

# ACE WOMEN'S Network™ Michigan

*Mentoring Mondays*  
September 14, 2020

This week, our review will focus on Habit #3 from the book *“How Women Rise”* co-authored by Sally Helgensen, women’s leadership expert, and Marshall Goldsmith, renowned business coach and bestselling author.

## **Habit 3: Overvaluing Expertise**

The authors tell us that mastering every detail of our jobs in order to become an expert is a great strategy for keeping you in that job. However, if your goal is to move up in the organization, your expertise won’t get you there. Always seeking to go the extra mile in your job to gain acceptance and recognition will keep you on a treadmill. “Meanwhile, your male colleagues are taking a different route, trying to do the job well enough while focusing their time on building the relationships and visibility that will get them to the next level.” This does not negate the fact that skill and knowledge are required for success. “Top jobs always require managing and leading people who have expertise, not providing expertise yourself.”

Since women have earned their spot at the table by becoming experts at what they do, it’s only natural to believe that expertise is the key element to success. This mindset could lead you to thinking about only you and overlooking the big picture. See the excerpt below and begin to re-think your strategy.

“In *Necessary Dreams*, Anna Fels notes that feeling fulfilled at work requires two things: mastery and recognition. Mastery is the expertise part, the sheer enjoyment you feel when you do something you value really well. Mastery provides what psychologists call an intrinsic reward, meaning you take satisfaction from it. The effort and the reward are both internal. Recognition is an extrinsic reward because it comes from the outside: you need someone else to recognize you. It’s not surprising, then, that women tend to overvalue expertise, since women often have a rougher time being recognized for their achievements. . . . Mastery is the one source of satisfaction that you can control. It is a good thing, and can be deeply rewarding. But it’s insufficient if you want to move ahead.”

When Ashley’s boss told her that the internal recruiter was looking at her for a higher position in the company, she was surprised to hear him say, “He couldn’t afford to lose me.” Ashley says, “It’s amazing he didn’t think telling me this would be a problem. But even more amazing is that I saw nothing wrong with it. I actually felt flattered that he needed me so much. It was the validation I’d been looking for since joining the company.” This encounter stayed with her and

after seeing two less qualified colleagues get promotions, she realized her mastery mind-set approach to her current role was keeping her stuck.

Ashley further realized that she was telling her boss that she was content to remain where she was. She followed-up with an email to her boss that laid out all the reasons she was right for a new position. “Composing the email required her to think deep and hard about her strengths. Looking beneath the surface, I saw that my skill at managing relationships was actually my biggest asset. This was a big aha for me. It gave me confidence and a way to tell my new boss I was ready for even bigger things.”

As Sally was researching for an earlier book, *The Web of Inclusion*, she spent a half day with Ted Jenkins, the fourth executive hired with Intel, one of the tech giants of Silicon Valley. “In Ted’s view, those who thrive understand that there are four kinds of power in organizations.”

“The first kind of power is the **power of expertise** . . . reliant on human talent to create. Expertise is required for success . . . but cultivating expertise at the expense of other kinds of power will not position you as a leader.”

“The second kind of power is the **power of connections**, or the power of whom you know. Connections are usually built as you move around in the company, holding different jobs, finding allies – getting to know the people in your industry is important. Connections serve as a kind of currency you can use to get resources moving and assure your contributions get noticed. Your relationships comprise an even greater part of your value as you rise.”

“The third kind of power is the **power of personal authority** or charisma, which is rooted in the confidence you inspire in others. You rarely start your career with much personal authority; it builds as your reputation develops over time. Expertise and connections can help establish personal authority, but there’s always another element: a strong presence, a distinctive way of speaking and listening that inspires loyalty and trust.”

“The fourth kind of power is the **power of position**, or where you stand in the organization. Marshall likes to quote Peter Drucker, who famously observed that ‘the decision is always made by the person with the power to make the decision.’ In other words, the person who holds positional power gets to make the key decisions.”

“Ted Jenkins noted that organizations are most healthy when all four types of power are in balance. When positional power overrides all else, decisions tend to get made arbitrarily, with insufficient information and without much support.”

The take-away from this excerpt is: by placing less value on expertise and getting comfortable using other kinds of power, you may be able to move into senior management positions or harness the power required to rise.

If you are interested in securing your own copy of the book “*How Women Rise*” visit [www.hachettbooks.com](http://www.hachettbooks.com).

Coming next week, Habit #4 and how to break it.