Bulletin Board: Girl's guide to enjoying a career

by Amy_Winter

Females still face hardships climbing the workplace ladder, so two writers have decided to reach out and help women take control of their careers. Caitlin Friedman and Kimberly Yorio, authors of "The Girl's Guide to Kicking Your Career Into Gear," focus on how women can achieve what they want in a job. Their two prior books provided girl guides to starting a new business and succeeding as a woman in charge.

"We want to explore women's stories and offer a place for them," says Yorio. "Many times women don't like talking about work, but we learn from each other's stories."

Friedman and Yorio say women employees should sell their accomplishments to the boss. Don't fear being disliked or having a supervisor say no to ideas, they say. The authors recommend promoting achievements, marketing talents, increasing networks and facing doubts to achieve that promotion.

Female workers can't sit back and expect to rise to the top. Be yourself at work. Avoid hiding your talents and character; bring them to the conference table, according to Friedman. Write down your accomplishments. Try to tackle harder assignments.

"Start working with your boss on your career planning," says Friedman. "Start selling your successes to your boss in a style that is comfortable to you - weekly e-mails or face-to-face meetings."

Keep a good attitude about change. Embrace who you are today and how you are different from five years ago, according to the authors. Don't go along with stereotypes or project them on others, but be aware of them so that they don't limit your achievements.

Define your own success. A satisfying career might be an exciting job or the ability to balance life and career - there isn't one definition. Success becomes easier to achieve when it is personally defined, according to the authors.

Friedman and Yorio's Web site allows women to share their stories, ask for advice and read tips to be more content and successful in the workplace. Users can see when the authors will be doing their next workshop, purchase Girl Guide books and read current blogs.

The site enables women to "ask questions, get feedback and support each other's progress," says Yorio.

The authors hope to address the issue of balancing life and career in their next book. A work/life balance can be tough, and many women take time off work when their children are small. They advise keeping track of your contacts when you're at home in order to be prepared when returning to the office. You shouldn't be kept away from top positions due to family obligations.

"Wouldn't it be great to hear other stories," says Friedman. "Challenges in the workplace aren't unique to us."

For more information, visit www.girlsguidetobusiness.com.

BENEFITS MATTER

Money isn't the only encouragement for drawing in job candidates. It seems benefit packages follow closely behind salaries. Thirty-seven percent surveyed by Robert Half International, a staffing firm that interviewed 1,400 chief financial officers, say paying higher compensation than competitors is most effective in recruiting job-seekers. But 33 percent of respondents say benefit packages are most influential, up from 2 percent in the 2003 survey.

Telecommuting and flexible work schedules finished in third place with 13 percent of respondents, followed by signing bonuses and extra vacation days at 4 percent, and other responses finished with 1 percent. Eight percent didn't have an answer.

Increasing medical costs may have influenced the importance of health packages among workers.

"Companies that do not provide comprehensive employment packages, including competitive compensation and insurance programs, risk losing top job candidates to other opportunities," says Max Messer, chairman and CEO of Robert Half.

"Whether it's higher salaries and enhanced health-care coverage or accelerated career-advancement opportunities, employers should determine and effectively communicate what makes their company a great place to work when speaking with prospective employees," Messer added.

For more information, visit www.rhi.com.

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