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Why Push Back?

Last fall, I stood before hundreds of women, presenting a workshop on negotiation skills. The scene was the Pennsylvania governor's conference for women, an event that brings together 4,500 women from around the world, with the aim of promoting gender balance in leadership and facilitating rousing debates, discussions, and learning. The promise of my session was similar to that of this book: to give attendees techniques to maneuver through tough bargaining conversations—techniques they could use in all areas of their lives.

The women who attend this conference are extremely bright—most hold advanced degrees and are very successful professionally. They are also engaged, vocal, and motivated when it comes to shaping the trajectory of their careers. Kicking off the session, I asked the question, "Who in this room counteroffered when negotiating your current salary?" About 10 percent of the women raised their hands.

This picture was uniquely unsettling but not unique. It's representative of women's behavior when negotiating—and not just about salary. According to the research of Carnegie Mellon's Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever, women report "a great deal of apprehension" about negotiation at a rate 2.5 times more than men.[1]

How is it possible that in the year 2012—when there are more women than men in the workforce[2] and women earn more degrees than men[3]—women are still apprehensive about negotiating? After all, we negotiate every day in countless ways. We bargain with our

children and partners, making almost daily trades and concessions of our time. We demand a refund on a broken stroller, negotiate with our bosses to ensure coverage while we're on vacation, or ask the hotel maître d' for a room further away from the elevator. We're in bargaining situations all the time. Yet, time and again, my female colleagues, students, and friends tell me resoundingly, "I hate negotiating and I'm no good at it."

Women Leaders Get There by Asking

When researching my first book, I spoke with thirty women executives about how they own and use their power at work. I learned that successful women ask for what they want; I even dedicated a full chapter of that book to the art of asking. The women executives I convened figured out through experience that doing good work does not guarantee rewards. They learned that people who are vocal and advocate on their own behalf move up, not those who wait to be noticed. In interviewing them, I also learned that women who achieve leadership status challenge long-standing beliefs. They push back on the "good-girlisms" with which they grew up: "be seen and not heard," "always be nice," and "don't be too outspoken." They don't take "no" as a final, damning answer, nor do they allow rejection to create a deeply personal wound. On the contrary, to survive in a top role, women executives ask for what they want. They're firm. They don't accept what's unacceptable. They speak and maneuver with power.

To understand how women leaders achieve this level of savvy, I sought out even more specific data, turning to a new set of twenty women leaders in the top echelons of their fields. I had the pleasure of sitting down with these women in hour-long mentoring sessions, to hear in their own words about the learning, mistakes, observations, and successes they'd experienced with self-advocacy.

I started each interview by defining the term *pushback* to be certain we had the same foundation of understanding. The word is often used to mean resistance. I explained that I was using it rather more broadly—and more positively. In the context of those interviews and of this book, *pushback* represents the group of skills that allow us to take a stand, be firm, or advocate on our own behalf. It also encompasses our adeptness at advancing a cause, making a request, and persuading others of the merits of our view. We can use it to go after what we want, and we can use it to defend what is ours and what we need.

We're called on to push back when

- We're asked to chair an event. We want to say "no" but our reflex is to answer "yes."
- We're told that there are two paths for advancement at our job: option A and option B. We're interested in the nonexistent option C.
- We're interested in expanding our small business internationally and we'll need to get our business partners, all of whom are satisfied with the status quo, onboard.
- We've had a strong year at work, hitting all of our targets, but we've just been notified we'll be receiving a 2.5 percent raise.
- We're shuttling our kids to their fifth doctor appointment in two months and fuming that we don't share this responsibility with our partner.
- We're being talked down to in a meeting, when in fact we have a master's degree in the subject at hand and ten years' experience in the field.
- We spend $250 on a long-anticipated meal for a special occasion, only to experience an evening of rude waitstaff and cold soup.
- We've just been assigned another administrative project when what we really want is to manage a client account.

Self-Advocacy Matters Everywhere

A study of 136 women receiving care at an ultrasound clinic examined women's beliefs about their role in medical encounters with their physicians. Women who reported repeating information when they felt their doctors did not hear them, asking their doctors to explain information they did not understand, or reminding their doctors about screening tests were more likely to receive needed diagnostic tests than those who reported using these assertive behaviors less often. Interestingly, women who behaved assertively were more likely to view physicians as advisors in their health care and less likely to view their physicians as experts.[4]

Pushback is not always a formal process, as you can see from the previous examples. Sometimes a simple switch in the way we view our role can be action enough to drive a negotiation or debate in a favorable direction. Seeing the other person in a nondeferential and a more equal, peer-to-peer way can also make all the difference in getting the outcomes we want. What's more, pushback is not always about a grand issue or dealt with on a large scale. Each scenario, large or small, requires similar skills. If you're tackling a negative experience with a maître d' or looking to challenge your boss, you'll need a firm voice, you'll want to be ready for a different range of reactions, and you'll have to be crystal clear about your main message. It's important to know where you won't give an inch and where you're open to considering alternatives and options or hearing their side. Ratchet this up to the top level—to Middle East peace negotiations, let's say—and you'll find that our world's leaders have to summon a similar mind-set. Pushback skills, you see, can be called on by anyone, anywhere, in any debate situation.

