

7 essential tips for women to succeed in finance



BARBARA STEWART
Special to Postmedia Network

Here are the seven essential tips for women to succeed in finance:

1 – Make yourself visible

Don't just attend events outside your workplace; it is even more important to be seen inside your own organization. Think of it as marketing yourself to an internal audience: many of us don't 'show up on the radar screens' of the decision-makers in our own companies. Olga Jordao, Global Relationship Executive at State Street counsels women to learn how to talk about themselves, their accomplishments, and what they would like to do next.

Olga said "I started my new position in January and I have already let my manager know that I would like to get to the next level, that I would like to have a mentor and that I need him to help me gain exposure to various workgroups."

2 – Network in a targeted way

What good are 500 LinkedIn connections if you can't even remember who they are? It is great to get out of your office but you need to understand how to choose the best places to meet the people that can actually help you in your career. Quality is much more important than quantity when it comes to business contacts. Celine Fernandez, VP Head of Sales at S&P Capital IQ asks herself "if I connect with this person, what can I expect to learn from her and in turn, how can I support her?"

3 – Know how to listen

A panellist named Barbara Stewart said this. Getting in front of people is a big part of setting yourself up for success but it won't be effective unless you are also able to listen. I love listening to my clients talk about their businesses and their families. If

you are a genuine listener, people will trust and confide in you. This allows you to do a fantastic job for them because you will uncover the most relevant information and you become their true advisor.

4 – Go outside your comfort zone!

What good is taking a new job if you already know how to do it? According to Joanna Thompson de Colonges, President of the Paris branch of 100 Women in Hedge Funds, "we learn by doing and the more we learn the more we progress! Taking on challenges allows us to build confidence in our own abilities."

5 – Find your own mentor

The term 'mentor' can be

intimidating. Who should you choose? How do you ask them? There are many programs inside companies but you don't have to make this a formal relationship. As Olga Jordao suggested, "there might be someone who you call up every now and then." Celine Fernandez added "even an informal mentor can objectively help you develop your network, become more visible and get a better understanding of your own skill-set."

6 – Be persistent but also be patient

Although it is great to be eager, it is also a good idea to have some patience. As

Celine Fernandez explains "A career is a long-term adventure. You need to learn to deal with each crisis or opportunity without becoming anxious. You never know how each experience will end up helping you over time so try and stay positive and enthusiastic even during times of uncertainty. A certain amount of 'zen' spirit helps in every stage along the way.

7 – It is okay to be a geek!

The last point was from me again: I have always loved reading and studying so it isn't difficult for me to stay on top of what is happening in the world of finance.

The CFA program was a perfect start to a career that demands continuous improvement and learning. My research about women and finance has been a great way to draw on all of the skills I have developed in my career. Being a geek can really pay off!

