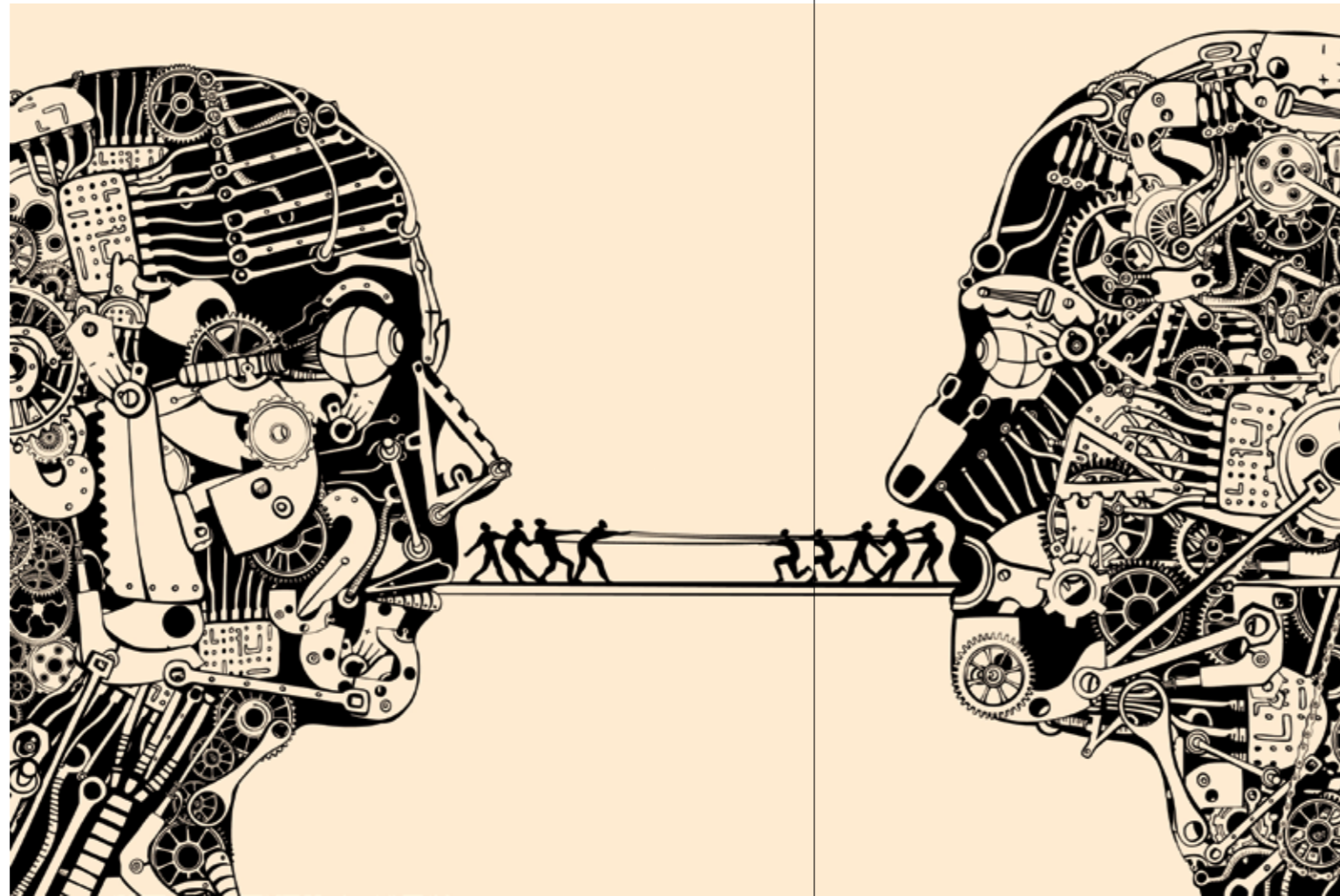


Closing the Gender Gap

Negotiation: Ways Women can Win

By: Dr. Clare Beckett-McInroy

The Chartered Management Institute estimates women are underpaid by 100 minutes every day in comparison to their male colleagues. Over the course of a year this adds up to a staggering 57 days, which equates to an average 22% of annual salary. Ann Francke, the Institute's Chief Executive, has also suggested that the bonuses men receive can be twice those of their female counterparts. This has been attributed to: firstly, their bosses and secondly, to the fact that gender salary gaps have widened especially in the over 40s.



