

J. E. Hamerstone & L. Musser Hough. *A Woman's Framework for a Successful Career and Life*. NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013. ISBN978-1-137-29319-0. 205pp.

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Over the last two decades, opportunities for women have increased dramatically, and in the United States they make up about 58 percent of college graduates and 50 percent of professional workers. They now account for a third of lawyers and doctors, a significant increase from only 10% in 1970. Still an overwhelming majority of them (77 percent) believe that gender discrimination is a very important issue at the workplace, and women have much harder time than men in building a successful career.

The reasons why this is happening are explored in many studies and are not novelty to anyone. There are also a considerable number of books with guidance on how women can overcome certain barriers and succeed professionally and personally. But, as James E. Hamerstone and Lindsay Musser Hough point out, all these books target women who are in the middle of their careers. Younger women, however, have not been familiarized with many of these important concepts at the very start of their professional lives, with the result of them “hitting roadblocks” of the workplace that could have been avoided. With both authors being involved in undergraduate teaching, the realization that technically competent female students lack confidence in the areas of career building, ambition and leadership led Hamerstone and Musser Hough to create a guidance for this kind of audience. *A Woman's Framework for a Successful Career and Life* has been conceived as a clear and detailed manual for young women who are embarking or are about to embark on the ambitious and self-fulfilling career, and want it to be successful.

The book consists of two parts and a concluding chapter. The first part of the book, *What Women Need to Build in Order to Have a Successful Career* is skills focused. The second part is about what women need to “consider” throughout a successful career. The structural organization of the book as well as chapter titles is quite original. Thus, in the first part the titles of all four chapters start with *Build*, e.g., *Build Your ...Board*, same with *Brand*, *Communication Skills and Negotiation Skills*. A similar device is used in naming chapters in the second part, such as *Consider ... Ambition*; similar with *Leadership*, *Work-Life Fit*, *Career-Path Navigation* and *Working in a Global Environment*. Finally, the concluding chapter is a directive to action - *Do ... Put It All Together*. The structure of the chapters is consistent throughout the book: each chapter includes a summary of key research and leading thought on the issue discussed as well as comments and examples from successful women of all ages and works of life. A few additional sources are suggested at the end of each chapter for those readers who want to explore the issue in a greater detail. Actually, the chapters build on each other, but being loosely connected, the reading of the book is not necessarily linear.

So what do young women need to build before they embark on their career, as suggested by Hamerstone and Musser Hough? First of all, they should have in place a board of advisors, a team of mentors

and sponsors, and the more the better. The authors stress that in a male-dominated corporate culture sponsorship and mentorship are very important for young women, and when an organization has established an internal mentoring program it is a sign that this organization wants its employees to succeed.

The next important thing to build is one's own brand, which includes such components as appearance, professional performance and personal interests, and helps one stand out from the crowd. Since one's personal brand is the image an applicant tries to project on employers within the first minutes of a job interview, the guidance the book under the review suggests for brand building is quite valuable for all job seekers and their tutors. Like the rest of the book, this part is not innovative, but it is detailed, focused on young people and is rich in good advice on building and maintaining one's brand, the interview behavior and the efficient use of social media for career purposes.

Of no less importance is building one's communication skills, and the authors emphasize that this is a critical yet underdeveloped aspect of both personal and professional life. Awareness of communication nuances and their implications is extremely important for women because their communication styles differ from those of men. According to the quoted research, women are socialized to be more modest, to downplay their credit and contribution, to be prone to self-denigration, indirectness, excessive apology, etc. Gender socialization is a powerful factor indeed, and it often can damage the professional image of women, therefore in this part of the book the authors advise young women on the ways to develop their verbal and nonverbal communication.

One more set of skills to build is negotiation skills because it is about asking for what you want, and research shows that women expect less and ask for less when it comes to getting what they want. It is negotiation, and this skill can be taught. The objective of this last chapter on building skills is to offer a flexible process that anybody can use to negotiate almost anything. The fundamental steps are to reconsider locus of control, to understand that there are double standards at work for men and women and to learn to ask, just to ask, because sometimes the negotiation might not be even necessary. For all this to work, the authors offer a scheme of integrated approach to negotiation, which includes preparation, analysis of the negotiation environment, the nature of relationship and the position of the other side with the primary focus on the outcome.

The second part of the book is about certain issues women need to consider, and the first of them is their attitude towards ambition. Ambition is critical for success, but research shows that early gender socialization of women makes them feel ambivalent about the issue. Hamerstone and Musser Hough relate ambition to one's self-image and the recognition one receives throughout life. Since women are often reluctant to take credit for their contribution at work and initiative for their advancement, a certain "ambition gap" between genders is created. Recognition builds confidence, and confidence, according to the authors, is a major factor that either contributes to or hinders one's success in organizational settings.

Another issue, leadership, is even more cumbersome for women than ambition, since characteristics of leadership have traditionally been male, and earlier theories of leadership indicated that it could not be taught, one has to be born with this innate characteristic. The traditional perception "think management - think male" expected women to "fix" themselves. Recent views on leadership styles, however, distinguish between transactional and transformational leadership; the latter based on employee involvement, engagement and motivation is currently viewed as the most effective and concurrent with female charac-

teristics. Even though the issue of leadership is not the immediate concern of the intended readers of the book, the young females at the beginning of their career, the authors still dedicate considerable attention to advice and guidance on how to develop this quality in oneself.

Next issue to consider is work-life fit, which is perhaps the most challenging for working women with children, to the degree when some publications on this challenge prefer to call the issue “work-life *conflict*.” The problem of achieving life-work balance has been widely discussed in numerous publications, so there is hardly any revelation in *A Woman's Framework*; but in the context of the manuscript, advice on choices and concerns working women face is highly appropriate.

Connected with the conflicting demands of work and family life is the issue of career-path navigation, which for many women is not traditionally linear and follows a “lattice” pattern, rather than a “ladder” one. The authors suggest their readers to keep in mind the alternative path options, such as extended time off, flexible schedules, part-time employment, entrepreneurship, and a new career, as well as various impacts career-path decisions may make on one's life. Since careers define most adults as individuals, young women should be aware that navigating a career path might present them with some of the toughest decisions they will have to make in their life.

The last issue for consideration is challenges of working in a global environment, which more and more employees face and which for women may be additionally burdened with discrimination and harassment. The general advice here is to appreciate the opportunities globalization offers while being aware of the challenges of working in/with a different culture and ways of dealing with them.

Finally, in the last chapter, the authors provide a closure by emphasizing how important it is to have one's board, to be oneself in all situations, to be aware of the issues and challenges discussed, and to read more in order to learn from other people's experiences. Beside the extensive lists of in-depth reading sources provided for each chapter the book concludes with the list of organizations, which are good resources for working women.

One more remark in favor of the book: the professional involvement of the authors with their audience prompted them to choose a very endearing form of the material presentation. They speak directly to their specific reader, a young woman, addressing her as “you”: “you need to build”, “you need to consider”, “your board”, “your choice,” and so on. Many who do not fit in this group might think the book is useless for them. However, educators, especially mentors and tutors of undergraduates who have not yet been exposed to overt and covert rules and conventions of the workplace, are sure to find this book worthy of their attention.

