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# **WAYS TO THRIVE IN TECH**

## WAYS TO THRIVE IN TECH: DISCLAIMERS

- ▶ Not all (in fact very few) of these strategies apply ONLY to the tech industry
- ▶ No need to use ALL of these strategies - even trying ONE of these strategies could help advance your career
- ▶ “Thriving” can mean very different things to different people. For the purpose of discussing thriving in a technical career, we will focus on career advancement.

## PART ONE: YOUR WORK MATTERS

- ▶ Work on projects with direct business impact
- ▶ Seek out challenging opportunities
- ▶ Be realistic & strategic with your time



# WORK ON PROJECTS WITH DIRECT BUSINESS IMPACT

- ▶ Visibility can be one of the most important factors for advancement
- ▶ Choose strategically important roles
- ▶ Understand how your work fits into the big picture
- ▶ Be clear about how your work fits into the big picture
- ▶ The effectiveness of other programs, like mentorship, networking, or leadership training, will be impacted by the visibility of the work



# SEEK OUT CHALLENGING OPPORTUNITIES

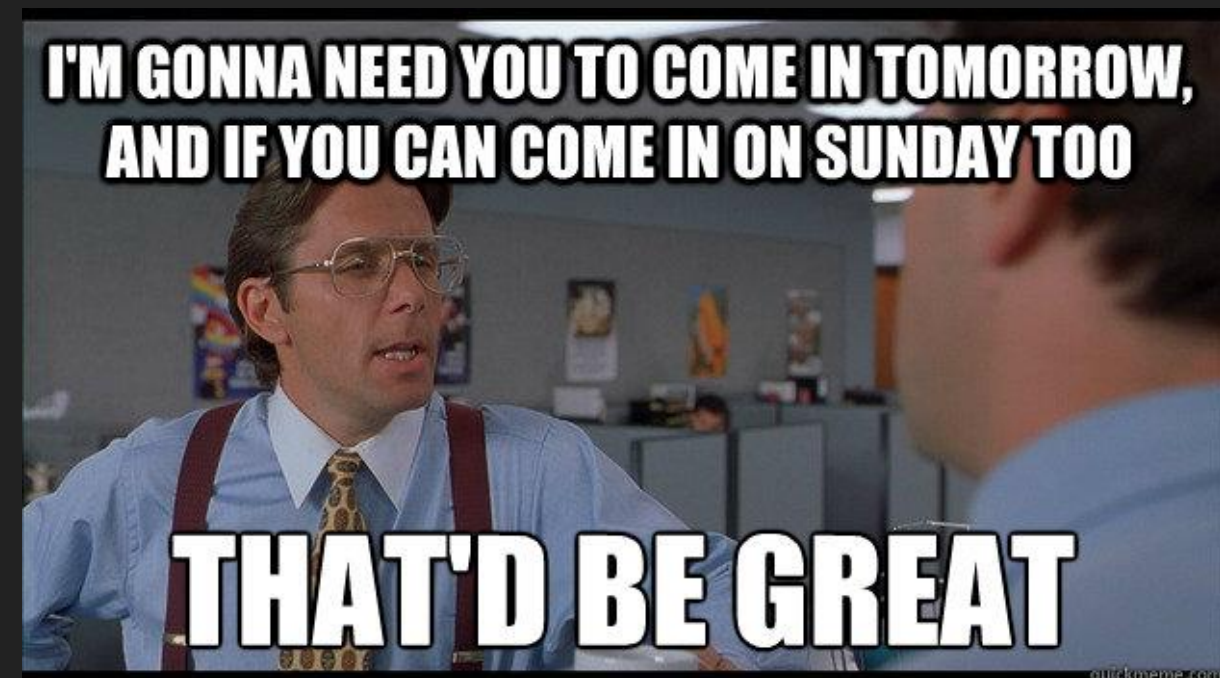
- ▶ Continuously grow and expand skills
- ▶ Opportunities can arise unexpectedly
- ▶ You don't need to have all the answers before beginning
- ▶ Visibility (again) - taking advantage of a challenging opportunities can lead to more visibility
- ▶ Be aware of this pitfall:
  - ▶ Research shows women often are raised to be harsher critics of their work than men; this can discourage women from taking on stretch assignments even when highly qualified.





