

WOMEN IN FM

7 Tips To Grow Your Career

By Naomi Millán,
Senior Editor, *Building Operating Management*

Sponsored by



How women can begin or advance their careers in Facility Management. Here is some expert advice, from finding the right fit to developing an assertive and confident attitude.



Give yourself credit.

One difference between men and women in leadership roles across industries that could make it difficult for a woman to advance is that women tend to give credit to the team, where they perhaps should be claiming it for themselves. When executive recruiters were polled to find out why women were not getting the top jobs, they said it was because the women did not come in and own the room, says Gail Ayers, CEO of CREW Network.

“Sometimes we’re our own worst enemy. We don’t step up and we’re often reluctant to say, ‘Yes, I lead that team. I’m the one that helped people step out and make contributions that really mattered. I’m the one that re-structured this problem.’ Instead women say, ‘We did a good job as a team,’” Ayers explains. “If you’re looking for a CEO candidate, you want to know that person has an impact and can make a difference.”

**“Sometimes
we’re our own
worst enemy.”**
~ Gail Ayers



Step up when you are 'mostly' qualified.

Again and again, this point is made by industry observers: Women screen themselves out of opportunities. An opportunity will arise and if a woman feels she does not have 100% of the criteria, she won't even apply. "It's not that they're not capable. It's that they won't even put their name in the hat," says Meredith Thatcher, president of Thatcher Workplace Consulting. Men on the other hand tend to apply if they are at least 60% qualified.

Positions where an individual might have 60% of the skills required but demonstrates potential to master the balance are crucial "stretch opportunities" cited time and again as the critical pivot points in many successful leader's careers. Women would do well to consider qualifications listed for a desired position as a framework, not a checklist.

Consider qualifications listed for a desired position as a framework, not a checklist.

3

Take charge.

Waiting around for permission is not the way to get ahead. “What I’m finding is that women who move forward take charge, as opposed to waiting for someone else to figure out the problem, or waiting for someone to give them permission,” says Mary Gauer, group manager in the health sciences center with the University of New Mexico’s planning, design, and construction department. “Waiting for permission is a mistake that a lot of people make.” Being a leader means making a decision with the best available information. Having the guts to take the step to move things forward is critical to anyone’s success, she says.

The other piece of this is not being intimidated by senior management, says Melissa Van Hagan, facilities manager at Oracle, and not being scared to take risks. “There isn’t an executive out there that hasn’t failed, that wasn’t a risk taker,” she says. As a result, executives respect people

who are willing to take risks. “If you believe something strongly enough, take that risk and stand up for it. It’s just like climbing a ladder. You may fall down but you’re going to pick yourself up and climb again. That’s one thing I tell women: Go out on a limb.”



“There isn’t an executive out there that hasn’t failed, that wasn’t a risk taker.”

~ Melissa Van Hagan

4

Expand your horizons.



“One of the things I advise people to do is to get as much experience as they can, and that doesn’t mean necessarily staying years and years with one company.”

- Lesley Groff

Men are often raised to try, fail and go again. Women are taught to be ‘perfect’, do what they are good at. Moving out of your comfort zone will allow you to risk, fail, regroup and repeat. That’s the real road to success. In the same way, loyalty is a great quality, but holding a position for too long can limit growth opportunities. So seek new opportunities to stretch and grow your abilities.

“One of the things I advise people to do is to get as much experience as they can, and that doesn’t mean necessarily staying years and years with one company,” says Lesley Groff, director of facility solutions at Paul Davis Restoration & Remodeling. “They need to fit a very wide spectrum of everything from customer service to strategic planning.”

Managers from any line of business can succeed in facility management. “Experience in finance is especially desirable these days, for example. Build your multi-stage experience and know when you are ready for growth,” Groff says. Facility managers are encouraged to find new opportunities or seek companies who offer multiple vertical markets, lines of business and disciplines to expand your skill sets.

5

Earn credentials.

Do what you can for your own professional development so you can be seen as management potential, says Alana Dunoff, consultant, AFD Facility Planning, and associate adjunct faculty at Temple University. She also teaches IFMA's FMP credential, one of several offered by the industry.

