Synergy

According to Dr. Sondra Thiederman, author of Bridging Cultural Barriers for Corporate Success, 70% of the world’s cultures are more relational than in the United States. That’s good news - particularly because most promotion opportunities require the ability to relate across cultures.

You’ve already got the skills to do so.

Within your organization, and particularly if you’re in a more Individualistic culture, your ability to create Synergy with co-workers at all levels will measurably increase innovation and organizational profitability.

What, in this context, does Synergy look like? These are the five identifiable forms of Synergy you can demonstrate, orchestrate and lead:

1. **Individual Synergy** - Going beyond your own lens and Competency to adopt and apply other Competencies and skills
2. **One-on-One Synergy** - Using both sets of Competencies together to build on each other’s thoughts and arguments to create new, innovative solutions that are collaborative and bullet-proofed
3. **Group Synergy** - Developing collective intelligence-based collaborative methodologies to ensure full participation and information utilization by all team members
4. **Organizational Synergy** - Creating a culture where what were previously considered unlikely or unrealistic new ideas and complex solutions are developed and nurtured instead of prematurely dismissed; incorporating all viewpoints from all functions and levels for new product and service innovations as well as achieving the organizational vision
5. **Organization-to-Organization Synergy** - Determining and selecting organizational partners and supply chain members based on their Gender Competence Culture and adoption of both Individualistic and Relational Competencies in order to garner different points of view for complex problem-solving instead of simply for their pricing and product offerings.

The more you know and can demonstrate the Relational and Individualistic skills - whether you identify as being Relational, Individualistic or an ambidextrous “Bridge-Brain” somewhere in between - the greater and faster the Synergies you’ll be able to create. This leads to a higher level of visibility for you as a problem solver and innovative leader.

Research from Stanford University indicates that women who are identified as “aggressive, assertive and confident” and are able to switch to what we are calling Relational Competencies on a situation-specific basis, are promoted faster than other men or women. The results state that:

“...For women to be successful they must simultaneously present themselves as self-confident and dominant while tempering these qualities with displays of communal characteristics.”

My graduate engineering students of both genders have been very successful in hiring interviews by first identifying the interviewers as Individualistic or Relational and speaking about themselves accordingly. When the interviewer is Individualistic, they speak with either “bulleted” facts and accomplishments. With Relational interviewers, they include more context such as what it meant to them to accomplish something, or to win an award, their enthusiasm for the job or company, etc. The students have proven their mastery in combining both when interviewed by both together - and being offered the job.

## **Empowerment**

Probably one of the most overused - and abused - words in business is “empowerment.” That’s because, too often, it’s more as positive sounding ‘corporate-speak’ than actuality. In this case, however, there’s a real and applicable skill involved.

It starts with empowering yourself by embracing your skills for the value they bring - not the value you’ve been told (or shown) they, supposedly *don’t* bring.

From there, the **RISE** Methodology gives you the ability to expand and apply those skills - at the same time taking on and understanding the complementary skills of others - so that you can make your case with assuredness.

You won’t be thinking about your point of view and contributions in terms of ‘common sense’ any longer. You’ll be thinking and presenting value-add and Return on Investment - your own and on behalf of your organization.

You won’t have to take on Individualistic Competencies, thinking it’s the only way to get recognized, or because you’re not good enough as you are. This is what I call “coming from deficit.” Instead, you’ll know yourself as an asset, thinking: “I have value to contribute and I have to speak their language in order for them to get beyond their blind spots.”

This mindset casts a different leadership presence - what some women identify as confidence - as well as content to what you contribute.

From there, just as you build the Synergy models, you’ll build empowerment opportunities for yourself and others throughout the organization. By listening differently, facilitating to the broader information that you take in through your new, expanded lens and teaching others to do the same, you’ll be showing your immediate and long-term value as a leader in every project and every meeting.

Then, just watch your promotion opportunities - in your current organization and beyond - grow!

With that, let’s start taking the Steps for you to Take Charge of Your Promotion.

## Step 1: Identify, Assess and Reframe Your Skills

Before you begin this process, it's important to start with a reality check. This one is provided by Facebook COO, Sheryl Sandberg. She says:

"Women systematically underestimate their own abilities. Men attribute their success to themselves. Women attribute it to other external factors."

