

Executive **EDGE**

WOMEN AND POWER

“Supersuccessful” women, those who have blasted through the glass ceiling and accomplished more than their colleagues of either gender, didn’t get there by pretending to be men. Seven top women interviewed—including Charlotte Beers, who turned around the Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide ad agency; Dede Brooks, the Sotheby’s CEO who engineered the Jackie Onassis auction; and Jill Barad of Mattel who was responsible for Barbie’s soaring popularity—have several characteristics in common, including outrageous behavior and a determination not to fit in.

Running counter to the conventional wisdom that women need to plan their careers, play the man’s game (literally and figuratively; only one plays golf), and network, these women got ahead by:

- Emphasizing their femininity. They don’t dress like men in little blue suits, and they may greet clients with hugs and kisses. “It’s startling to people when you’re attractive and also really smart or extraordinarily good at what you do,” explains Rebecca Mark, CEO of Enron

Development. “People want to meet you. They remember you.”

- Focusing on what interests them, rather than planning a career. Some of these overachievers bounced from career to career, not afraid of failure but enjoying a diversity of experiences. “You just have to follow your instincts,” advises Mark. “Do what excites you. You don’t see the path until you get there.”

- Surviving flak attacks. Their resilient personalities rest on a good sense of humor, an ability to not take criticism personally, and an unflagging self-confidence. After Brooks fired some people and was labeled “the Terminator” in the press, she displayed a picture with her head pasted on Arnold Schwarzenegger’s body.

- Standing out in a crowd. “Provocative disruption,” colorful packaging, and working methods no one else has tried help get these women noticed and their talents rewarded. “I’m likely to say the most outrageous thing in the room—to liven things up,” says Beers.

- Taking a gender-free approach to hiring. With one exception, the seven



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women do not favor females in hiring, promoting, or policy setting, though they do try to “nurture” all employees.

Despite their success, these women—all of whom have children—feel the same stresses and lack of balance that affect other women and men trying to balance work life with family.

From Patricia Sellers, “Women, Sex and Power,” *Fortune*, August 5, 1996, pp. 42-56.

BETWEEN THE CARROT AND THE STICK

The issue of pay is probably the most sensitive topic in the workplace. Pay can be a great motivator or a morale breaker, and it will inevitably elicit a whole range of emotions in between. Even the most seasoned manager can lose confidence in the pay decision minefield.

Well before pay decisions are made, people must understand what is expected of them and how their behaviors will be measured. Even “fuzzy stuff” like delegating authority or satisfying a customer can be measured through 360-degree evaluations and one-on-one interviews.

That said, people are still unlikely to change their behaviors without the appropriate reward. Here are some guidelines:

- Don’t tie pay to power. This era of downsizing and flattening of management levels means baby boomers, at the peak of their careers, are vying for a shrinking number of slots in the hierarchy. Linking rewards to rank is likely to create an army of malcontents.

- Make compensation comprehensible. Don’t let the many benefits you offer get lost in “abstruse actuarial doubletalk.” A

competitor may offer less but win employees over because it better communicates the value of the total compensation.

- Forget about the calendar. Delaying rewards is almost as bad as denying rewards. If the reward is separated too much from the act that earned it, employees may forget what they did to deserve it.

- Make rewards reversible. Using bonuses instead of raises in base pay reinforces the message that employees must keep performing. But bonuses can also be problematic. If overused, they become another entitlement. Nor should bonuses be used to catch employees up with the going compensation rate.

- Try nonfinancial incentives. Money can be a powerful motivator, but other things work well, too. Giving employees plum assignments, mentions in the in-house newsletter, or a chance to make presentations are examples of nonmonetary rewards.

The key to rewarding employees is not how much more you have to give; it’s how well you give what you already have.

From Steven Kerr, “Risky Business: The New Pay Game,” *Fortune*, July 22, 1996, pp. 94-96.