

Chapter 9

Career Promoters: A Gender Divide

ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to: discuss the complexities involved in mentoring and networking for women; identify how mentoring and networking can be advantageous in supporting women's careers and aid women in terms of career development and progression; and illustrate how women may be disadvantaged in the workplace, due to a gender divide in terms of access to mentors, female role models, and appropriate networking opportunities. These issues are especially issues for women working in male dominated occupations and industries.

INTRODUCTION

The lacks of both mentoring and networking opportunities have been viewed as significant and persistent barriers to women's advancement especially in male dominated industries. Managerial careers tend to be based on the male model of working. This male model of working makes it particularly difficult for women to progress, which has been highlighted throughout this book. A good mentor should be a role model, with the ability to share knowledge and expertise. The mentor should be supportive, nurture independence and have time to be committed. Good mentors need

to be able to be able to have had enough experience to pass onto their mentee in order that they may overcome similar barriers. There are two main types of mentoring arrangement, formal and informal. Informal relationships tend to develop spontaneously, in that a mentee is able to identify their own mentor, whereas a formal mentoring relationship is controlled by the organization and mentees/mentors are matched or selected. However, for the relationship to be successful, it is important that mentor and mentee have mutual respect for each other. This will allow the relationship to develop. When there are few women in senior roles, women in more junior positions

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-2107-7.ch009

lack female role models and female mentors. As this chapter will demonstrate, mentors can be important career promoters to women's careers. Similarly, networking is important to the careers of both men and women, in many occupational sectors and industries.

This chapter will discuss the barriers women face with regard to both of these and how both can be career promoters to women in the SET/STEM sector. Following our discussion of mentoring and networking issues, we will use evidence from our Barriers research, to provide examples of the opportunities and problems the women identified with mentoring, networking and progression. We will commence by looking at mentoring.

MENTORING

The dictionary definition of a mentor is "a wise and trusted counsellor or teacher" (www.dictionary.com). Mentoring is a relationship, traditionally between two people, the mentor who is the more experienced and the mentee or protégé, the inexperienced. Generally defined, mentoring is an activity in which an individual with advanced knowledge or experience actively provides assistance and support to enhance the career development of an individual with less knowledge and experience (Kram, 1985; Hayden, 2006). Mentoring can also bridge the gap between the educational process and the real-world experience (Barker, 2005). Researchers have purported that mentoring holds many benefits, especially benefits related to career development/progression for those who are mentored (Ragins and Cotton, 1999; Nielson, Carlson, and Lankau, 2001; Goldman and Schmalz, 2001; Allen et al., 2004). Research has looked at the potential benefits of mentoring for the mentor (Koskinen and Tossavainen 2003; Allen, Lentz, and Day, 2006; Allen, Eby, and Lentz, 2006). Many of the articles included

in this review have tended to come from the US (i.e. Kram, 1985; Ragins, 1989; Allen, Eby, and Lentz, 2006). However, there are numerous articles from Britain, Australia and Europe (Durbin and Tomlinson, 2010, Durbin, 2011, Tibbals, 2011, Ramaswami, Dreher, Bretz and Wiethoff, 2010, Linehan and Walsh, 1999, Fowler and O'Gorman, 2005 Kroskinen and Tossavarinen, 2003).

Access to Mentoring

It is argued that both men and women can benefit from mentoring yet many researchers put forward that women and ethnic minorities do not have the same or an equal ability as white men to access adequate mentors (Ragins, 1989; Linehan and Walsh, 1999; Anderson, 2005; Bussy-Jones et al., 2006). This lack of access to mentoring, being in part due to women and ethnic minorities lack of visibility in the higher echelons of professions and management (Vinnecombe and Singh, 2003). Mentoring is a complex process and there is a wealth of research on the various different aspects and attributes associated with the process. Mentoring has been researched across numerous professional disciplines including nursing, medicine, academia, management, business, biosciences, and technology. According to White et al. (1992, cited in Linehan and Walsh, 1999), much of the literature on mentoring comes from America and from a male perspective. The country in which the research sample is gained may be relevant, as it has been argued that there are various different approaches and goals to mentoring depending on the country (Clutterbuck and Megginson 1991 in Megginson, 2000). Clutterbuck and Megginson (1991), argue that the style of mentoring in America is paternalistic, while in Britain, it is more individualistic and insight focused. The authors put forward that the goal of mentoring in America is sponsorship and career promotion whereas in Britain the goal is insight, learning and support.

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