Let's extend Sheryl's theme by asking this follow-on question:

*Why do women attribute success to external factors and often blame themselves for anything that goes wrong externally?*

Research shows that boys are often taught to be "brave," in the face of external factors, girls are often taught to be "perfect." In addition, Relational people are very "other directed" in their commitment to connect and build relationships. Often, they don't want to break a relationship by putting themselves "above" others or excluding others from recognition. Likewise, Relational people tend to take responsibility or blame themselves for something wrong rather than put responsibility or blame on another and risk breaking the relationship.

Remember, your ability to connect brings many powerful competencies, like the ability to get into the customer's shoes and the shoes of the customer's customer - and, as a result, see opportunities from those perspectives.

What that teaches you is that you don't have to make yourself wrong by blaming yourself. Instead, reframe the situation by applying the Individual Synergy model to see how you can simultaneously ascribe blame and acknowledgement to yourself as well as to others.

As you can see, even before you begin identifying your skills, understand that may be starting this process by fighting an uphill battle...against yourself. That's okay. You'll win it. Just be patient and persistent - because no matter what you *think* your skills are, they're more.

You just don't know it. Yet.

To get you there, on the next pages you'll see a short Gender Competence self-assessment followed by an analysis of your responses. Answer the questions quickly. Don't spend a lot of time on them. Just react. When you're done, you'll know what to do next to get you where you want to go.

## Gender Competence Self-Assessment

*Circle the most true and representative answers about yourself - as many you want.*

**1. I'm most at ease in meetings and discussions when I:**

- a. Emphasize relationships and interdependence - collaborate, work with others
- b. Share information
- c. Do many things at once
- d. Demonstrate integrated, organic, systems-oriented thinking
- e. Make decisions driven by values - what has meaning, makes a difference, what I value
- f. Emphasize status and independence - work alone
- g. Give information only as needed
- h. Do one thing at a time
- i. Demonstrate linear, step-wise, compartmentalized thinking
- j. Make decisions driven by logic

**2. I'm most at ease in meetings and discussions when others (particularly those facilitating or leading the meeting or discussion):**

- a. Emphasize relationship and interdependence - collaborate, work with others
- b. Share information
- c. Do many things at once
- d. Demonstrate integrated, organic, systems-oriented thinking
- e. Make decisions driven by values - what has meaning, makes a difference, what I value
- f. Emphasize status and independence - work alone
- g. Give information only as needed
- h. Do one thing at a time
- i. Demonstrate linear, step-wise, compartmentalized thinking
- j. Make decisions driven by logic

*Answer "Yes" or "No" to the following questions. In-between's aren't allowed.*

**3. Sometimes I think that what I want to contribute is common sense that everyone should know, so I hesitate or don't contribute at all.**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**4. When my ideas are “attacked” or denigrated by others, I take it as a message that they don’t think it’s a good idea, tend not to fight my side and drop the idea.**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**5. I know I am and can be of greater value to the organization if I was listened to and they could understand the value of my ideas.**

- a. Yes
- b. No

*Circle the single most true and representative answer about yourself for each question.*

**1. How good am I at taking credit for the work I do and ideas I bring forward?**

- a. Very good
- b. Pretty good
- c. Not good
- d. I let others take the credit

**7. How often have I found out that others have taken the credit for the work I did or ideas I brought forward?**

- a. Very often
- b. Pretty often
- c. Sometimes
- d. All the time

**8. How proactive have I been in enlisting allies and being assertive in rectifying that situation or misunderstanding?**

- a. Very proactive
- b. Pretty proactive
- c. Not very proactive
- d. I didn't even try

**9. How frequently do I respond with a comeback or a better answer when my ideas are attacked or shot down by others?**

- a. Very often
- b. Pretty often
- c. Sometimes
- d. I stopped trying a long time ago

**10. How ready am I to start speaking up about my different competencies so they can value what I bring to the organization?**

- a. Absolutely ready
- b. Getting ready
- c. Not ready at all
- d. I'll think about it a while longer.

## Analyze Your Results

### Questions 1 through 5:

If your skills - or your belief about your skills - are Relational, then you answered primarily in the a.- e. choices for Questions 1 and 2, and a. (Yes) for Questions 3-5. If your skills - or your belief about your skills - are Individualistic, then you answered primarily in the f. - j. choices for Questions 1 and 2, and b. (No) for Questions 3-5.

