

Seven Career Pitfalls Affecting Women – Tip 17

Women sometimes unknowingly create a negative impact during job interviews or in on-the-job interactions with others. Here is a list of seven career pitfalls affecting women based on my direct experience and from I hear from recruiters and executive coaches:

Interview tips:

1. Do not wear low-cut or V-neck blouses. When interviewers ask questions that might be uncomfortable to answer, women often blush at the neck and upper chest. When this happens, it is a clue to the interviewer that they have hit a nerve and need to pursue more detailed questioning on the subject that caused the blushing.
2. Avoid bright or strong contrasting colors as interviewers will be distracted and are likely to pay more attention to what you are wearing or your choice of colors, rather than on what you are saying.
3. Have a strong, confident, but not effusive, handshake. Look into the other person's eyes when you shake their hand. You are a resource with skills and experience an employer needs and they are willing to pay you for them. You are not another candidate just looking for a job.

On-the Job Tips:

1. When you attend large meetings, make a point of sitting in front. You will be more engaged and noted by those making presentations even if you have nothing to say or contribute. Others in the room will note that you are confident enough about yourself that you want a "front row seat." It sends a subtle statement that you have high self-esteem and that you want to be engaged. If you sit in the back, your presence will not be noted or it will seem to others as if you didn't attend.
2. When in small group meetings or in one-on-one discussions, don't make statements that might put people on the defensive or make them feel that you are putting forth an idea that they must accept, like "I think we should do it this way." Instead, use questions with subtle wording that contributes to the conversation, like "What do you think if we did it this way?" Be careful though and don't make it sound as if you are being submissive, by asking "What do you think?" in a way that doesn't suggest a solution or an outcome.
3. When you are in a one-on-one meeting and talking to someone in particular, look directly at them and establish eye contact. If you don't, you likely will not be getting their full attention, or respect.
4. When supervising or managing others, don't tell your subordinates what to do or how you would do it. Engage them in a conversation by asking them to explain how they think something needs to be done or how they think they should approach solving the problem. Lend your experience and wisdom but let them make decisions. If you make all the decisions, they won't take responsibility and will not be able to replace you. As a result, you will never get promoted.

Carl Wellenstein is an employment and career strategist located in Southern California and is the author of 12 Steps to a New Career. He helps those in mid-career facilitate career advancement, expedite job changes, and pursue new career destinies.