

ACHIEVING HOLISTIC SUCCESS



24 TIPS FOR WOMEN
TO INSPIRE, LEAD,
AND THRIVE IN
EVERY AREA OF LIFE

SUCCESS[®]



Success today doesn't look like it once did—and that's a good thing.

Modern achievement isn't just about rising to the top. It's about rising whole. The women redefining what it means to lead, grow and influence are building careers and lives that honor their values, amplify other voices and create meaningful change across industries and communities.

This guide is a celebration of that power. Inside, you'll find **24 actionable insights to elevate your leadership, connect with purpose, foster inclusive environments and protect your well-being.** These aren't lofty ideals—they're real-world strategies from women who are walking the walk.

As a values-driven individual, you're not just advancing your own path—you're **helping shape a stronger, more inclusive future for everyone.**

Now, let's break holistic success into its essential parts. Each of the following sections explores a key area—from workplace culture to personal boundaries—and offers specific ways you can lead with intention, clarity and care.

04

Women Supporting Women

How women can champion each other at work

06

Thrive in Your Career

How to be a voice in any industry

08

Fostering Inclusivity

5 things you can do to be a better ally

10

Making Connections

How to make the most of networking online

12

Protecting Mental Health

6 ways employees and employers can boost well-being in the office

WHAT'S INSIDE?

WOMEN SUPPORTING WOMEN

How women can champion each other at work

We've all heard the narrative about senior women who don't support the women below them. (Of course, what we hear less about are the battles those senior women fought and the toll those battles have taken.) **We know about the "mansplainers," the low-key harassers and the "underminers" young women face at work.**

Some women might object to the premise of this article. They might say they identify as an individual or their employer doesn't see gender. They might say they've never experienced sexism. Well, that's only true until it isn't.

More than having a system in place for when things go bad—like "filing with HR and hiring a lawyer"—bad—women's networks also know things, such as how best to navigate your workplace as a woman. For example, how have people at your office dealt with maternity leave? Are there clients who will have trouble hearing a woman's expertise when she pitches an idea? What are the best ways to manage these issues, among others?

Happily, today's professional women are part of a significant demographic group, significant enough that a body of advice exists to help them navigate the sometimes-unfriendly world of office politics. And while some of that advice differs based on the career level of the individual—how to negotiate as a woman, how to dress, etc.—**if women really wish to change workplace culture, they need to support each other along the way, no matter their position.**

So, what's an ambitious young woman who wants to support her peers to do?

Network up, down and sideways

It can be easy to focus networking efforts on those in positions above you. After all, aren't these the people who can provide you with the most tools and resources? However, there are two big problems



with this. First, many of the top positions in the workplace are still held by men. While it's important to be collegial and friendly with the men in your office, it's just as important to start developing a network of other women.

Second, if we are moving toward a more progressive world, the women at and below your level in the workplace will be the future of your organization someday. It is in your own best interest for them to flourish and to develop camaraderie with them. **If women are doing well in general, it boosts the likelihood of you doing well.** You could even make your commitment to supporting other women's careers explicit, forming what author Jessica Bennett calls a "Feminist Fight Club." It's a group of women that gathers to talk strategies for career advancement and fighting workplace sexism.

Draw attention to the domestic work of the office

Who gets coffee and orders sandwiches? Which employee organizes birthday cards and cakes? Who gathers money for gifts? These tasks are all labor. But it's labor that's not likely to earn a bonus or a promotion for the person undertaking it. As Harvard Business Review describes them, these tasks constitute "office housework," and women tend to volunteer more for these tasks and receive more pressure to do so. The solution to the problem? **Take the volunteering out of it and make it a matter of turn-taking.** If you can implement a system for assigning these tasks on a rotating basis, generations of women that follow will be forever grateful.

Avoid the gossip trap

Humans love gossip. It's part of how we bond—creating an inside group that's momentarily pitted against an outsider. If you are a woman in a predominantly male office, it can feel like a good idea to engage in this kind of gossip about other women with the men in the office. It can make you feel like you are "one of the guys."