### Questions 6 through 10:

If your prevailing skills are Relational, then it's also likely that you've not been successful in conveying your value and may have doubted yourself and your contribution.

What's important about that undervaluing shows up most clearly in Questions 7 and 8 - because it's more than likely that someone else who understands the value of what you bring...and happens to have Individualistic skills...has put forward your ideas as if *they* were the one who came up with the brilliant thought.

That's bad - but it's also a natural, if toxic, extension of not having the words to put a value to your contributions. Also, Relational people often use qualifiers when presenting ideas, such as, "What do you think if we..." or "This may not be the best idea, but..." wanting to get others' input or validation. This comes off as "not confident" and presents yet another barrier to success. That's because Individualistic leaders often make decisions based on the confidence of the presenter when they don't know enough about the content. That makes an idea fair game for someone to present later with confidence - and take credit. After all, if you're not going to take a stand for your idea and get credit for your own accomplishments, someone else will.

## Begin Reframing Your Skills

That's why it's so important to:

- **Identify your prevailing Gender Competency.** The Competencies aren't biology-specific, nor are they mutually exclusive. That means you can - and do - have a skill level in all the Competencies - not just one or the other. But many people have a much stronger more developed set of Competencies, like being right- or left- handed.
- **Recognize and assess your skill level in your and others' Competencies.** Treat your skills the same way you'd look at playing the piano or doing tennis serves. You have a particular skill level now - but it doesn't mean that that's as far as you can go.
- **Expand your skill base to recognize and demonstrate other Competencies** in order for others to work more effectively with you and you with them. Continuing the piano metaphor, think of it as expanding your skills so that you not only play classical music, but you also rock at jazz.
- **Reframe the value of your contributions by putting them forward without hesitation.** There's nothing "common sensical" about your thinking. It is different. Once understood, it's good, solid thinking that makes a difference and adds value. Don't let yourself believe anything other than that. You deserve better - especially from yourself.
- **Learn to prepare and stand up for your ideas when they're attacked or denigrated.** Individualistic people often think they are helping "bullet proof" an idea to be sure it stands up.

Some may like to display all they know. However, if you take the tack to tell them to set aside the Devil's Advocate and first give their best thinking on building the idea, they may be stymied and then amazed at the innovation that comes out of collaborating. If your solution isn't *the* solution, perhaps you'll come up with one together that wasn't thought of before. Make sure you give your ideas the chance they (and you) need and deserve to help make things better.

- **Take credit for your ideas and achievements.** Don't ever assume that the people out there - from your supervisors and managers to the executives and Board members - are going to understand your thinking and give you credit for your contributions. At least not to the level you want and deserve. Find allies whom you have prepped to understand your thinking who will also watch for stolen credit and point it out as your idea. Do the same for them. This applies, too, to the ideas and accomplishments you've had that have remained invisible to the traditional business eye or that no one noticed. The only way you're going to strive and thrive is by being both a teacher of these new competencies and your own best advocate. Always make sure your name is where it deserves to be.

It may be awkward at first. But the more times you say, "I've connected some dots that must be included, so this is what we do," the easier it will be for you to say it the next time.

What you'll soon find is that the people around you will look to you and more and more - literally turning their heads to you in meetings for what you see that others have not - to bring your answers forward. Your ideas add value...and that's the first big step toward your next promotion.

Next, let's look at the opportunities that will get you there.

## Step 2: Identify Your Opportunities

You're good at lots of things. Some of them may be part of your job - some aren't. There are tasks and skills and outcomes that you enjoy and about which you're passionate. There are others that you have to do because you have to do them - so you do your best, but it's not like the others.

As you take charge, you need to focus on those things that you are both good at and passionate about. You need to identify where you're not only capable (because the number of things you *can* do are innumerable) - but where just the doing, itself, brings you joy.

Part of the reason why is because the more you focus on those things for which you give yourself credit, the more you'll ensure that you're *getting* the credit you deserve.

### Reframe Your Language

In order to get that credit, you need to give yourself the language to convey your Relational Competency and value.

As shown earlier, even the most powerful and respected senior women use language that often undermines their goal of establishing their value. Here's an example from a Bloomberg interview with Carolyn Everson, Facebook Vice President of Global Marketing Solutions on trends in the tech sector:

Everson: "The trend I'm seeing is not necessarily a rush of women into the CIO or CTO position, but that CMOs, Chief Marketing Officers, are actually being much more data savvy and I think that's going to open up more opportunities for people that are sensitive. Whether it's women or men, I think the judgement is still out there. It's really whether or not you have the business sense to build your business around people."

