



Women and Leadership: Owning Your Strengths and Skills

Quick Reference Guide

Improving Self-Management Through Reflection

Part of putting knowledge into practice, and learning from experience, is reflection. With reflection, you can come to understand a situation not only as a memory but a living classroom. What happened? What was your role in what happened? How could you adjust your role to get the results you want? What can be done next time?

Reflective Journal

Consider starting a journal at your workplace, for recording experiences as they unfold or soon after they occur. Consider the situation in light of the following questions, from Gibbs Cycle of Reflective Thought:

- What were you thinking and feeling?
- What was good and bad about it?
- How can you make sense of it?
- What alternatives did you have?
- What would you do if it happened again?

From Idea to Brand

Step One: Identifying the idea

What type of leader are you, and want to be? How do you want to be known? Identify branding words or key phrases that can share your idea.

Step Two: Expanding the Idea

Share your intent, words and phrases with a wider audience: colleagues, friends, and associates, in the branding or marketing industries who can give informed feedback.

Step Three: Evolving the Idea

Refine your words and phrases based on feedback, and your own evolving perception of your brand.

Step Four: Selling the Idea

Your brand is a tool to help you gain opportunities, responsibility, promotion ... or whatever meets your goals. Perhaps it is a casual conversation with your supervisors, or a formal presentation to clients. In any case, prepare for maximum impact in minimum time.

Step Five: Live Tests

Test your presentation on focus groups, willing managers, or agreeable clients who offer their time in exchange for providing honest feedback that you can use to refine your brand.

Step Six: Implementation

Share your brand as often and in as many venues as is appropriate.

Step Seven: Review and Revise

Be constantly on the lookout for feedback or hints that can help refine your brand and presentation.

Barriers vs. Benefits

A barrier is of two general types:

- External
- Internal

External barriers are those found in the workplace environment, social circles, or home life – anywhere you, as a person, interact and spend time. Examples include:

- Hostile coworker or supervisor
- Caring for an aging parent or special-needs child at home, leaving little energy or freedom for recharging or creativity
- A two-hour daily commute that leaves you stressed and drained before the workday begins
- Lack of direction or goals on a project or in the workplace generally

Internal barriers are by far the most challenging. These are walls, blocks, diversions – some women have described them as concrete – built up over years of training, conditioning, trauma, and experience. These can manifest as anxieties, phobias, physical issues (headaches, backaches, fatigue, rashes), lack of concentration, mood swings, and depression.

Both internal and external factors can greatly affect leadership performance by:

- Influencing decisions
- Creating negativity
- Draining energy

How can we deal with these barriers?

There are two things to remember:

- We cannot control other people or situations, only our reactions to them
- Within each barrier is a benefit - an opportunity to learn, do things differently, break down the concrete, and evolve

We are conditioned in our society to give our power to external forces. It is up to a doctor, not us, if we are well. It is up to a school system, not our instincts, if we are learning at an appropriate speed. It is the bank's fault that we have no money, the government's fault that there are so few jobs, and on it goes. We as individual women cannot change these massive systems or fix all of society's problems. Each of us can, however, take back our choice and our power. Our coworker may be hostile toward us. What steps can we do to remedy the situation? We can pause, reflect on our reaction, and learn from it.

Consider this:

Women are deeply conditioned to be maternal and needed, yet small and in the background. As a result, criticism tends to be taken deep inside the body where it can sit, unprocessed and festering, for years. Effective leaders are able to distinguish job criticism from personal attacks, take the criticism as a learning opportunity, process it, glean value from it (even if that value is practice in dismissing invalid attacks) and move on.

Personal Inventory

Let's increase your leadership awareness. What tools and skills to you possess, and at what levels, that make you a good leader?

	This statement is not like me at all.	This statement is somewhat like me.	This statement describes me completely.
I like to take risks.			
I focus on opportunities instead of problems.			
I am confident the company will support my ideas.			
I like to get things done.			
I am enthusiastic.			
I am creative at work.			
I don't mind asking for help when I need it.			
I always have new ideas.			
I don't mind putting in hard work and long days.			
I like being in control.			
I know what I am passionate about.			
I get excited when I am talking to others about my ideas.			
I challenge the status quo.			
I enjoy working with others.			

If the majority of these statements are somewhat like you, or describe you completely, you may be an intrapreneur, or entrepreneur, or long to be one. Chances are you are passionate about your work, motivated to make your organization better, are highly creative and are poised to "lead the charge" on new initiatives or workplace culture.

If the majority of these statements are not like you at all, you may be an enabler, collaborator, or connector, the quiet force of accomplishment in an organization. The intrapreneur type described above will need many people to help them bring their ideas to completion, which is where you can shine. As well, many of us have strengths that can be used to assist our colleagues in promoting new initiatives.