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How Women Leaders Can Define Their Own Metric For Success

Research shows that women, much more than men, must have proven accomplishments before their talent is recognized.



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You can make great strides in your career by understanding the advantages of exceptional performance, and how to make that performance count. Performance is the degree to which you do your job well. Your performance is measured by your results, using whatever outcomes matter most in your organization and your role in the organization.

Leaders strive to have meaningful results. They want to know their efforts will make a positive impact on their careers, whether that means building their reputation, getting new opportunities, or being rewarded for their good work. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee. Corporate life is more complex than that.

Many company leaders believe that their performance will count for everything; however, in complicated and changing organizations, it doesn't. When it comes time for career advancement, you cannot always control what happens to you or believe that your performance will count for everything. But, you can take steps to ensure that good things do happen and allow your performance to be the foundation to that success.

Performance becomes a dilemma for women when it doesn't seem to count the way it should--you do your best, get great feedback, and nothing happens. Research shows that women, much more than men, must have proven accomplishments before their talent is recognized.

The perfect performance environment would be a true meritocracy--a system in which people chosen to advance were selected on the basis of their ability. Performance is certainly not the metric from which people are evaluated, but it is the most important. Performance is a clear indicator of success and understanding when to deliver peak performance and showcasing it appropriately cornerstones a place for a successful career.

Leaders can lose sight of this when they forget to prioritize and advocate for their own good performance for several reasons. For instance, performance measures may not be clear in your organization, or maybe you're the one who is not entirely clear on those measures. Clarifying those priorities can make identifying your performance more obvious and directed. You can also become focused on the wrong thing--the next job, office politics, or the fire drill of the moment, instead of your results. In addition, you can neglect to track changes in your performance measures overtime. Your performance measure changes as your jobs change throughout your career. Be sure you are staying current.

A final, and potential disastrous mistake is forgetting to identify, communicate, and improve your results. You don't have to overdo it, but you do have to own your performance. No one else will do it for you.

You secure your performance by getting clear on the metrics that matter in your role--tracking the changes in those measures as your career progresses--and continuing to track your results.

By doing this, you can reap the benefits of a job well done. Typical benefits of good performance are pretty straightforward: salary, benefits and bonuses. Beyond that, additional and less concrete rewards become available such as confidence, marketability, promotability, career choice, and fulfillment.

If you show yourself to be a talented leader--and a future leader--of your company, you can start gathering the experiences now that you will need to succeed in the future. Then you won't just be promotable, you will be prepared.

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