Bay: "Sensitive. Collaborative. Potentially intuitive".

Everson: "Yes."

We may get excited over this trend to Relational and "what I am good at," but let's look closely here at the definition of "sensitive." Sensitive is associated with women with definitions from the Merriam-Webster Dictionary that include:

- easily hurt or damaged; especially easily hurt emotionally
- delicately aware of the attitudes and feelings of others
- excessively or abnormally susceptible; hypersensitive.

This doesn't translate as a Competency. The same with "intuitive" - and I recently discovered that even "collaborate," in the Individualistic world, can be seen as tearing down another's idea. We have to clarify our meanings with language that gives value through the Individualistic lens.

For instance, when you clarify collaboration as "building together with everyone adding value," an Individualistic listener will ascribe value to the skill whether it's applied to ideas, project or products.

What do you use instead? You use words like:

- Insightful - as in, to see and make connections that others do not,

- Responsive - as in, to team members and customer needs,
- Instinctive - as in, about market trends, and
- Savvy - as in, with regard to emerging social business.

The logic is there. You need the language to translate the new into the traditional business culture. This is Gender Competence - and once you frame your skills and value that way, you'll be able to quickly identify and move forward toward the future you want.

## **Relational Competencies and Your Opportunities for Promotion**

Sandy Carter, Vice President and Evangelist of IBM Social Business says there will be a tremendous demand for women to manage social communities reaching into the marketplace as well as transforming the structure and culture of business.

So, now, take it internally. The more and better an organization works across levels and functions, the more nimble and responsive it is. That makes it more innovative and profitable - all of which comes from internal relations. Good, strong relations, flow of information and diversity of thought. And that takes Relational Competencies.

Very similar the Individualistic and Relational Competencies Competencies I developed in my research, Sandy Carter describes the way business culture will be transformed by Social Business from Current to Desired. You may recognize how this has begun, in your own organization.

<b>Cultural Theme</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Desired</b>
<b>Boundaries</b>	Isolated Functions	Cross Functional Cooperation
<b>Teaming</b>	Individual Competitive	Team Oriented
<b>Learning</b>	Slow Adopting New Skills	Continuous Learning Culture
<b>Management Style</b>	Controlling	Delegating
<b>Horizontal Communications</b>	Bureaucratic, Formal Channels	Free Flow Communication
<b>Open Communications</b>	Guarded Communication	Open Communication
<b>Initiative</b>	Follow Specific Instructions	Take Initiative
<b>Risk Tolerance</b>	Punish Mistakes	Learn from Mistakes
<b>Pace</b>	Slow, Cautious Pace	Fast Pace
<b>Rules/Process</b>	Keep to Rules	Ignore Rules
<b>Hierarchy</b>	Many Organizational Layers	Few Organizational Layers

As you assess your own organization as to where they are in creating “desired” culture, begin to determine opportunities you have to contribute to creating a more desirable, innovative culture by identifying and bringing your relational competencies to your organization.

The next Steps will assist you in identifying where those opportunities lie, what the barriers are and how you can Take Charge of your Promotion.

## Analyze Your Responses

As you will have seen, your answers to the last question take you right back up to the top - which is exactly what you want to do.

Just as in Step 1, it's more than likely that you're not giving yourself the credit you deserve for the contribution you bring. Using this list of questions, you're not only identifying where the opportunities lie organizationally - internally and externally - but, most important of all, you're identifying the opportunities *resident in you* that are not only available but just waiting for you to access them and speak about them.

Now the question is: Are the best opportunities in your current organization? Do you want to contribute to the transformation of the organization you are in or is it time to find an organization that is already demonstrating their commitment to this kind of culture?

## Step 3: Assess Your Organization

It's time to go back to the **RISE** Methodology and take a look at how the specific skills are being played out in your organization, by whom and what the effect is - for and on you.

You may decide that you don't want to answer all the questions at one time. That's okay. You're taking an objective look at your current situation - and you want to give it the time it deserves. Just be sure you answer all the questions before getting to the final section to analyze your results.