In my interviews for this book, I asked women questions about preparing for negotiations—navigating and communicating one's

way through them. I asked how they physically carried themselves in a tough conversation. I asked about the nuts and bolts of pushback how-to and about the inside dish—the stuff no one tells you about in the corporate world but that you need to know in order to thrive in it. I learned about how to gain self-worth, how to engage in office politics positively, and how engaging allies can drive the outcome of a pushback situation. I also queried the women about how they manage relationships after a tough conversation or when they're called on to hold repeated negotiations with the same person.

What caught my attention most in analyzing my data was the answer to a numerical question. I asked these women leaders, "Assuming a woman's career success equals 100 percent, what percentage is accounted for by her effectiveness in negotiating and pushing back?" Of the twenty responses I heard, the answer was compelling. The executives I met with felt, on average, that a full 60 percent of a woman's career success hinges on her pushback skills. One interviewee said, "Pushback and being firm is a large part of your career. You have to operate like you're a shareholder and like you own the company." Although technical skills, academic or business pedigree, and people skills are necessities for those who want to lead, command of your own voice and ability to advocate, according to successful women executives, ranks higher. You can assess for yourself how important pushback is in your particular industry and work environment, but the longer you spend in the corporate world, the more you'll find that 60 percent figure to be rather convincing.

After interviewing more than fifty women executives in writing my columns and books, instead of seeing negotiating and other pushback skills as one part of women owning their power at work, I've come to see it as the *most* important tool at women's disposal. What's more, it's a tool that the top women leaders I interviewed developed through practice. By committing to the art of asserting

themselves and taking risks, these successful women became skilled at learning to negotiate, advocate, stand firm, and push back. And so can you. This book will show you how.

Women's Distaste for Negotiating

How is it that so many women survive professionally without asking for what they want? Negotiation, after all, can make the difference between getting by and flourishing. In their research, Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever made an interesting discovery: women often experience negotiating passively—something that is being done to them—whereas men see themselves as an active participant in a strategic pursuit. As part of their research, they asked women and men to pick metaphors that they associate with the practice of negotiating. Women most often selected "going to the dentist," and men more often chose "a ballgame" or "a wrestling match."[5] This finding demonstrates, in a painfully clear way, that women not only think of negotiating as a passive experience, but also as uncomfortable as getting a cavity fixed.

Women hesitate to negotiate and push back for many reasons. Chief among them, I would argue, is a relentless—and often subconscious—belief that relationship should trump outcome or agenda. For example, let's say that Janelle, a twenty-eight-year-old junior account manager, is passed over to lead an important new project at work. She is inclined to protest or try to change her boss's mind but doubts quickly start to creep in. How might pushing back change the existing relationship between her and her boss? "What if I'm laughed at, belittled, challenged, or disregarded?" she wonders. The damage, it seems to Janelle, could be irreparable, and is thus not worth the risk.

A second common reason why women shy away from self-advocacy is a paralyzing need for perfect conditions. We are often

plagued by misgivings that emanate from the seductively simple questions, "What if I'm wrong?" or "What if I'm not ready?" Both men and women face uncertainty and doubts, to be sure, but men tend to handle this predicament differently than women do. Research shows that in self-assessments, men tend to overestimate their abilities and women commonly underestimate theirs. Take for example a study conducted internally by Hewlett-Packard. The IT giant noticed that women incumbents were applying for internal job openings much less frequently than their male counterparts. Leaders commissioned a study to learn more, and what they found was revealing. Although men noted that they would respond to a job posting if they met 60 percent of the requirements, women would only apply for open jobs if they thought they met 100 percent of the criteria listed. Similarly, banking company Lloyds TSB found that although female employees were 8 percent more likely than men to meet or exceed performance expectations, they tended not to apply for promotions.[6] Often we women feel we have to achieve perfection, that we need *all* of the answers—along with guaranteed outcomes—in order to take a risk (even though risk involves taking action *without* total certainty).

Raising our hands then, either as participants or as resisters, can feel like an impossibly loaded affair. If we must seamlessly maintain our relationships while getting every fact and figure exactly right—if we are insistent on "victory or bust"—no wonder we don't want to ask for what we want!

