



SMARTER THAN THE AVERAGE GUIDE

# HBR Guide for

FEATURING

**Women, Find  
Your Voice**

by Kathryn Heath,  
Jill Flynn, and  
Mary Davis Holt

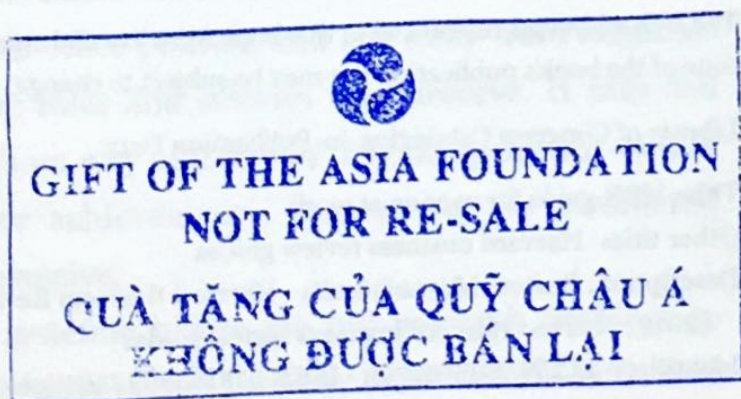
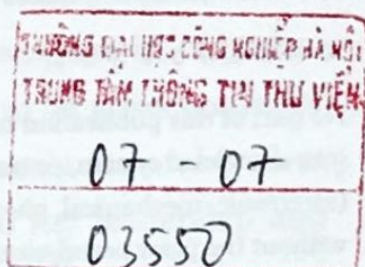
## Women at Work

**Overcome bias**  
**Project confidence**  
**Negotiate for more**



**Harvard  
Business  
Review  
Press**

# HBR Guide for **Women at Work**



HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW PRESS

Boston, Massachusetts



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Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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The web addresses referenced in this book were live and correct at the time of the book's publication but may be subject to change.

### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Title: HBR guide for women at work

Other titles: Harvard business review guides.

Description: Boston, Massachusetts : Harvard Business Review Press, [2019] | Series: Harvard business review guides

Identifiers: LCCN 2018017709 | ISBN 9781633693364 (pbk : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Women executives. | Women white collar workers. | Career development

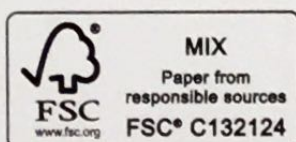
Classification: LCC HD6054.3 .H27 2018 | DDC 650.1082—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018017709>

ISBN: 9781633693364

eISBN: 9781633693371

The paper used in this publication meets the requirements of the American National Standard for Permanence of Paper for Publications and Documents in Libraries and Archives Z39.48-1992.



## What You'll Learn

Unconscious gender biases run rampant in organizations today. Women are less likely to be given credit for their work, tend to command lower salaries, and are less likely to be promoted, especially to key leadership and C-suite positions, than their male colleagues. Because of gender biases inherent in our culture, women often struggle to make their voices heard, avoid getting involved with office politics, and shy away from negotiating for the roles and salaries they deserve. It may feel like there's no way out: When they do speak out or talk about their achievements, women may be considered overly aggressive.

While systemic biases are not women's problem to solve, the reality is that in many cases women must still navigate around them to reach their career goals. If you are a woman and these challenges sound familiar to you, there are ways to develop how you communicate, present yourself, and connect with others so that you can break past these biases and become more effective in the workplace and in more control of your career.



## What You'll Learn

In this book, women will learn to:

- Understand the biases preventing their advancement in the workplace—and the self-defeating behaviors that those biases can trigger
- Come across as more confident by using more definitive, muscular language
- Promote their expertise and experience through a robust personal brand
- Share strong opinions without being perceived as pushy or emotional
- Turn “office housework” requests into real opportunities for growth
- Build a network of support, including relationships with mentors and sponsors
- Display leadership potential through vision and decisiveness
- Strike the right balance between an outwardly imposed “professional” appearance and one that is authentic—especially for women of color
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# Introduction

You sit down in a meeting and begin to speak, describing an innovative new product you'd like to release in the next year. Within a few moments, you're interrupted by a male coworker, and despite your best efforts, you can't get back into the conversation. Five minutes later another male colleague reiterates the need for the new product, and the table nods in acknowledgment, thanking him for his idea.

Frustrated, you walk out of the meeting, feeling more invisible than ever. A moment later, your boss stops at your desk: "The prep work you did for the meeting was really helpful, but next time you present, you should have more confidence. You never got your point across."

Sound familiar? This scenario and others like it are all too common for many women at work, where their ideas aren't heard, feedback is vague, and the road to advancement is long and difficult. Across organizations, women command lower salaries, are less likely to get promoted,



and are underrepresented in key leadership positions, including the C-suite.

Some argue that women should lean in or step up, that they lack ambition or confidence. But placing the burden of work to be done on women is unfair and strategically wrong-headed. Most of what holds women back are the unconscious biases against them that are difficult to work around or eliminate. Organizations develop programs and set goals to ensure that women are fairly treated, but time and again, women find themselves facing the same challenges—and watching the men they work with succeed while they are left behind. While much still needs to change with how men, managers, and leaders are responding to and working with their female colleagues and employees, the reality is that these biases exist, and unfair or not, women will be forced to grapple with them for years to come.

But that's not to say women are helpless to these biases—or that they can't improve their situation. This guide aims to help you, as a woman, navigate these obstacles more successfully. It provides the advice and tools you need to more effectively promote your work and ideas, communicate with others, and handle difficult situations that are particular to a woman's experience of the workplace, so that you can be credited for your accomplishments, get more done in your organization, and advance to the level you want. While this book is targeted at women specifically, the final section also includes tips and advice for all leaders and managers—male and female—so they can learn how to change their organizations, work with women more fairly and effec-