### Organizational Assessment—How the Organization Operates

- Describe a Situation.** Identify a situation you were recently in that required discussion, participation and decision-making. Describe the situation/purpose of the meeting and the titles (not names) of the people involved:

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#### People Involved (Titles Only)

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- Apply the Competencies.** Now, reviewing what went on in that situation, apply the Relational and Individualistic Competencies to see who (*by title only*) demonstrated which skills - as well as what the reaction and/or outcome was from those skills being demonstrated. *Make sure you include your own contributions!*

Skill/Competency	Title of Person Demonstrating Skills	Reaction/Outcome
Emphasized connection and interdependence		
Collaboration: building ideas with others; Inductive Reasoning		

Skill/Competency	Title of Person Demonstrating Skills	Reaction/Outcome
Shared information		
Did many things at once		
Demonstrated integrated, organic, systems-oriented thinking		
Made decision(s) driven by values		
Emphasized status and independence		
Bullet-proofed ideas; engages in opposition to find weaknesses in ideas; Deductive Reasoning		
Gave information only as needed		
Did one thing at a time		
Demonstrated linear, step-wise, compartmentalized thinking		
Made decision(s) driven by logic		

3. **Analyze and Review the Outcomes.** Reviewing the information you just wrote, pay particular attention to the reactions and outcomes you identified. It doesn't matter what the title - or gender - of the person was. All that matters is the outcome.
  
4. **Repeat the Process.** Go back to the beginning of Part 2 and, document another situation that had a different feeling, use of skills and, possibly, outcome. If there are other situations that warrant analysis and you want to document, repeat again.

## Analyze Your Responses

What you're looking at as you review your answers are a first level identification and analysis of the barriers to promotion you've been experiencing.

Your responses show you how that culture is playing out in the body of the enterprise - no matter what level position you currently hold. The situation(s) you described are ones that are being played and replicated throughout the organization every day. Others are experiencing the same types of decision-making patterns that either help them or keep them from their ability to achieve their goals.

This gives you insight not only into how the organization supports - or doesn't - those who bring your particular skills and Competencies to the table, but also how you react in those situations when your ideas and contributions are supported - or not.

Now, with all this information in hand, you're ready to Break Through the Barriers!

## Step 4: Break Through the Barriers

One senior manager I interviewed had been told by her boss, a Division President, that she was “the best utility player in the company” - meaning she could play many positions well - but that she “would never be a star.” The senior manager thought she was the best person to be CEO of a company they had acquired with her overseeing the project. She said all these Relational Competencies of hers were just what were needed.

I asked if she had specified them on the job description for the CEO position. She said “I will now!” Within two years, her boss advocated for her and she was appointed to be CEO of an acquisition. Ten years after I worked with her and the parent company, it was identified as one of two Silicon Valley companies who had more than two women on its Board.

This is typical of the different kinds of barriers you are - and will - encounter as you take charge of your promotion and what can be done about them.

One of the women who attended a Calling Out the Brilliance of Women workshop, asked me to coach her on articulating her competences. Her manager had five special projects and she wanted to be put in charge of one. We worked to identify and put into competency language, her strengths. When I checked in with her to see how well it went with her manager, she told me she was put in charge of all five projects!

The good news is, even by speaking about your unique competencies, you can open doors for yourself and shift the culture.

### Breaking the Barriers

In Step 1, you identified the extent to which your Gender Competencies are primarily Relational or Individualistic.

Just to remind you...

Relational Competencies are most often ascribed to women and are based on:

- Emphasizing connection and interdependence
- Sharing information
- Collaboration: Building ideas with others; Inductive Reasoning
- Doing many things at once
- Integrated, organic, systems-oriented thinking
- Decision-making driven by values.

Individualistic Competencies are most often ascribed to men and are based on:

- Emphasizing status and independence
- Devil’s Advocate: Bullet-proofing ideas; Deductive Reasoning
- Giving information only as needed

- Doing one thing at a time
- Linear, step-wise, compartmentalized thinking
- Decision-making driven by logic.

Review the chart of Individualistic and Relational Competencies (pages 13 and 14). What Relational Competencies can you articulate and add?

In Step 2, you assessed yourself and identified how your skills play out as you act upon the opportunities that have presented themselves to you in the past.

The information has given you the opportunity to identify the ways that you, *yourself*, and the organization have kept you from achieving your goals and all you're meant to achieve.

Use that information objectively. It's telling you where and how you've gotten in your own way - or allowed the organization to get in your way - that's kept you from the promotions you've wanted and deserved.