ONE ARGUABLE REASON FOR THE ABOVE IS THAT, PERHAPS UNCONSCIOUSLY, women want to avoid confrontation where men actually look forward to the challenge of winning what they feel they deserve. The argument for women standing up for their rights is that companies which embrace more progressive policies benefit economically, including through higher productivity. The key to achieving true equality in the workplace is negotiation. Negotiating is an essential skill in the changing world of work as we are changing jobs more and more frequently.

We negotiate more than ever before for salaries, bonuses, promotions, working conditions, responsibilities and job titles. These soft skills have been included in many workshops, presentations and articles. We are told to listen carefully and listen before speaking, respect views of others, go with solutions not problems and remain composed.

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If you find negotiation uncomfortable, and win-win as unimaginable (not only in work but in family life and other areas of your life), the following advice will help you personally, professionally, organisationally and financially. These ideas are based on the ideas of Kathleen O'Connor who writes for Harvard Business Review.

1 Nurture your networks

We all have networks. They come from family, friends, societies, online and off line. Colleagues and acquaintances enable you to draw upon a wide range of people and this network is often overlooked and underutilized.

O'Connor suggests spending time, "... thinking about how you can better use existing networks to get what you want. LinkedIn and Facebook provide easy ways to strengthen links and extend your reach. Do you know someone who can make the introduction you need? If you feel uncomfortable asking someone for something then think what you can do that they need, get in touch and make an offer of help."

If you are preparing for a big negotiation, you may well know someone who is aware of the ways the other person 'ticks', what they like and what they hate as this is invaluable armour for you. Also remember to reciprocate to keep relationships alive too.

2 Ask not what your company can do for you but what you can do for your company

Can what you want be framed as part of a wider, commonly beneficial project? Research indicates that - rightly or wrongly - women are more likely to be effective in negotiations when they show how their 'demands' will profit the business as a whole rather themselves personally. Presenting a communal and commercial goal rather than a self-interested approach is often more effective. Interestingly, men would be more likely to use their testosterone and see their wishes as demands, where women would see them as requests. Also ensure you have very clear intentions of

what you want, what you need and what you can drop if necessary.

O'Connor warns, "... don't be too self-effacing and end up eradicating yourself and your contributions from the picture. Never assume that all your skills and achievements have been noticed. Demonstrate what you've done that's earned your company success. Speak up. Now is the time to blow your own trumpet."

3 Asking is for free

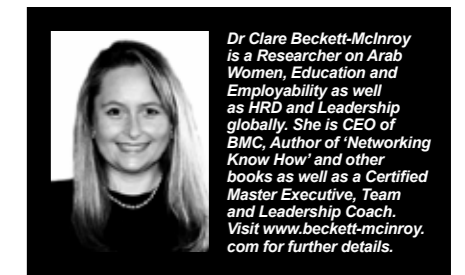
Asking IS free. If you're told 'no', think how you might be able change that 'no' into a 'yes' by putting forward your request in a different way.

Make sure that what you're asking for is clear and precise, especially when speaking to a busy male boss.

O'Connor insists that women should, "Avoid apologizing (unless you've been rude, of course) as it immediately weakens your position and can pre-empt a negative

reception. Have the courage of your opinions and state them clearly without using hedging words that make you appear unsure. Use clean language too. "Replace 'It seems to me...' with 'It is...' and 'I think we should...' with 'We should...' In this way you will come across - and feel - more confident. And if you're still hesitant at the thought of launching yourself into negotiating a better deal at work just, remember those 100 minutes."

This has impact. Picture your male colleagues leaving the office each day a full hour and forty minutes before you! **BIG**



Dr Clare Beckett-McInroy is a Researcher on Arab Women, Education and Employability as well as HRD and Leadership globally. She is CEO of BMC, Author of 'Networking Know How' and other books as well as a Certified Master Executive, Team and Leadership Coach. Visit www.beckett-mcinroy.com for further details.