And while it's true that women are capable of being jerks, be on the lookout for coded language like "difficult," "drama queen," "emotional," "demanding," etc., that might suggest something else is going on. **If men you work with keep dragging a senior woman, for example, you might worry about what**

that means about their prejudice against women in leadership roles. Perhaps you should seek out her friendship instead.

Signal boost each other's contributions

Sit in on workplace meetings long enough, and you'll see variations on a pervasive phenomenon unfold. A woman will start explaining something, and a man will start talking over her before she's finished. Or, more insidiously, she will make a point or proposal, it will be glossed over, and 10 minutes later, a man will make the same proposal—which is then taken up. This creates frustration, to be sure, but also the more damaging tendency for men to get credit for women's work.

Thankfully, we have a model for combatting this. In 2016, *The Washington Post* reported on a strategy used by female staffers during the Obama administration. Even in the White House, the culture of meetings remained unfriendly to women. Women responded by developing **a strategy to support other women:** "When a woman made a key point, other women would repeat it, giving credit to its author. This forced the men in the room to recognize the contribution—and denied them the chance to claim the idea as their own."

Build each other up

As your career develops, you'll have the opportunity to help build up the women coming up behind you. Unfortunately, people can still have implicit biases against members of their own identity group. As you move into rooms where decisions are made, **be careful of selecting only people who "look the part."** You might even consider making it part of your practice to seek out new women in your firm to take to lunch on a weekly basis. That way, their names and projects are more top of mind when it comes time to put people forward for special opportunities or awards.

Whether for good or ill, cultures tend to replicate themselves. Changing the culture with and for the women around you can make your workplace one where women thrive rather than just survive.

Supporting others is one part of the equation. The other is owning your voice and showing up with conviction. The next section explores how to do just that—especially when you're one of the few women in the room.

THRIVE IN YOUR CAREER

How to be a voice in any industry

Many women know what it's like to balance family, financial inequality and a demanding career, as well as navigate missing rungs in the corporate ladder. **Imagine what would happen if more women supported one another** in their roles and stepped into their voices. We would be a force to reckon with.

Now, let's discuss why hiring women is important in the first place. According to the 2023 Women in the Workplace report published by McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.org, **very few corporate leadership positions are held by women—less than 30% for white women and less than 15% for women of color.** This holds true across the leadership ladder, from managerial (27% white women and 13% women of color) and senior managerial (27% and 9%) to vice presidential (26% and 7%), senior vice presidential (21% and 7%) and C-suite (22% and 6%) roles. And the broken rung? Well, that lies right between the entry-level and managerial positions where men significantly outnumber women.