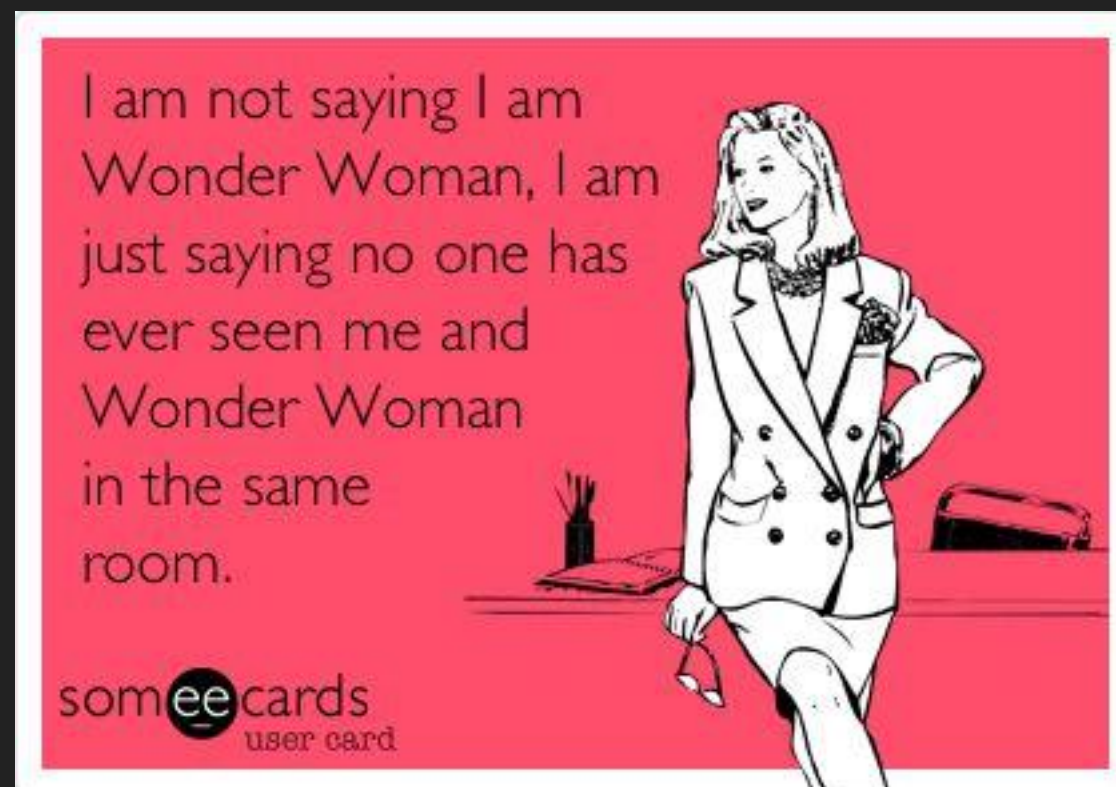
# BE REALISTIC & STRATEGIC WITH YOUR TIME

- ▶ You may want to decline roles if they:
  - ▶ do not further your career goals & interests
  - ▶ are not central to the business
  - ▶ are undervalued work
- ▶ Say “no” by explaining your rationale or offering an alternative solution
- ▶ Filling your plate with high-value work empowers you to turn down undervalued work



## PART TWO: GET THE WORD OUT

- ▶ Develop a strong network & continually look for ways to diversify it
- ▶ Seek out mentors and sponsors who have organizational clout
- ▶ Know what you're good at and promote that about yourself



# DEVELOP A STRONG & DIVERSE NETWORK

- ▶ Importance of external eminence:
  - ▶ Understand which skills are in demand
  - ▶ Become recognized as a leader in your industry
  - ▶ Make a name for yourself by sharing what you know externally
  - ▶ Write a blog post, become active on professional social networking sites like LinkedIn or Twitter, or speak at meet-ups or conferences
- ▶ Diversify your networks:
  - ▶ Connect with coworkers outside your immediate team
  - ▶ Build relationships with peers, not just people who are more senior
  - ▶ Participate in cross-functional, cross-organizational projects to diversify these networks
- ▶ Local tech networking opportunities: AITP Calendar, Meetups, MATA





