

## Influencing and Negotiating

It's important to operate in a style you're comfortable with but paying attention to some of the following tips will also help ensure that you are able to influence and negotiate as effectively as possible.

### Influence

See influencing as a crucial part of your job. Avoid the tendency to be so focused on doing the day-to-day work that you fail to pay sufficient attention to the importance of building relationships, gaining visibility and influencing decision makers.

Even if your own business is relatively small, a good understanding of how larger businesses or official departments operate can be very helpful. Knowing the unwritten as well as the written rules, where the power of influence and decision-making really lie in an organisation, enables you to target your efforts and to be more effective.

It is important to be conscious of the result you are looking for from any business interaction. Only then can you know who and what to influence. Taking time to plan and think through the best approach will always pay dividends.

### Know how to behave assertively

Being assertive is a critical skill. To be successful, you need to be able to speak up for what you need or want and to be able to say "no". Aiming to achieve a win/win outcome in which both parties feel respected and understood can be a challenge for women who have picked up childhood messages about the need to "be nice" and spare others feelings.

This traditional socialisation also means that what is acceptable for a man and for a woman in terms of assertive behaviour, can be perceived very differently. As a result, there is a narrow 'range' of acceptable assertive behaviour for women.

### Negotiate with confidence

Women in business need to be proficient negotiators and the following framework is a useful tool to help increase your success in this area:

- **Prepare** – *No matter how skilful you are, thorough preparation is vital. Be well informed and make sure you have accurate up to date information at your fingertips. Be clear about your objectives, both strategically and tactically. Analyse the strengths and weaknesses of your position and those of the other party. Look for areas of common ground and potential compromise. Decide the positions you are willing to compromise on and also the "must haves".*
- **Discuss** – *The first part of the discussion should create a climate for cooperation. Starting off on the right foot is essential. Listen carefully to the other's position and show respect. The other party needs to feel that his/her perspective and position are valued and showing respect will build trust.*
- **Bargain** – *Be prepared to make proposals to help move the negotiation along. Be flex-*

ible and willing to review your position in the light of new information. Remember to follow the “If you...then I’ll...” process to ensure that any flexibility is reciprocated. Ensure that any concessions you make are cost effective/easy for you but valuable to the other person. Aim never to give away something for nothing.

- **Reach a clear agreement.** Be realistic and look to achieve a win/win. Even if you achieve your maximum outcome from the negotiation, make sure you do so in such a way as to preserve the relationship. Be sure any agreement reached is clear and transparent with no room for ambiguity or misunderstanding after the event. Summarise the agreement verbally and follow up on any interaction with written confirmation.