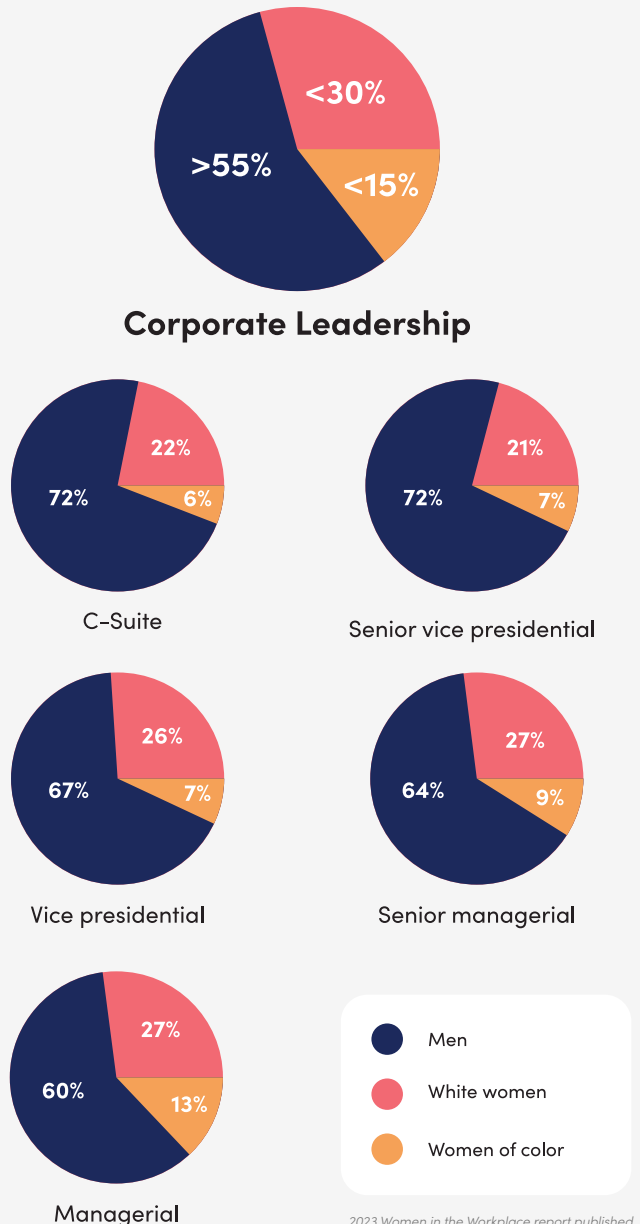
Gender diversity offers many business benefits. **In every industry, women bring a unique point of view from their life experiences. They tell different stories and have different lived experiences to draw from.** However, many women experience the world of work through the lens of being left out. So what can these women do not only to protect themselves and their jobs but also to be a voice in their industries?

In male-dominated spaces or industries with hidden barriers, it's essential to be proactive, collaborative and bold.

Find a mentor and a mentee

Find a woman you can lift up. Don't compete. Rather, challenge yourself to help a woman-owned startup, a co-worker or someone in business who could use your advice and mentorship. According to McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.org's 2023 Women in the Workplace report, "only 40% of women say their manager helps them manage their workload, and only 44% say their manager regularly shows interest in their career."

Find someone in your company to support. Be proud of them when they succeed and help them celebrate even the smallest milestones. Be the change in their life by noticing them and helping them grow.



2023 Women in the Workplace report published by McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.org

Just as it is beneficial to help other women grow and thrive at work, find someone in your industry to help you grow. Look to co-workers who are a little ahead of you in their careers or women you know who have paved paths for others in their industries. Ask them out for coffee, and see if they would be willing to talk with you regularly about their experiences and help guide you through your own.

Create your own opportunities

Opportunities in competitive industries aren't always offered—they're often built from the ground up. When women don't see roles that reflect their ambitions, many **create their own lanes**. And in doing so, they often build something better—not just for themselves but also for those who follow. A designer might launch a freelance studio to serve mission-driven brands. A tech professional might build a startup to solve a problem their previous company ignored. A corporate leader might leave to found a consultancy that prioritizes flexibility and inclusion.

These paths aren't without risk. Starting something new often involves financial pressure, long hours and a steep learning curve. But **with clarity of vision and the courage to act, it's possible to create the kind of role, company or culture you've always wanted to be part of.**

Not everyone can quit their job or fund a startup right away—and that's OK. Creating your own opportunity might begin with starting a passion project after hours, pitching a new initiative at work or building a personal brand online. Small moves compound over time, often leading to surprising, significant shifts.

Take the initiative to get to know all your colleagues

While women in male-dominated industries may brush off small microaggressions, like not being invited somewhere with the men as “guy time,” it all adds up. Instead, create the party! Invite your co-workers to a meeting to learn more about them. **Take time to get to know all your colleagues and allow them to get to know you.** Proactively reach out to your co-workers to begin building a sense of community.

Career growth isn't just about personal advancement—it's about the environments we shape along the way. **Inclusive leadership isn't a buzzword; it's a daily practice.** The next section explores how to deepen that commitment and become a stronger ally in any professional setting and create real change.