"Getting credentials, getting those letters after your name, shows the outside world that you are competent in your knowledge," says Dunoff. The credential serves several purposes. "First, it's a differentiator in the market and organization. It also is an external mark to show that someone is serious about her career, and it validates her proficiency in facilities," she says. "But it also translates into personal confidence."



"Getting those letters after your name, shows the outside world that you are competent in your knowledge."

~ Alana Dunoff



Demand your worth.

Women often rise to the level of middle management and then find themselves stymied. They're good at their jobs, and senior management is very happy to keep them there, says Lori Kilberg, president of CREW Network and partner at Hartman Simons & Wood. Why?

"When we ask why these women aren't being promoted, the response is, they don't ask," says Kilberg. "They don't ask for the salary increases. They don't ask for the promotions because they feel that their merits should be observed, understood, and rewarded. We don't want to stick our hand up and say me, me, me."

"We don't want to stick our hand up and say me, me, me."

~ Lori Kilberg



Find the right fit.



“I soon learned that it doesn’t matter if you’re a man or a woman. You make your own choices about how your career progresses.”

~ Deborah Roberts

Being able to develop a strong career hinges on finding the right fit – finding an organization that aligns with your career goals and interests. Deborah Roberts, Senior Vice President of Facilities for Sodexo Health Care, says that for much of her career, she was one of very few women on leadership teams, managing the technical side of various businesses. “For many companies around the globe, the majority of employees in technical careers are men,” explains Roberts. “But Sodexo lives the diversity. That makes it a very compelling company to me.”

“It is invigorating to be in an environment where people from diverse backgrounds are in leadership positions. There is business strength in diversity of thought,” says Roberts. “As teams we also need to align well with our very diverse client base. Many former colleagues, true leaders with high levels of business integrity, have chosen to work here at Sodexo.”

Seek companies that encourage you to expand and develop your career, companies who are constantly evolving to meet and exceed their customers’ needs, and who will continue to offer new challenges. “Looking back, I always loved trying new areas of business,” says Roberts. “In business, much of my success and career advancement hinged on my willingness to try new geographies, including Asia, to try new approaches and develop strategies. It is especially rewarding to lead teams in business ventures

that are new to my core expertise. There is always a mentor out there somewhere who can help you get comfortable taking a big career risk. I soon learned that it doesn't matter if you're a man or a woman. You make your own choices about how your career progresses." ■



Naomi Millán is Senior Editor with *Building Operating Management*. She has been a writer and editor for *Building Operating Management* since 2008. Prior to that, she was a facilities coordinator with Trammell Crow and CBRE.

BONUS TIP

Get Specific

In an effort to be proactive in her career, a woman will approach her boss and ask what she should be doing to get to the next level. Often the reply is: Just keep doing what you're doing.

This is a common breakdown in communication, says Joanne Cleaver, president of Wilson-Taylor Associates, a consulting firm focused on advancing women in business. "The supervisor thinks he's saying, 'We have our eye on you for promotion so just sit tight,' but what she hears is, 'We have nothing more for you but what you're doing right now,'" Cleaver says. This leads to frustration and often precipitates the candidate leaving for perceived greener pastures—to the utter confusion of management.

"You need to change the script and say, 'What one or two experiences or skills do I explicitly need to qualify for XYZ job, which I believe to be the next logical step for my career?' So get specific," says Cleaver.

The bosses should also respond by being more specific: Oh, we have you in mind for XYZ rotation. It won't be coming up for six months, but just know we have a Post-it note on you for that opportunity. Meanwhile, it would be great if you could step up a bit on your industry volunteer experience to complement your internal leadership experience with something that's more outward facing.

"Now you've got a meaningful conversation," says Cleaver.

~ Naomi Millán

Your future so sodexo

*"There's a lot of opportunity at Sodexo.
I was nervous about coming to work in
a very large scale job as a woman in
construction but this has been a great
environment and very welcoming.
There's a lot of expectations in this job,
but if you do your job you're rewarded."*

Christy Rager
Facilities Manager
Corporate Services



www.SodexoFacilitiesJobs.com

sodexo
QUALITY OF LIFE SERVICES

Sodexo is an EEO/AA/Minority/Female/Disability/Veteran employer.