

Negotiating For Change

by Shifra Bronznick

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Women are on the verge of tremendous breakthroughs in our culture, breakthroughs that will have a powerful influence in our families, in our workplaces, in our voluntary associations and in our community.

As you all know, women are now faced with a wide range of choices about the way we live our lives – as professionals, volunteers, parents and caregivers.

Women also are making choices at different stages in the life cycle about work and family. Whatever our personal, volunteer and professional priorities may be at any one point in time, we are learning that the boundaries between our personal and public lives are becoming much more permeable. Since many of us will be blessed with long life, we need to appreciate the fact that we probably will be moving from chapter to chapter -- from professional to volunteer and volunteer to professional, from career-seekers to caregivers. We need the skills to manage a life in which we will have multiple careers, diverse volunteer opportunities, and for almost half of us, more than one family situation.

Regardless of our particular status at any point in time, we will all need to become more adept at negotiation as we create new agreements about our roles and our priorities – with ourselves, with our spouses and our partners, with our parents and children, and with our colleagues and friends. As we move from setting to setting, as we enter new environments and face new challenges, we can draw upon our negotiation skills to ask effectively for what we require to fulfill our potential.

Negotiating on Your Own Behalf

What does it take to negotiate successfully? First, we need to be clear about what we want and what we need. Let's start with the basics. We want to be heard, to be recognized, to expand our capacities to contribute in meaningful ways as volunteers and as professionals. We want to craft lives that give us quality time with our families and friends, and balance that with building vibrant Jewish communities and healthy societies.

While many of us struggle privately, wondering how to do a better job of balancing it all, I've come to realize that we actually need to focus more on negotiating with those around us to secure the right roles and the appropriate resources that will allow us to succeed in every arena. Yet, surprisingly enough, given all the changes in women's status, we continue to discover from both research and anecdotal findings, that often women don't ask for what they need.

That's right. Women don't ask. This gender gap begins with women feeling they are not entitled to ask for what they need – at home, at work or in their volunteer settings. And as you know well, women are frequently encouraged to accept what they get, not to ask for more and that is part of what is perpetuating this gender gap.

To understand this better, let's start with the research, including my own observations in the field and research findings I've gleaned from some groundbreaking work that has just been published by Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever, in a book called, very appropriately, "*Women Don't Ask*."

The first example: When Linda Babcock examined the starting salaries of students graduating with masters degrees from Carnegie Mellon University, she observed that the starting salaries for men were almost \$4,000 higher than the women. She then looked at salary breakdowns between those who had accepted the initial offer and those who had negotiated. What she found was that 57% of the men had asked for more money; compared to 7 percent of the women, and those who negotiated increased their starting salaries by \$4,053.

As a footnote to this research, and to emphasize how important it is to negotiate well for salaries, here's the math: that \$4000 gap in salary for an entry-level position accumulates into a half-million dollar difference over the course of a lifetime of work.

In another study, a similar picture emerged. In more than one hundred interviews about negotiation, the majority of men described negotiation as a routine and frequent part of their lives while women often cited a single event that had taken place some time ago, such as negotiating for a car.

Here is an example from my own work in the field. A few years ago, I interviewed several women who work as coaches to senior corporate executives. I asked these coaches, "Tell me the secret. What's the real difference between your male clients and your women clients?" Here's what they told me: When people advance in a company or institution, they are asked to assume leadership challenges that often appear impossible. When women of high potential are offered such a challenge, they will often say, "Yes," even if this huge challenge comes without the necessary resources and support. Men will also say, "Yes." But then they negotiate, "I'll do it," men say, "but here is what I need. A staff, a budget, and a deputy to do the work I was doing before."

When I heard this distinction, it was a revelation. I immediately started suggesting to my women executive clients -- many of them senior professionals in nonprofit organizations -- that they must negotiate actively for more resources when taking on particularly demanding jobs. Much to my surprise, the women executives did not embrace this suggestion. One of them captured the dilemma when she said, "I can't do that. It would make me look weak if I asked for help." The men saw negotiation as a demonstration of their power. The women viewed negotiation as a potential risk and liability.

Now these women were onto something. Often, when women do negotiate, they are met with negative responses. Some women find that, to make their case compelling, they need to promote themselves and speak forcefully about their accomplishments and superior skills. But the research tells us that “boasting or self-promotion” causes people to rate women as less likeable than when the same behavior comes from a man. So there are signals embedded in the culture that discourage women from negotiating.

Negotiating on Behalf of Others

How do we get around this dilemma? One way is to practice negotiating by advocating for one another. Studies show that where people are asked to do a task and then figure out how much they should get paid, women pay themselves less than the men. For example, in one study, the men paid themselves 63% more than the women. But when it came to figuring out how much someone else should be paid, women paid others 48% percent more than they paid themselves. (By the way, the men paid others 20% percent less.) So one way that women can strengthen their negotiation skills is to use them on behalf of others and then apply those same strategies on their own behalf.