FOSTERING INCLUSIVITY

5 things you can do to be a better ally

Increasingly, leaders in industries where diversity has long lagged behind are holding up inclusion and equity as essential in a thriving workplace.

Author Melinda Epler, CEO of Empovia (formerly Change Catalyst), is one of the people leading the charge.

As a diversity and inclusion expert, Epler has given talks for such organizations as Google, McKinsey and World Bank. She also hosted the **popular podcast *Leading With Empathy & Allyship***.

In her book [*How to Be an Ally: Actions You Can Take for a Stronger, Happier Workplace*](#), Epler details the actionable steps anyone can take to foster empathy and understanding in any organization.

Because **real leadership means making room at the table**—and pulling up extra chairs—here are five key takeaways you can use to be an ally and foster inclusivity.



Everyone has biases—examine your own

Even well-intended people can unintentionally cause harm without meaning to.

Epler identifies “in-group, out-group” biases based on affiliation or other characteristics as one of the most common in the workplace. This can be remedied by “being aware if you’re unintentionally excluding people by making some people feel like they’re not a part of that in-group.”

Another tool for overcoming biases? Self-regulation. Epler suggests taking a moment when you first meet someone to **ask yourself if you’re making assumptions** about them that could prevent you from letting the person organically present themselves.



Learn to build consciousness

Learning about historical issues with diversity is only part of the job. Building consciousness should involve stepping out of our bubbles.

Intentionally engaging with diverse points of view—interfacing with stories and perspectives that challenge our preconstructed narratives—is one of the biggest ways we can learn.

“Even in Hollywood, there’s a lack of representation within storytelling... and as a result, it changes our worldview,” Epler says. “And so we need to be conscious of that and make sure we’re consuming stories from different, diverse perspectives.”



Intervene when necessary

Part of fostering inclusive spaces involves building teams that value empathy and growth. It also means standing up for inclusion by pushing back on behaviors that can undermine it.

One of those behaviors is interrupting. Fortunately, it’s easy for other participants to butt in on those who would seek to monopolize airtime in conversations.

“If somebody is in a meeting and constantly being interrupted, stop the conversation, or if there’s a pause in the conversation for a minute, say, ‘Hey, you know, Melinda was trying to get a word in, and I’d love to hear what she has to say,’” Epler says. “It’s not that hard to make that kind of space.”

In other serious situations, such as when a racial slur is said, **Epler recommends assuming good intentions first.** Take the person aside and explain without recriminating why that word or phrase can make others uncomfortable—even if it was previously perceived differently.

“The more that you can have that human, one-on-one interaction, the better in that scenario,” Epler says.



Open your network to advocate for others

As a leader, advocating for others is important, whether it's to have their work recognized or helping them gain access to new opportunities.

For Epler, one common example is that of the worker who's not being recognized for their contributions. "Advocate for them to get a promotion and notice when somebody is not being recognized for the work that they've been doing," she says.

Opening your network to others who belong to groups that have been historically marginalized is another important way to advocate for greater diversity and inclusion.

"It could be that somebody has amazing skills and expertise, and they're just not accessing the networks that they need to really grow in their career," she says. "So **use your influence to really open those networks** or open your own networks for somebody else."



Find other people's unique access points to inclusion

Not everyone comes to understand issues involving inclusion in the same way. Epler says it's why it's so important to "**meet people where they are.**"

For example, **it can be useful to build a foundation of general empathy awareness before jumping headfirst into topics that can generate strong feelings**, such as microaggressions.

"Everybody has their own entry point into diversity, equity, inclusion and allyship. And so finding that motivation is the first step," Epler says.

People might initially be drawn to inclusion because they care about equality and justice, or it might just be because they want to be the best leader possible. In any case, when dealing with others who might be reluctant to talk about inclusion, Epler says it's important to remember that "each of us is on our own journey."

"There are different access points, and it's really important to understand what those are—and to just remember that we're all human," she says.