This is a particularly difficult barrier to breach. It's the one where you have to take a step back from yourself, be particularly honest and then be willing to act on what you've learned.

The good news is, the more you look at the information - and the more objective you are about it - the more you'll realize that for those behaviors that are yours, you can choose whether to continue to behave in those ways.

For those behaviors that come from others that have impacted you - particularly if the impact was negative - you are now in the position to choose whether to continue to accept those behaviors or to change your response to them through your greater understanding of where they come from *and* your willingness to stand up for who you are and what you bring.

Use the next pages and take some time to identify and journal the barriers from each category that you can identify - as well as the actions you will take to address them.

Then, you'll move onto Step 5, put it all together and take charge of getting promoted - whether within your current organization or elsewhere.

## Breaking the Barriers Worksheets

Using the descriptions on the preceding pages, identify and specify the barriers you're encountering - or need to plan for encountering - as you take charge of your promotion. Wherever possible, identify an action that you can or will take to address and break through the barriers.

Barrier	Action

<b>Barrier</b>	<b>Action</b>

## Step 5: Take Charge!

You may have been wondering where the second half of the **RISE** Methodology (i.e., Synergy and Empowerment) went. This is the point at which they appear - because now you're ready to start taking action to produce unprecedented results.

### Synergy

You will recall that there are five levels and forms of Synergy. They are:

1. **Individual Synergy** - Going beyond your own lens and Competency to adopt and apply other Competencies and skills
2. **One-on-One Synergy** - Using both sets of Competencies together to build on each other's thoughts and arguments to create new, innovative solutions that are collaborative and bullet-proofed
3. **Group Synergy** - Developing "collective intelligence," collaborative methodologies to ensure full participation and information utilization by all team members
4. **Organizational Synergy** - Creating a culture where what were previously considered unlikely or unrealistic new ideas and complex solutions are developed and nurtured instead of prematurely dismissed; incorporating all viewpoints from all functions and levels for new product and service innovations as well as achieving the organizational vision
5. **Organization-to-Organization Synergy** - Determining and selecting organizational partners and supply chain members based on their Gender Culture and adoption of both Individualistic and Relational Competencies in order to garner different points of view for complex problem solving instead of simply for their pricing and product offerings.

To Take Charge of Your Promotion, you're going to use all of them. Specifically:

- Now that you're aware of the skills involved for each Competency, start listening specifically for those cues that demonstrate a more Relational or Individualistic lens - whether it's coming from you or from one of your colleagues or co-workers.
- Actively work to "hear through" the difference in *how* what's being said is said to *why* it's being said. Listen for the intent.
- As you respond, ensure that you give your listener an understanding of your Competencies, your lens or perspective and your resulting communication behavior. Be specific about *why you're saying what you're saying the way you're saying it*. Explain, if necessary (as you stop them from interrupting), that you have a different way of seeing the situation and that it's their responsibility to listen to your input with the same respect with which you listened to theirs. Your intention is to see how the different rationales and solutions can work together.
- The more that you practice these skills on a one-to-one basis, the more you'll be able to expand the skill to start generating collaborative, innovation opportunities in groups and across the organization.

An example of Synergy on several levels is to bring your "process" competency on how to get things done with better quality and efficiency together with a bottom line "goal" competency:

You have your commitment to build a more inclusive, diverse workforce as a goal. The more Individualistic thinker is listening for "strategic thinking" which produces bottom line results. For

you, the impact on the bottom line may be obvious - again, your common sense - but you have to make the connection explicit of "growing a more inclusive, diverse workforce to expand our market share through attracting and meeting needs of a more diverse customer base."

This reframing of the results you want to accomplish sets you up to be heard, to be seen as strategic and to produce results beyond what is predictable. While it looks like you're simply using a communication tool, what you're actually doing in this process is revealing blind spots and creating new possibilities for yourself and others.

### **Building Beyond the Blind Spot: Addressing Zero-Sum Thinking**

Here's a tip on a special blind spot: Zero-Sum Thinking. It means that if someone is going to win, another is going to lose as much as the other wins.

In her final months as Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton used her final speech in Australia, in the city of Adelaide, the heartland of Australia's military manufacturing industry, to reject the criticisms that Australia's enhanced ties with the United States would come at a cost to its burgeoning relationship with China. She said:

"Well that kind of zero-sum thinking only leads to negative-sum results....We support Australia having multifaceted ties with every nation in the Asia-Pacific, indeed in the world, including China, just as we seek the same."

