

6 Tips For Getting Ahead in a Male-Dominated Industry

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I have a good news/bad news situation for you.

The good news: **Fortune** magazine cited [2017](#) as a record-breaking year for female Fortune 500 CEOs.

The bad news: we're talking about only 32 women on a list of 500.

Unfortunately, the Boys' Club is still alive and well. I've seen it throughout my career in tech, working for creative agencies and in innovation consulting. Women have always been outnumbered – and [it gets more extreme](#) the higher you climb.

That hasn't stopped me, though. If anything, it fuels my fire. I'm determined to make my mark and be a part of the change. Are you with me? If so, here are some tips for getting ahead in a male-dominated industry.

1 Find your voice, and let it be heard.

Being in a room full of people with strong opinions is intimidating for anyone. And if you're a member of an underrepresented group, that disparity is magnified exponentially. That's why it's imperative to find your voice. I'm not saying that you should be loud and aggressive. In fact, knowing your stuff and staying calm, cool, and collected is more powerful. My point is: do your homework, speak up, and be ready to stand your ground.

You want an example? I've been in this situation too many times to count: I share an idea in a meeting. It goes unnoticed for five minutes or more. Then, a male leader in the room speaks up and shares the same idea to great fanfare. That's where I speak up. It's not acceptable for your ideas to be passed over in this manner. Confidence is key.

2 Use your gut instinct to build a strong team.

Maybe you've heard this one before, but it's true: you're only as good as your team. That's why you need to develop a strategy for assembling a group that works well together, is capable of seeing the big picture, and can easily move toward shared objectives. I've personally found that women tend to have an edge over men when it comes to understanding human nature. Use this to your advantage as you grow your work "family."

This really became clear for me at Uber, where we were working in a hyper-growth environment. We also battled frequent organizational changes, ambitious goals, and high visibility. I quickly realized how critical it is to have a strong and diverse team. That's precisely what enabled us to be successful, despite many factors being completely out of our control.

3 Network with other awesome women.

You're on the fast track, but it's important to surround yourself with other like-minded women. Get to know them, support them, learn from them, and empower them. The more diverse the group, the better. They don't even need to be in the same industry as you. Having a network of women to consult with when you need advice on everything from career moves to balancing work and life is invaluable.

I've personally met some amazing mentors and role models through a Women in Management group, [XX+UX](#), and [The 3% Conference](#). Don't worry about finding the perfect group right away; [just get started](#). If you don't know where to begin, start with groups at your company, or search LinkedIn and Meetup.

4 Market yourself, and be your own advocate.

There's one thing that tends to hold women back when it comes to career trajectory (as compared to men): women sometimes underestimate their value. If you know your stuff, be bold and ensure that your successes are well-communicated. Market you. No one else is going to do it. This is especially important given that the cards are already stacked against you if you're in a male-dominated industry. [Ask for a raise](#) when you score a big win, and don't be afraid to negotiate on your behalf.

As a young designer, a big project I really wanted to work on was assigned to someone else. I raised my hand and asked to take a swing at it because I knew I'd make it a success. I could have waited and hoped to land it next time, but I'm glad I didn't. It was successful and was one of the more important moments in my career.

5 Get comfortable with discomfort.

This is a gender-neutral bit of career-related truth. The more senior you get, the bigger and stickier the problems become. However, since you're a member of the "fairer sex" (whatever that means), you'll also have to deal with sexism intentionally or obliviously hurled in your direction.

You may have to confront a manager about unfair pay. You might be invited to a meeting because they "want a woman in the room," only to be sidelined in the conversation. HR is your friend for some of these situations, but it's also helpful to prepare yourself for handling these scenarios on the fly. I found the book Crucial Conversations had great tips on keeping your cool in contentious situations.

6 Be excellent.

Because women are often underrepresented, we tend to be more easily overlooked. This is unacceptable in my book. If it means working twice as hard as someone else, always strive to be the rockstar. It takes hard work and constant hustle, but this is how to make your mark. It will be your best attribute in persevering through politics, organizational changes, and negative chatter. Above all else, amazing results will build your reputation and be the legacy you (and your teams) leave behind.

Now, I'm not saying that following my lead will change history overnight. This is simply what has worked for me in this male-dominated work culture. You'll put your own spin on things as your career evolves. In the meantime, keep fighting the good fight, and I'll save a seat for you at the boardroom table! Let's turn history on its head.

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