# SEEK OUT MENTORS & SPONSORS WHO HAVE ORGANIZATIONAL CLOUT

- ▶ Mentors can advise you on your career & company culture.
  - ▶ Advise on specific situations or decisions
  - ▶ Knows your career goals and interests
- ▶ Sponsors advocate for you, making sure that your work is visible to influential people in the company.
  - ▶ Increase visibility among leadership
  - ▶ Expand perception of your potential
  - ▶ Open up career opportunities
- ▶ Technical capabilities are critical, but can only take you so far. These key relationships help your career continue moving forward.



# KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOOD AT AND PROMOTE THAT ABOUT YOURSELF

- ▶ What are you good at? Spread the word!
- ▶ Consult with your mentor, manager, or peers about different ways to “pitch” your talents
- ▶ If you're passionate about it, talk to people about it
- ▶ Develop a succinct way to describe your strengths



## PART THREE: NOT DONE YET

- ▶ Seek out feedback to continue your professional growth
- ▶ Keep expanding and updating your skills
- ▶ Take Risks



## SEEK OUT FEEDBACK TO CONTINUE YOUR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

- ▶ Know your career goals
- ▶ Discuss your goals with your manager, mentors, sponsors, and other advisors
- ▶ Ask for specific feedback on how to obtain these goals
- ▶ Be receptive to constructive criticism and ask for specific examples of how you might improve





# KEEP EXPANDING AND UPDATING YOUR SKILLS

- ▶ Stay curious and keep learning forever, because tech!
- ▶ If a colleague is working on a new project that interests you, ask them questions about their work
- ▶ Meet-ups and events are a great time to find out what others are working on, and ask questions about projects that interest you
- ▶ Technical skills:
  - ▶ Develop breadth of knowledge as well as depth of knowledge in your area of expertise
- ▶ Soft skills matter too:
  - ▶ Presentations, negotiation, communicating with clients
- ▶ Practice makes “perfect,” and practice is learning!





## TAKE RISKS

- ▶ Learn to take calculated risks
- ▶ Start saying “yes” before saying “no”
- ▶ Risks are inherently risky - embrace failure
- ▶ Indicating interest is not the same as committing - it's ok to put yourself out there to get more information before finally committing
- ▶ Be your own best advocate - the person who is going to look out the most for your career is you.



## DON'T SWEAT IT

- ▶ You don't need to use EVERY strategy
- ▶ You are not alone - connect with others facing challenges similar to you
- ▶ This is a two-way street - employer-led initiatives and company culture can have a significant impact

# QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

- ▶ How do you thrive?
- ▶ Have you seen visibility at work impact career results?
- ▶ How do you promote yourself? Has your mentor, sponsor, or network had a significant impact on your career?
- ▶ What do you do to work toward continuous growth?
- ▶ Which of these strategies seem most useful?

## RESOURCES

- ▶ <https://www.themuse.com/advice>
- ▶ <http://aitpozarks.org/calendar.php>
- ▶ <https://austinstartups.com/how-to-thrive-as-a-woman-in-tech-e1de541140ce#.4elx3uvgo>
- ▶ <http://theglasshammer.com/2015/12/02/theglasshammer-com-6th-annual-women-in-tech-event-how-pursuing-your-passion-and-taking-career-risks-can-help-you-thrive/>
- ▶ <https://hbr.org/2011/01/the-real-benefit-of-finding-a>
- ▶ <https://www.themuse.com/advice/9-tips-for-findingand-gettingthe-perfect-mentor>
- ▶ <https://hbr.org/2016/09/to-succeed-in-tech-women-need-more-visibility>
- ▶ <https://www.ncwit.org/resources/top-10-ways-thrive-your-technical-career/top-10-ways-thrive-your-technical-career>
- ▶ [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alison-wagonfeld-/five-career-strategies-fo\\_b\\_6114996.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alison-wagonfeld-/five-career-strategies-fo_b_6114996.html)