

CS322462

Why there are so few women in leadership and what you can do to change this

Andrea Janzen
Andrea Janzen Professional Coaching

Learning Objectives

- Discover why all genders need to become diversity champions
- Learn how to differentiate between mentorship and sponsorship
- Learn how to identify potential sponsors in your organization
- Learn how to identify people you can sponsor and advocate for in your organization

Description

Everybody seems to be talking about the gender gap at work, but nobody seems to know what to do about it. Gender diversity is a complex issue and it's easy to get overwhelmed. Most corporate diversity strategies to date have focused on supporting women through programs like mentorship and women's leadership conferences. This approach sounds good in theory, but it places the responsibility solely on women.

The truth is that women are not holding themselves back from leadership; the latest research confirms that workplace culture is preventing women from achieving equality. Things will never change unless all genders take part in finding a solution. In this interactive session, we'll talk about how all genders can get involved, and how to use the concept of sponsorship (not mentorship) to accelerate women into leadership positions.

About Andrea Janzen



Andrea is on a mission to close the gender gap in the workplace. She uses executive coaching and evidence based consulting to create top down and bottom up diversity strategies. Most of her clients are in male dominated industries like construction, engineering and aerospace. She is the host of the [Diversity at Work Podcast](#) and a contributor to the [Forbes Coaches Council](#).

She is a Certified Executive Coach through Royal Roads University and an Associate Certified Coach through the International Coach Federation.

She has an MBA from the Schulich School of Business at York University and a BBA from Wilfrid Laurier University. Andrea has presented at the Ground Breaking Women in Construction Conference, The Fusion Atlantic Leadership Forum, Ottawa Construction Association and more. She lives in Halifax Nova Scotia Canada with her husband and three children. She enjoys running, stand up paddle boarding and being outdoors.

Women: Stop asking for career advice and do this instead

By Andrea Janzen

This article was originally published on [Forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com) on September 9, 2019

You want to get ahead in your career, you often reach out to another successful woman because you want to hear her story. You want that advice to help you find your way and get that next opportunity. This is what you've been told to do, and so you do it.

I don't know about you, but I've spent hours meeting with other women in coffee shops talking about work. I leave inspired, ready to take action, ready to follow up on the advice they gave. When I get back to my desk, I'm overwhelmed, I don't know where to start and I don't have the connections to actually put the advice into action.



Through lots of frustration and reading, I've discovered a better way. Asking for an opportunity instead of advice is what you need to do in order to get ahead.

The [research](#) says that having an influential mentor is one of the best strategies for career advancement. But the truth is women and men are mentored differently, and the way that women are being mentored is not helping to advance women into leadership roles.

[In general](#), men are given opportunities, which is defined as sponsorship, and women are given advice, which is mentorship.

This is how it shows up at work: Men are given opportunities to learn on the job; they are pushed to take risks and given exposure to new projects and opportunities. The senior person will ask the junior male to present a few slides during a big presentation. They will be forced out of their comfort zone. They'll have to learn on the job and get some valuable exposure in the process. This learning, this exposure, is what gets people promoted. It's what gets people seen.

It accelerates their learning and progresses their careers. At the end of the day, the onus to take action and create opportunities is shared.

A junior woman, on the other hand, will be given advice. She'll be told stories, she'll be offered some strategies, but at the end of the day, the onus to take action and create the opportunity is on the junior woman. The mentor will help her prepare for that opportunity, but the research says that typically women are not pushed as often into riskier situations where they can learn on the job and get the exposure they need to get ahead.



Who is going to progress faster? The person getting the advice and preparing for the opportunity or the person who is given the opportunity and learns as they go?

Unfortunately, in some cases that stereotype of women going out for coffee and talking and men making deals on the golf course is true.



One thing to note is that this usually doesn't happen on purpose: We often don't even realize we're doing this — it's completely unconscious. Many people don't even realize that they are treating women differently than men.

Now that we have this knowledge, we need a plan to move forward. Here are three things that you can do to get that opportunity to get the exposure and experience you need to get ahead.

1. Showcase what you have to offer. In order for someone to take a chance and offer you an opportunity, they need to know what you're capable of. They need to be so confident in your work that they are willing to put their reputation on the line to advocate for you.

Ask yourself: What can I do to show a potential sponsor what I am really capable of?

2. Tell them what your goals are. In order for someone to advocate for you, they need to know what you are striving for. This will allow them to be on the lookout for opportunities that can help you move forward. It sounds really simple, but getting clear on your own goals and sharing them with your mentor will allow them to realize they can help you.

Ask yourself: What are my short-term and long-term goals?

3. Ask for the opportunity. The research has told us that women are groomed for leadership differently than men. Women are mentored and given advice, and men are sponsored and given opportunities. But because this is often unconscious, you can turn your mentor into a sponsor by asking them to open doors for you.

Ask yourself: What new experiences would help me to move my career forward?

If you want to do your part and sponsor other women, hold back on giving advice. Instead, get curious and ask questions.

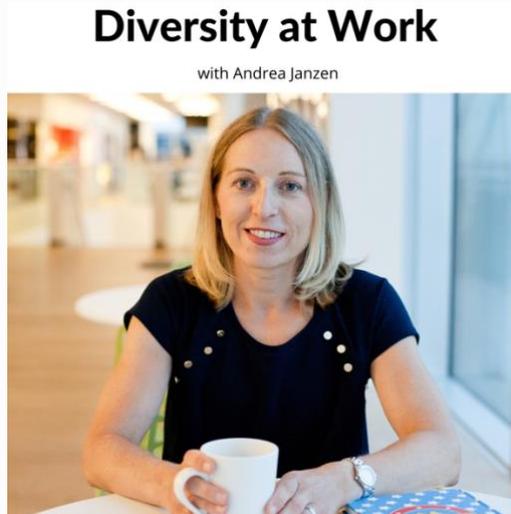
Ask yourself: What are their goals? What needs to happen so that I can become comfortable aligning my reputation with theirs?

Take a risk yourself — give another woman an opportunity and push them out of their comfort zone. Support them and help them figure it out and learn along the way.

Sponsorship is a powerful tool to advance people's careers, but unfortunately, we aren't leveraging it to its full potential. With this one simple tweak, focusing on opportunities instead of advice, we can accelerate women's careers and start to close the gender gap.

Additional Resources

Listen to the Diversity at Work Podcast



[Here on Itunes](#)

[Here on Spotify](#)

[Here of Google](#)

Connect with Andrea Janzen on [Linked In](#)

Follow Andrea on [Instagram](#)

Find Andrea on [Facebook](#)

Read Andrea's latest [Forbes articles](#)



Get your [FREE Ambitious Everyday Journal](#)

www.andreajanzen.com