Zero-Sum Thinking has also been applied to women's Competencies: If she has "people skills," she's not technical. If she's tactical, she's not strategic.

You have to nip this in the bud. Point out that the different and multi-faceted strengths you have don't take away from the others. When you truly are not strong in a competency, you have the ability to synergize or "hybrid" with others who do. The whole being greater than the sum of the parts is a completely different game than Zero-Sum.

In leadership we often talk about discovering "what we don't know, we don't know." You have now discovered and are able to reveal to others:

What women know and they don't know how they know it

and

What men know and they don't know that they don't really know.

This opens new possibilities.

You're demonstrating that you are innovative and you're also an innovation leader. You're creating an environment where others can contribute new ideas and opportunities for products and services that will lead to further organizational success.

Asserting your independence and what you bring beyond traditional competencies and standing up for yourself and what you believe instills confidence and leadership presence. You're bringing your knowledge, skill and ability to bear to address complex situations so that everything that needs to be done to fire-proof the solution is addressed before any fire can begin.

You're showing your organization your value.

This means that you can *quantify* your leadership, team building and “communication skills” - your Relational Competencies - *directly into profit...*which is something you want to regularly do as you speak up for your own achievements.

Those same skills - and that same presentation of yourself - work as a particularly strong tool as you build synergies with others within and outside your organization.

### **Getting Involved: It's Time to Network**

The expression, “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know” is particularly true in as networked a business environment as now exists. Don’t be hesitant about what you have to offer as you network within and outside your organization and work with a sponsor who can better advocate for you.

After my presentation at a Diversity Conference sponsored by a major U.S. Government defense contractor, I was asked by a high level manager to help him to advocate to the C-level executives the promotion of a woman manager to lead a major environmental clean-up for the organization.

As I listened to his description of what she accomplished and how she did it, I gave him Competencies to use to describe her. When I checked in with him a few weeks later, she had been promoted two levels to a Vice President position.

Just as that executive did for a woman he wanted promoted, it’s now your job to educate your sponsor so that they see - and speak to - your Competencies for the value they bring.

The less you think of your contributions as “common sense” or that anyone could have done or said the same - and realize that it’s only because it’s *you* that that solution was offered - the more comfortable you’ll be presenting yourself in that light as you meet others.

Finally, the Synergy process gives you the opportunity to use and re-use what you learned in the preceding Steps about yourself and your organization. The same process will also apply to any organization to which you might move - so it’s always worth going through the steps to see where you’re making progress, what skills you need to keep working on and where your organization needs to make progress...at least if they want to keep you.

### **Empowerment**

The whole of this process is about empowerment. However, in this case, it’s not about anyone “empowering” you. It’s about you recognizing your own power and further empowering yourself.

The biggest challenge for women in promotions is to give *themselves* the credit they deserve. It’s not about getting credit from others. That comes after you’ve recognized yourself as the valuable contributor you are. Document and report your accomplishments. Ask for what you want.

Some of the steps you’ll take will be risky. Good. Embrace risk - but in that embrace, know, also that you may fail...and that that’s perfectly okay. You’ll continue to go forward.

Be honest - with yourself and others - about who you are and what you have to offer. Men and women aren’t looking for men or women leaders, *per se*. They’re simply looking for *good leaders* - and that’s you.

As you are empowering yourself, you're transforming the culture of your organization, changing the mindsets of those around you as to what is competency, what is leadership and what is the contribution you and women can make.

Take the opportunities that you will hear in new ways, listen to others and speak who you are to build synergistic connection - new possibilities and new actions that would not be there otherwise.

In challenging moments, when you are questioning whether to "let them have it" or "let it roll off my back," take the high road. Surprise them. Teach them. Dispel the blind spots and open doors to new opportunities for them as well as you.

Remember Catalyst found that "Women Take Care, Men Take Charge." Notice how, when you "Take Charge" of your career, you are at once going beyond who you know yourself to be - while still being yourself.

Care is still included. You are caring for yourself, the people you work with and your organization. Simply reframe "Care" to "Quality" by thinking and speaking of your:

- Quality of work and working together
- Quality of products, services and results
- Quality of career development, and
- Quality of life - which feeds back to quality of work.

