

ACE WOMEN'S Network™ Michigan

Mentoring Mondays
September 21, 2020

Greetings everyone. As we continue our review of “*How Women Rise*” co-authored by Sally Helgensen and Marshall Goldsmith, our entry this week covers “Habit 4: Building Rather Than Leveraging Relationships.”

Habit 4: Building Rather Than Leveraging Relationships

When surveyed, senior leaders rank female employees very high in the areas of motivating and engaging others, building strong teams, negotiating win-win situations, empathic listening and building morale. These are all vital leadership skills. The authors ask the question: “*Why don't women benefit more from this strength?*” “Experience suggests an answer. Over the years, we've noticed that, while women are often stellar relationship builders, they tend to be less skilled at leveraging relationships . . . or noticeably reluctant to do so.”

Perhaps not true for all women. “They'll gladly spend time and energy getting to know people, offering them help, listening to their problems, giving advice, and drawing them close. But they shrink at the prospect of engaging them in a way that furthers their own ambitions.” Below are some frequent responses from women about the practice of leveraging:

- “I don't want others to think I'm using them.”
- “I want people to know I value them for themselves, not for what they can do for me.”
- “I don't like self-serving people and I don't want to be one.”
- “Political games are really not my thing.”

“These statements make clear the underlying belief that exercising leverage translates as not being a very nice person. This is problematic because leveraging relationships is key for achieving professional success. Most great careers are built not just on talent or hard work, but on the mutual exchange of benefits, something men are often more comfortable with than women.”

Let's look at the basics of leverage. It is a key career skill – a strategic way of operating that pays big rewards. “Even if you are uncomfortable or skeptical with the subject of leverage, you can benefit by understanding the basics of how it works. It differs from building relationships in four ways:

1. Leverage is always reciprocal, based on a quid pro quo – *“You help me and I’ll help you.”*
2. Leverage is used to achieve both tactical and strategic goals – *“You initiate leverage when you make a request.”* Example: *“I’m representing an artist whose prints are perfect for hotel lobbies. Do you know anyone in the hotel business who could introduce me to dealers who acquire work for their properties?”*
3. Leverage is highly intentional – *“You establish a leveraged relationship with a specific purpose in mind, which means you use different criteria than when you establish a friendship.”*
4. Leverage brings distinctive rewards – *“The rewards are extrinsic, which means they are measurable and concrete.”*

“In establishing leverage, your purpose is always front and center. This doesn’t mean you don’t respect or enjoy spending time with the other person. But the intrinsic rewards are a bonus instead of the point.”

Examine your thoughts on the value of using leverage in your relationships. Act on your strength and make better use of leverage as you seek to rise.

To secure a copy of *“How Women Rise,”* visit www.hachettbooks.com.