



## TEN THINGS TO A MORE POWERFUL YOU

By  
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**A**s I prepared to celebrate this *Power of Women* issue, I wondered what I would go back and tell my younger self if I could. Although there are loads of things I would share, there are 10 items that would be at the top of the list.

### 10 Everyone else is making it up as they go too.

Don't be intimidated by those who look like they wrote the book (even if they wrote a book). The truth is everyone in the room is as insecure as you are. Embrace the fear and speak up. Ask the questions. Support or push back on the idea. Don't wait for a consensus and then pile on. Everyone has stuff they don't know, that's why there are teams.

### 9 If you have to think about whether or not it's okay, it's not.

Almost as soon as you gain any authority, power, influence, etc., someone will want you to compromise it. I have received some interesting offers over the course of my career. Some illegal, many wildly unethical, but the little ones are the most dangerous. Often the reason sounds plausible. My test was if I would be willing to tell my dad what I was doing. He is the 'true north' on my moral compass and if it wouldn't pass his test, it didn't pass mine. You're amazing; don't sell yourself short.

**8** When it comes to salary and title, never, EVER be anyone's best deal. Studies show that women put up with this nonsense far more often than men. Don't fall for it. Not only will you be underpaid for what you are doing now, it will be doubly difficult to make it up later. Almost all human resource departments have parameters around raises, even with promotions. If they come to you with the "We want to try you out in this position..." and you get talked into it, be sure you understand that if you are successful (which should be defined and measurable by the way), you know what the pay will be AND when it will be reviewed and take place. If they can't give you that, it's time to move on which leads me to...

**7** You always have choices. You get to make all the decisions about your life and career. You may not always like your options; you may have to sacrifice something for a higher priority, but you decide. You can choose to put a plan into practice that will help you make better choices. Oh, and doing nothing? That is a choice you make.

**6** People aren't thinking about you nearly as much as you think they are. That goes for pretty much everyone—family, friends, boss, colleagues or ex-whatever. It's just not happening. Put your effort into what you are doing, not what you think someone else might be thinking about what you are doing. People who become poisoned by perceived slights and mishaps never reach their power potential. If you can't change or control it, give it 15 minutes and move on to use your powers for good.

**5** Invest in your network. You've heard the adage that it's not what you know, it's who you know? In many ways, that is correct. Your best path to the most powerful you is to surround yourself with smart people who will help you "up your game." I'm not talking about a bazillion LinkedIn contacts that you couldn't pick out of a police lineup. I'm talking about people that you know well enough to stay in touch with. Don't be that person who only reaches out when they need something. Be the one that people genuinely want to help because you have been a help, or treated fairly or thanked—so simple and yet so overlooked. Nothing compares to a good network and like any investment that pays off, you have to pay attention to and nurture it.

**4** Stay Curious. The moment you don't need to continue your education, when you no longer need to learn new skills, that is when you have peaked and begun your downward slide. Nothing will increase your power like continuous improvement, learning and understanding. Seek to understand by staying curious about the people, company, city, country and globe around you.

**3** Write e-mail and social media as if the world is watching, because they are. Gone are the days when you could make a statement and expect anonymity. E-mail gets hacked and subpoenaed and everything in it is out there for the world to see. So, the next time you are tempted to dish on that vice president to someone you work with via text, e-mail, etc., think again! A former chief procurement officer of mine had a great line: "Say it like there is a '60 Minutes' microphone in your face. Write it like it's going to be done by a skywriter."

**2** Romance has no place in the office. I know, I know, it's a tough one. It's one of the best places to meet smart people that you have something in common with, but it almost ALWAYS ends badly. Not only does it compromise your influence when everyone can speculate on something other than your worth getting you that promotion, it is a disservice to all of the rest of us because we will be painted with the same brush. If it's really your soul mate, then one of you has to go someplace else. If it's not worth that...well, you get my drift.

**1** Know your priorities and review them often. Years ago when I was appointed to my first board of directors, I received some great advice. A colleague who had been there told me to write down all of the reasons I had agreed to take the position, because I might forget along the way. I took the advice and any time I had a tough vote that I was torn on, I took out those reasons and I knew what to do. It's easy to put our families and loved ones on a lower priority because they will understand, but at the end of the day, they are what matter. Don't neglect them for a company that frankly, will boot you out in a nanosecond if they need a headcount reduction to make numbers next quarter. Family first.

Take care of you and yours, and you will find yourself with the most valuable power of all—the power of self-confidence and accomplishment. 📌