I hear powerful women politicians continuing to refer to women "bringing something softer," or being concerned about the "soft issues." When you reframe those words to Quality and Quality of Life, what you're saying is "women make quality." It commands more attention and new thinking. You're showing yourself to be strategic in creating a new, quality future for yourself and your company. You're synergizing yourself and making a difference in quality of life for yourself and beyond. Congratulations!

So, step up. Step in. Lean forward. Participate. Lead the Way. **RISE.**

The more you do, the more and faster you'll see the career success you've always wanted, the more you'll be appreciated every step of the way - and the more you'll be creating the workplace and the world you want.

If you have any questions, or brilliant successes to share, by all means get in touch with me.

Bonita Banducci

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650 529-9336

We can SKYPE or Zoom Conference for a coaching session, if you would like to bring the best of two heads together about your competencies and breaking through!

## Recommended Resources

Bay, Willow, Producer, "[Women to Watch: Women Take the Lead in Technology](#)," Bloomberg Television, 2012

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Deloitte Global Center for Corporate Governance, "[Women in the Boardroom: A Global Perspective](#)," November 2011

Evanoff, Carol, [Mapping Your Career Success](#), Fair Winds Publishing, 2011

Fletcher, Joyce K., [Disappearing Acts: Gender, Power and Relational Practice at Work](#), MIT Press, 1999

Imbrie, P.K., Ph.D., "Modeling Engineering Student Success: Examining Factors Related to Retention and Graduation," presentation for Current Activities in Engineering Education and Factors Affecting Student Retention, Santa Clara University, May 29 2012

McKinsey & Company, "Women Matter: Women at the Top of Corporations, Making it Happen," 2010

Rigolioso, Marguerite, "Women Who Display Masculine Traits - and Know When Not to - Get More Promotions Than Men," Stanford School of Business <http://www.gsb.stanford.edu/news/research/womencareerresearchbyoreilly.html>, March, 2011

Sandberg, Sheryl, "[Commencement Address](#)," Barnard College, 2011

Sandberg, Sheryl, [Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead](#), Alfred A. Knopf, 2013

Sandberg, Sheryl, "[Why We Have Too Few Women Leaders](#)," TED Woman, 2010

Spar, Debora, "Why Women Should Stop Trying to Be Perfect," [The Daily Beast](#) September 23, 2012

Thiederman, Sondra, [Bridging Cultural Barriers for Corporate Success: How to Manage the Multicultural Workforce](#), Lexington Books, 1991

Williams Wooley, Anita, Chabris, Christopher, F. et al, "Collective Intelligence: Number of Women in Group Linked to Effectiveness in Solving Difficult Problems," [Science Daily](#), October 2, 2010

## About the Author

Coach, consultant, author, trainer and mentor, Bonita Banducci has built a world-wide reputation adding a powerful dimension to men's and women's leadership and development through her proprietary RISE methodology.

Some of Bonita's clients include Adaptec, Amgen, Booz Allen Hamilton, Cisco, County of Santa Clara, Hewlett Packard, Johnson & Johnson, Intel, KLA-Tencor, Sun Microsystems, Xylinx, NASA Ames, the US Navy Corps of Engineers, US and California Environmental Protection Agencies and others. She was also a representative of the Commission on the Status of Women of Santa Clara Country at the UN NGO Forum World Conference on Women held in Beijing, leading a workshop on Creating Partnership of Women in Business with Women in Development for Sustainable Global Development.

At Santa Clara University, she teaches Gender and Engineering, a Core curriculum course, for the School of Engineering Graduate Program. In addition, she is the Gender Specialist for Mentornet. She is a founding Board member of the Santa Clara University Global Women's Leadership Network sponsored by the Leavey School of Business and a faculty member and coach for the Women Leaders for the World Program.

Her popular and well-received workshops have been delivered at Santa Clara University, the University of San Francisco, Haas School of Business at UC Berkeley, Stanford's Institute for Research on Women and Gender as well as at Women in Technology conferences including WITI, Society of Women Engineers, SCU Women in Business.

In 2014, Banducci was honored as a Woman of Influence in Silicon Valley by the San Jose Business Journal.

In 2017 she hosted a panel of colleagues applying Gender Competence to their work at the NGO Commission on the Status of Women Forum for UN Women "Realizing 50/50: Brilliant Women and Great Men in Partnership at Work—to fulfill on the Sustainable Development Goals.