Women are more effective as negotiators when they use their social networks to gather solid information that shapes a compelling case. In our case, we can turn to one other to find out what the appropriate resources and rewards are for each particular task, job and challenge. Look at this Lion of Judah conference and the vast social network it allows you to tap into. I am sure that many of you already ask friends and colleagues in other communities to help you figure out how to solicit more support for your federation. And I know you already share great program ideas with one another. But do you ask each other how to negotiate for the position, resources and support you need as a volunteer? Maybe it is time to focus on sharing strategies about what resources are really needed to launch a particular program, how much staffing is required, what’s a reasonable budget for an event? Maybe it is time to share notes about what kind of visibility are women’s contributions and women’s leadership receiving from the general campaign? Are there women at the dais? Are there prominent women speaking at every event – both women’s events and Federation affairs? Are women leaders being recognized by achieving positions on grant making and allocation committees? Are women on the nominating committee and the finance committee? Sharing this kind of practical information with one another and then using your knowledge to negotiate for more visibility, recognition and support for women leaders has a powerful multiplier effect. These strategies will enhance your own effectiveness and leadership, and will expand the circle of leadership by attracting more women to the table who like the idea of being part of a community that recognizes women’s talents.

As you develop fluency in negotiating, you will often be surprised by the results. In a course on negotiation, students were given negotiation tasks -- some for themselves and some on behalf of others. They gained about \$2,200 each when negotiating for themselves, and saved \$390,000 for their employers. What was the amazing tactic that

achieved these exceptional results. Simple the students said, “Choosing to negotiate at all.”

We can especially make that choice when it comes to negotiating to bring more women into leadership. In every field, Jewish women are taking on prominent positions. In our own community we are also seeing more women leaders, women who are volunteer heads of organizations ... from USCJ to JAFI, to ADL to the JM to AIPAC.

When I first started my work on women’s leadership with Ma’yan, none of the organizations that I have just named had a woman President. It was hard to understand the stumbling blocks to women’s advancement in the Jewish world, given their impressive achievement in the general society. To figure it out, I interviewed hundreds of community leaders. I asked women whose term as President of a JCC or local federation was ending -- what did they want to do next? Virtually all of them responded, “I am not expecting anything. I will wait for my talents to be recognized.” But when I interviewed the male organizational leaders, they said that when they accepted a Board position, they would sit down with the Chair or the CEO and ask, “What do you have in mind for me here? What’s my future?” Think about it. If the men are actively demanding that their philanthropic career be structured in satisfying ways, while the women are waiting to be recognized, isn’t it likely that when a choice post becomes available, it will be offered to the men who have already negotiated for visibility and opportunity?

In recent years, I have been encouraged to see women realize that you have to ask for what you need to do your volunteer work successfully, and you have to negotiate for the kind of opportunities that will move you forward. Sounds challenging doesn’t it? But it is no coincidence that two of these women who became presidents of major Jewish organizations said quite clearly, “I wanted those posts and I campaigned to get them.”

On a parallel path, as many of you know, in my work as founding president of AWP, I have been advocating for a change in the balance of power at the CEO level. In the year 2004, almost no major national Jewish organizations and none of our top 20 Federations have a woman at the helm. Last year, AWP partnered with UJC to produce a research report that elucidated the obstacles to women’s leadership. One of our major recommendations for change was for UJC to set a goal of recruiting 50% women participants for the new program to develop Federation Executives. As you can imagine, this was met with real resistance. We don’t want quotas, people said. Neither do we, we said, we want new targets. We only want outstanding candidates, people said. AWP shares that aspiration, but we believe that, to encourage sufficient numbers of excellent women to apply, UJC needs to send a powerful message that says, federations welcome women’s leadership at the highest level. Though our UJC partners were not yet ready to embrace this goal, we decided that AWP, as an independent entity had a right, and even a responsibility to keep negotiating for this commitment. So in every document we wrote and every speech we gave, we kept repeating, “In the next EDP, ideally, 50% of the participants will be women.” The good news is that last week, nine months after our report was presented to UJC’s Board when the announcement of a new Mandel executive

Development program was distributed, in both the CEOS letter and the application itself, it said, “ in accordance with UJC’s commitment to gender equity, ideally 50% of the participants will be women.” This was only achieved because of our continuous negotiations, our willingness to ask again and again for what we know is needed to allow women to succeed. Now we hope that women in the field will be willing to step up and apply. But we are not relying on hope: we are asking each of you, women active in your communities as philanthropists and volunteers to bring talented women to our attention, and encourage them to apply.

It’s up to women, to all of us, to negotiate and advocate for each other at every stage on the path to leadership.

It’s challenging to think about advocating for women to advance to leadership posts. And I know it is daunting to think about asking for power and position for yourself. But it is critical that we work together to support women who are determined and ready to assume leadership roles, women who will then have the authority to negotiate successfully for a place on the agenda for women’s issues.

Because in the same way that we have learned how important it is to negotiate for compensation, position, and resources, we also need to negotiate forcefully to ensure that our concerns and issues be reflected in the priorities of our public institutions. It is no coincidence that the dangerous consequences of Hormone Replacement therapy were only discovered when Dr. Bernadine Healy took over the National Institutes of Health. Until Healy’s tenure at NIH, male health problems were given a much higher priority than women’s health issues. In fact, NIH studies on general health issues traditionally excluded women entirely, in order to streamline the complexity of the research. Healy not only insisted that women be included in all research protocols; she also established the Women’s Health Initiative to focus specifically on women’s health challenges with appropriate scientific rigor.

We can follow Healy’s lead and ask that as donors, as volunteers, and as Jewish citizens we want to make our women’s perspective a more powerful force in defining the priorities for the Jewish community. And, when we ask we don’t ask as advocates for women; we ask as advocates for a strong and vibrant Jewish community, the kind of community we can only create when diversity is seen as essential to our spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing as a people and as a force for change in the world.