

COACHING GUIDE MODULE 6

LESSON 1: BEHAVIORS THAT HOLD YOU BACK

This Module will introduce to you the skills and behaviors which often hold women back professionally. Although everyone faces career hurdles, the specific behaviors in this Module have been found to hold women back more often than they do men. I intend to help you change that dynamic for yourself so you can raise your own bar to where you next want it.

We, as women, cannot waste any time with any behaviors that might hold us back from being as successful as we want to be. We must become self-aware enough of our unconscious habits in order to make adjustments that prove to be more beneficial to ourselves and our careers. This takes admitting some hard truths and making commitment to yourself in terms of reaching for what you want.

Even after retaining and promoting top women to senior positions in many organizations, lack of women at the top remains a pervasive problem. In her book, *“How Women Rise”* Sally Helgesen says, “Women made remarkable progress accessing positions of power and authority in the 1970s and 1980s, but that progress slowed considerably in the 1990s and has stalled completely in this century.”

Today, in spite of the progress women have made, women are still profoundly underrepresented in truly high-powered roles in many workplaces. The good news is that women are putting themselves out there more and taking on bigger roles and companies are more focused on creating opportunities for women to take on bigger leadership roles. The bad news is more women are burning out and leaving the workforce due to a lack of opportunities for advancement, especially if they hold middle management roles. As a result of the pandemic beginning in 2020, more women have re-evaluated their professional lives and left organizations in droves as they did not feel valued. Diversity and inclusion efforts are often ineffective and not supported throughout many organizations in spite of the rhetoric and allies are not taking widespread visible or effective “allyship” actions. Women know they are capable. Enlightened men know women are good for business. According to the research organization Catalyst, studies show that companies with more women serving as senior executives, as well as corporations with women serving on their board of directors perform better and have higher sales and returns on investment. The data supports having more women in leadership roles as valuable because organizations thrive more. Even so, the old boy network prevails in many places and we, as women, have to decide if we want to play the corporate game given the realities of the current workplace.

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For me personally, when my female boss told me she didn't think I could be a serious career woman and a mother at the same time (seriously, aren't women supposed to support each other and btw, isn't this illegal?), I decided staying to work for her was a career limiting move; so, I stepped out of that corporate game and built my own business. I have been happy with my choice but I have still needed to rigorously continue to grow myself and learn strategies to build my personal brand and unleash my potential so I would not to hold myself back. It has not been easy work. I've learned a lot and I am happy to share with you what I've learned in this Module so you can avoid falling into the same or other common limiting behaviors.

In this Module I review the top behaviors and obstacles I have found important to either stop or start doing in order to grow my own personal brand, my power and build my career. I hope these will be informative for you as well as they are common among women in general. Although, we know and often experience limiting factors outside of our sphere of influence and control that might be holding us back professionally, the behaviors in this module are within our control and with attention we can elevate our value and confidence. Mastering these behaviors daily will make each of us a force in which to be recognized and appreciated.

EXERCISE 1: SHOWCASE YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS – BEHAVIOR #1

Many women have been taught it is distasteful to pat themselves on the back publicly and think others interpret this behavior as bragging or showing off. The reality is if you don't verbally showcase your strengths and achievements, they may often be overlooked.

Showcasing is not the same as showboating or bragging. Showcasing is instead shining the light on what you have accomplished which is important because it demonstrates self-advocacy and owning your power. Men who are comfortable with being self-assured and regularly point to their achievements, have a step up over most women who either want to share the credit for their accomplishments or wait to be acknowledged.

If you keep giving it your all and getting good results, someone will eventually notice and promote you, right? Not necessarily. Many women believe that if they do good work, others will notice or that their solid performance is the most important factor in moving up the ladder. In reality, people are too busy doing their own work to notice the details of your accomplishments on top of theirs. It's not that they don't notice *anything* you do but they don't necessarily notice the things you want them to notice or think most important. We have to tell them. Showcase.

I have found it is important to point out our achievements and accept the recognition rather than redirecting it to others erroneously believing it makes you more of a team player.

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Who told you, "I didn't do it alone; the team really should get the credit" kind of comment was the best way to be viewed as a team player? Men rarely redirect but instead take credit for their results. It's easy for us to say a simple, "Thank you" when being acknowledged without deflecting. This bad habit is so ingrained in me that even when a CEO told me after I conducted an Executive Leadership Retreat just last week, "I have seen many facilitators over the years, but you're the best I've ever had the pleasure of working with." Instead of just saying, "Thank you; I appreciate that", I went into this long explanation of how I had worked with a colleague the prior week who was really the best I'd ever seen and I'm still working on developing my skills. What the heck was I thinking? A better answer to showcase my achievements might have been, "Thank you; I appreciate your comment. I have facilitated Executive Leadership Retreats now for over 20 years and it's a skill I am committed to delivering with excellence."

It is not bragging to accept the compliment or to showcase what you are good at before the other person even says anything. Show them, tell them, what you want them to notice about you and your skills set. There is plenty of time to acknowledge your team who helped you deliver later. Get comfortable accepting the credit.

If something you achieved has been overlooked, make sure you let your key stakeholders know (showcasing) and state your role in making it happen. One way I suggest my coaching clients do this easily is in preparation for their 1:1 meetings with their manager. I have them start off the meeting by listing the important things they have accomplished in the last month (showcasing). This way showcasing becomes more matter of fact and less challenging if you're hesitant to toot your own horn. Being reluctant to own and showcase your strengths and accomplishments will work against your career and hold you back, so go for it and start to practice showcasing your contributions.

EXERCISE 1: Identify something you have accomplished recently that you really want your manager or key stakeholders to know you had a pivotal role in making happen. Take a few minutes to complete this template with your answers in your journal.

Next, list the people you want to tell and the reason you want them to know about it. This will help you clarify who to include on your showcasing list. Finally, write down what you want to say specifically and be strategic about how you articulate your win.

Key Work Accomplishment	Key Stakeholder Name	Reason It's Important They Know*

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Your reason(s) behind why it's important they should know about this key work accomplishment includes your contribution, impact on the business, and results it/you accomplished. Learning to showcase yourself and your work is a practice that gets easier over time the more you do it. Many of us have been conditioned to believe it is better to be modest than to self-promote. I think if we showcase well, there is more to be gained than lost. I have learned if I don't direct the perceptions others have of me, I might be turning over the power of my reputation and brand to others without my careful guidance. Who knows more about what I want than me? No one.

STOP: It is important to do this exercise before going on to the next Lesson and Coaching Guide.

This exercise will help you develop a stronger showcasing muscle, which is critical for advancement as well as helping us to reduce the negative self-talk that we are sometimes or often undervalued. Maybe we just forgot to tell them where to notice.

JOURNAL AND REFLECTIONS

Journal your answers to the questions below. Journaling is more about writing stream of consciousness versus getting it right or making it sound pretty. Journaling is a process that unearths curiosity and wonder within us. After completing the exercise in this Lesson,

What top 3 observations do you have?

What patterns, if any, do you notice?

What specific things resonated most or seem right on target for you? And why?

What resonated least or seems less relevant for you? And why?

What are your biggest ahas or take-aways?

What did you learn about yourself that delighted you most?

What are 1-2 next steps you will take with this information you now have?

FOLLOW UP

Want more help understanding what this all means and how it relates to where you are or where you're going, reach out to me at Wendy Capland, wcapland@visionquestconsulting.com to schedule a one hour 1:1 Coaching Session. Investment-\$500.