

From the desk of the Founder & President

QUEEN BEE

by Deirdre Joy Smith

Over the years, I have had opportunities to interact with several women's organization across the country. Working with women from all walks of life—who are going above and beyond to make a difference in the lives of women and girls—has been one of the most inspiring experiences of my life. We share stories of our hopes, dreams, fears and difficulties. When times are tough, I rely on this great sisterhood as a source of support and encouragement. Unfortunately, as POWER® expands to other markets and our visibility increases, we are encountering some challenges from a rather unlikely source: other women's organizations that have been in the trenches for several years.

In swapping stories with a number of somewhat younger women who are running organizations across the country, I have found that we all have similar stories about how some of the more established women's groups have tried to block our progress and, in some instances, disparage our work. We all have our theories as to why we are experiencing, in some cases, visceral attacks from our big sisters—the economy, generational gap, racial bias—but whatever our lens, one thing we all agree on is that such actions are counterproductive and hindering the progress of women!

I am often told that "there are a lot of women's organizations out there" and that we should consolidate our efforts. In fact, often times our groups collaborate, but organizations, just like any other business entity, have the right to exist individually in the market place. The market will determine which organizations thrive, merge or emerge at a later date. With diverse issues such as genital mutilation, equal pay, increasing the number of women on corporate boards, etc., the need for organizations to promote and provide multiple platforms for women is more important today than ever.

A recent and surprising example of the progress of women was when Kathryn Bigelow became the first woman in the Oscar's 82-

year history to win the award for "Best Director." I celebrated that night, but also took pause—82 years!!! Several groups have done extensive research as to how and why we have made progress in parity, but there is so much more we must accomplish. We don't need one more dismal report to remind us that although women comprise half of the workforce, only 3% of Fortune 500 companies have women CEOs. I recently had lunch with a friend who proclaimed "we don't need any more research—we need action!"

To ensure parity, we must cultivate the next generation of women leaders now. We need talented players who will bring a new perspective and energy. Our goal should be to have a "deep bench" of confident women who are poised to take

the helm, whether of a major not-for-profit, that corner suite or as department chair. Veterans of women's advocacy should serve as a bridge for the next generation of women, not an obstacle that prevents them from reaching their full potential—

regardless of age or race! The younger generation and those new to advocacy, ask, hope and work for wisdom and guidance from those who have been doing this work for many years. They look to such leaders for respect and encouragement. There is too much work to go it alone or against each other. We need all hands on deck! I believe that we can exist independently and work simultaneously. Through support of one another and respect of various goals, we can together build a brighter future for all women.

POWER® salutes our partners who have opened doors for us in many cities, and encourage you to support their upcoming programs. Scroll down to see upcoming events in your area.

POWER® welcomes your feedback. Please send your comments to power@womensnetworkingcommunity.org.

Deirdre Joy Smith is the Founder & President of **POWER: Opening Doors for Women**. She recently received an Impact Award from the **Chicago Foundation for Women**. The award was given to 25 recipients who impact the lives of women and girls in the Chicago-land area.

To learn more visit www.cfw.org



POWER Spotlight How to Toot Your Own Horn

by Gail Golden

They tell us the economy is getting better, but for many of us the scene is still pretty grim. Even those who still have jobs are often feeling

overworked, underpaid, and insecure. Many of us are doing work that used to be done by two or more people, and we are still not sure our jobs will be there tomorrow or the next day.

This is a great time to demonstrate how you bring value your company. Making sure your boss knows about your contributions is good job insurance. Unfortunately, most women are terrific at doing a good job and lousy at making sure others know about and value our contributions. We are afraid we will look pushy and boastful. As a result, others often get the credit, the jobs, the promotions, and the raises we rightly earned.

But how do you let your manager know about your value without marching down the hall chanting, "I'm so great!" Here are three key suggestions:

- Keep your manager informed about your progress. Check in regularly and ask for his/her input. Then it's the most natural thing in the world to share your successful completion of your work and thank your manager for his/her help.

- Talk about your successes with joy and gratitude, rather than with pride. For instance, "I am so excited. I just found out the team is going to move forward with my suggestion for the ad campaign. I feel so fortunate to have this chance."

- Be a huge cheerleader for others' contributions and successes. If you are enthusiastic and talkative about others' achievements, people will be more accepting when you are enthusiastic and talkative about your own.

The goal: Make yourself indispensably valuable to your company by doing great work and building your reputation for excellence.

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