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Getting Ahead: Eight Axioms for Women's Advancement

Use these insights to help you work your way along your career path and rise to the top.

By Sheila Wellington
 Catalyst



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In Catalyst's book, *Be Your Own Mentor*, Catalyst President Sheila Wellington and other successful women leaders offer their advice and insight on how to get ahead in today's business world. Below are the highlights from Sheila's "Eight Axioms for Advancement," described in detail in the book. They provide useful reminders for women navigating their careers.

1. The best isn't good enough.

Successful women consistently say that performing beyond expectations is critical for advancement. By repeatedly impressing people with outstanding results, you will gain the recognition, respect, and credibility needed to succeed.

2. Time is of the essence.

In order to integrate your work and personal lives in ways that allow you to succeed in both, plan effectively. If the timing isn't right for you to accept an assignment, make sure you communicate your interest and specify when you will be available for it later. Try to anticipate the times in your career when you will be able to be most focused, and use those periods to make major career efforts.

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3. If you don't blow your own horn, nobody else will.

Don't wait for people to notice your accomplishments. Successful work deserves public recognition—inside as well as outside your organization. Make sure your colleagues, team members, and—most important—your boss, know what you've accomplished.

4. Expertise impresses.

Develop an expertise in a unique specialty. As a result, people will look to you for that knowledge, and you will build credibility and standing. Figure out what information or expertise might be lacking at your organization and learn as much as you can about it.

5. Nothing comes to she who waits.

Catalyst research repeatedly shows that taking initiative is critical to getting ahead. Actively pursue high visibility assignments and advancement opportunities. When you learn about a project that interests you, approach your boss with your plans for completing it, and then do it.

6. It's not just corporations that need to diversify.

You need to gain a broad range of experience to succeed. Build experience in positions with bottom-line responsibilities such as operations or sales. Also, consider making both lateral and downward moves that will give you cross-functional experience. Seek out a structured succession-planning process at your organization.

7. Fortune favors the brave.

In order to advance, you must take risks. Demonstrate your willingness to take on new, different, and difficult assignments that will allow you to show off your talents and prove your executive potential.

8. Money matters.

Make sure that you get paid what you're worth. Because women often accept or reject job offers without asking for more money, they tend to start at lower salaries than those who negotiate. Do your research to find out what salary you should ask for; check with recruiting firms, the Internet, other companies advertising similar positions, and current or former employees for information. Also, when your workload gets heavier, ask for more pay.

Author Bio

Sheila W. Wellington is the president of Catalyst, the nation's premier, non-profit organization on women's private sector leadership. Having broken new ground for women in her own career, Ms. Wellington identifies strongly with women's efforts to advance in business. Ms. Wellington was the second woman officer of Yale University, serving as secretary for six years. Previously, she worked in the public health arena for more than 20 years, serving on the faculty of Yale Medical School

and as director of two major mental health facilities. Ms. Wellington is also the author of *Be Your Own Mentor*, published by Random House in February 2001.

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