Once you've laid the foundation for empathy and inclusion, it's time to connect—with intention. Whether you're expanding your business, shifting careers or simply building your circle, **strong networks drive lasting impact.**



MAKING CONNECTIONS

How to make the most of networking online

Whether you're building a business, switching careers or expanding your impact, strategic networking is essential. To some extent, networking of any kind has a numbers component—you meet and talk to many more people than actually become valuable contacts or clients. However, **thoughtful outreach, personalized messaging and clear asks are what turn introductions into opportunities.**

It isn't just about who you know—it's about how you show up. Here are five tips to help you make the most of online networking.

Start local

This one may seem counterintuitive when using a global tool like the internet, and in many situations, it makes a lot of sense to reach beyond your immediate geography. However, when you're getting started with online networking, **connecting with people in your own backyard first has its advantages.** People may be more likely to connect with you if you're local, you have a better shot at getting a face-to-face meeting and building a solid network locally helps establish quality connections to build from later.

Find a personal connection or shared point of reference

When seeking out people to connect with, **start with what you may have in common**, such as hometown, alma mater, previous employers, clubs/organizations, volunteering/causes, etc. Referencing whatever common ground you may have with a prospect helps instantly build rapport and gives them a reason to connect with you. Relevant professional connections are best because they also offer some implied credibility, but even personal connections can be a conversation starter.

Know why this specific person

When reaching out to someone you don't yet know, it's very important to **have a clear reason you want to meet this specific person.** This goes beyond shared background; there are lots of people who share an alma mater or previous employer. Giving the person a reason you need them specifically

means they will be more likely to give you some of their valuable time.

For example, perhaps you are considering a career move from a large company to a startup and you identify someone who followed a similar career path, lives locally and shares your passion for great user experience. Share that with your prospective contact, and they'll understand why you want to speak to them and are more likely to want to help.

Know what, specifically, you are asking for

It's a good practice to put some thought behind this question before any meeting, but particularly when you're asking to meet with a new contact. This helps you clearly structure the request and gives the prospect a distinct idea of what you're looking for and if/how they can help. Avoid sending a coffee meeting or networking request that's as vague as, "I'd like to meet you" or "I'd like to pick your brain." Instead, **state as specifically as you can what you would like to learn, discuss or anything else you're hoping to get out of the connection.**

Ask for the meeting

Just connecting with someone on LinkedIn does not make them a valuable contact. If there's someone you want to learn from or get help from or who otherwise has something you want, you must actually talk to the person, preferably face to face (or via video chat if needed). The worst thing that happens is the person you want to connect with says, "No." The bottom line is this: **You'll be pleasantly surprised how often people will say yes if you just ask.**

When you do write that first note, here are a few more tips for success:

- Use their professional email address whenever possible, personal email is the next best, and only use social media messaging if you absolutely must.
- In your note, use a “friendly formal” tone—**sound like you’re an actual human** (versus a generic script), but keep it professional.
- And, finally, follow up! If you don’t get a response the first time, write at least two more notes before giving up (people get busy, emails get buried).

Strong connections can open doors—but sustaining success requires something deeper: resilience. As we navigate ambitious goals, demanding schedules and evolving workplace dynamics, it becomes clear that mental well-being isn’t optional. It’s foundational. In the next section, we shift from outward engagement to inward care—with strategies to protect mental health and create supportive environments where both individuals and teams can thrive.

PROTECTING MENTAL HEALTH

6 ways employees and employers can boost well-being in the office

One thing we'd all like to leave behind is the prevalence of stress. In an October 2022 poll, "Stress in America 2022," the American Psychological Association found that **34% of adults reported "stress is completely overwhelming most days,"** and 27% of respondents reported that "most days they are so stressed they can't function." Experiencing a degree of stress can keep you motivated and alert. However, chronic stress can potentially lead to a host of health issues, from anxiety and depression to physical ailments.

But **ambition should never cost us our health.** In a world where stress is high and burnout is common, prioritizing mental well-being is imperative. Here are a few tips to build good mental health in the workplace.

Protecting *your* mental health

Ease into your day

You open your eyes, silence your phone alarm, press your mail app and start thumbing through your emails. Sound like a familiar scene? **How you begin your day sets the tone.** When you immediately launch into work before brushing your teeth, you're immediately launching yourself into a stressful frame of mind.

Instead, consider practicing a few minutes of mindfulness upon waking. **Use this time to set your intentions for the day or begin your morning routine** (workout, shower, rouse the children) without reviewing your work tasks. This will help further delineate the line between personal and professional. The groundwork for a smooth morning can often be established the night prior. **Self-care doesn't always equate to spa days.** It could simply be taking the time the night before to select your outfit, pack lunches and check your calendar, ensuring the morning hours are much calmer.

Establish boundaries

Establishing boundaries is difficult. Your cellphone is usually nearby, which theoretically means you're always reachable and potentially available to address any work issues. **Now that so many of us work from home, turning off work mode is an even more challenging feat. But it can be done.** And in order to lessen stress, improve mental health at work and enjoy an adequate work-life balance, it must.

Set boundaries (not answering emails on the weekends, for example), **communicate them with your team and then stick to them.** You might



question what harm drafting one little email on Saturday afternoon could do as you hit send. By replying then instead of Monday morning, you're showing people that not only is your boundary shaky, but you're willing to be inconvenienced again.

Familiarize yourself with available EAP benefits

Employee assistance program, or EAP, benefits allow you the opportunity to speak with a trained counselor to help you handle stresses such as financial issues, burnout and family problems. **These services are also confidential and free.** Look into these mental health benefits available via your work's EAP to find out how to access them. That way, when you need to have a productive conversation with someone who can serve as an unbiased sounding board, you know where to go.

Protecting *employees'* mental health

Cultivate a culture of gratitude

Think of gratitude as your silver bullet: What else can create better work relationships, less stress and higher job satisfaction? Whether it's emailing a colleague a congratulatory note after an engaging presentation or beginning each work meeting with team members sharing what they're grateful for, lead the charge for encouraging this type of thankfulness in the workplace.

Be supportive

The phrase "taking a mental health day" has become more common in recent years. Don't let it be something you give lip service to and then abandon when it's crunch time or deadlines are looming. **Treat employee mental health like you would physical health.** If you wouldn't think twice about an employee ducking out for an optometrist appointment, don't punish them for taking time off to go to a therapy session.

To that end, check with your employees about using their vacation days. With increasing workloads, some employees might feel they can't or shouldn't take time away. Address those concerns proactively and have a plan for vacation coverage. **Taking a break is necessary to recharge,** shows employees you believe in work-life balance and reduces stress and potential burnout.

Offer mental health resources at work during the day

Could a meeting over coffee instead be a walk (weather permitting) at a local park? Is there a lunch-and-learn or a webinar on stress management you can ask your team to attend? What about discounting or subsidizing nutritious food services or gym classes? Building a culture rich in wellness opportunities will help **develop that good mental health muscle** to keep employees feeling less stressed.



Wellness in the workplace is more than just a perk—it's a reflection of a culture that values sustainability, humanity and long-term impact.

When we prioritize both individual and collective well-being, we lay the groundwork for a more empowered, effective and resilient workforce. And that brings us full circle: **True success isn't just about performance.** It's about how we lead, how we live and how we elevate others along the way.



A CALL TO LEAD HOLISTICALLY

The insights in this guide are more than just strategies—they're stepping stones toward a new standard of success. One where **achievement is measured not only by what we accomplish but by how we show up in the world:** grounded, inclusive, collaborative and whole.

Whether you're climbing the ranks, launching something new or redefining what leadership looks like for yourself and others, know this: **Your presence, your values, and your voice matter.**

Keep connecting. Keep advocating. Keep becoming.

Because when women lead with intention—in every area of life—we don't just succeed.

We change what success means.

And when more of us lead this way, we create cultures, companies and communities that thrive—for everyone.