The Cost of Not Asking for What We Want

Pushing past our discomfort with advocacy, risk, and negotiating, however, is critical for our success. Negotiations are among the most materially significant dealings we have in our personal lives, and they are particularly important at work. What other conversations

create value, drive growth, or increase monetary profit at the same rate? When we hesitate to ask for what we want, it substantially hurts our earning potential, our access to plum work assignments, and our opportunities for promotions. From a broader perspective, not asking for what we want limits our input in decisions that affect us, making our voice a barely audible whisper. Not asking encourages us to accept what is, to consent to that with which we disagree, and to leave a world of opportunity unclaimed.

Take Fatima, a thirty-seven-year-old accountant, who had to decide whether or not she wanted to take a particular job. Fatima was being courted by a local firm with a good reputation. She liked the people she'd interviewed with, her commute to work would be shortened by taking this job, and she felt comfortable and at ease in the work culture the company fostered. The job seemed a clear improvement over her last position, and promised to come with a talented swath of colleagues and a boss who was hands-off. There was only one issue: she wouldn't get paid quite as much as she was making at her current job.

Although she was bothered by her current fate of being perpetually strapped financially, Fatima nonetheless accepted the job. Six months later, she put her finger on an uncomfortable thought. She felt a perceptible resentment toward herself and the company. She was working hard, delivering what she was supposed to, and yet she complained, "I feel like I'm being taken. I'm giving a lot, but not getting much in return when it comes to money." She griped at home—and to anyone else who'd listen—about how she wasn't being paid fairly.

You can imagine Fatima's bitterness when, while having lunch with Rachel, a newly hired accountant, she excitedly told Fatima she was able to negotiate a much more favorable salary than the last job she'd held. Incredulous, Fatima demanded, "How did you do it?!"

"I just asked for it," said Rachel breezily.

Fatima paid too much for not pushing back on her salary offer. Not only did she acquiesce to continuing to live with money worries, her resentment negatively affected her relationship with her new employer from day one and gave her unneeded mental stress. The funny thing about asking is that when we get used to living *without* doing it, any semblance of negotiating becomes as uncomfortable as, say, wearing burlap undergarments. We funnel our discomfort into unproductive and unsatisfying channels: we grumble about our problem to everyone *except* the person who can do something about it. We lambast ourselves for not having the nerve to protest. We are disgusted at how far we'll go to avoid a confrontation altogether. And we may think back disappointedly to a time when we caved, capitulating way too easily with a smile and a "yes," when what we really wanted to say was "no" (I've certainly had this experience).

Deciding whether or not to negotiate or advocate is part of something larger—our conditioning. Animal trainers know a thing or two about the effects of habituation. Elephant trainers, for example, tie baby elephants to poles, and the babies can't get loose no matter how they resist and tug. As the elephants grow and develop to massive proportions and great power, however, they don't realize that they can easily free themselves. So as full-grown adults, they don't even bother trying to escape. Similarly, our assessment of our own power, whether right or wrong, drives the action we're willing to take.

Many of us might recall a pushback situation in which we didn't feel the slightest bit powerful. We then attach that feeling to a sense of what we deserve and who we are in the long term. So we don't ask for what we want, and we never get to challenge our deep-seated thoughts of inadequacy, which means we never get to prove them wrong! And so the cycle continues. At the same time, the effect of experience can work in quite an opposite way. By taking action and

practicing the thing we're afraid of, we can give ourselves wins that show us we have power and can use it, leading to a virtuous cycle.

Ironically, as uncomfortable as the thought of asking for what we want is, living without negotiating—without insisting on mutually positive terms—is much tougher than advocating your case. Another irony is that our relationships are actually strengthened when we let the other person know what we want and where we stand. Everything from the conditions of our work, to the projects we take on, to the deadlines to which we agree, is negotiable. Our career prospects can be greatly accelerated when we advocate for what we want and, by the same principle, can be heavily weighed down and stalled by inaction. If you're trying to navigate from point A to point B, wouldn't you prefer a high-powered, state-of-the-art propeller boat as opposed to an oarless rowboat? Indeed, between pushing back and not pushing back, there's no contest.

Pushback and Economic Power

If you're reluctant to ask for what you want, consider that the tangible costs of not negotiating are many. By omitting negotiation from salary discussions, for example, a woman stands to lose more than $1,000,000 over the course of her life compared to a man.[7]

It's been demonstrated that men and women tend to perceive and value money differently. For example, in a national workplace study conducted by LLuminari, Inc., a health education company, researchers found men value pay, money, and benefits, as well as power, authority, and status significantly more than women.[8] Conversely, Lois Frankel, author of *Nice Girls Don't Get Rich*, notes that women value friends and relationships, recognition and respect, communication, fairness and equity, collaboration, and family and home life more than men. Women are encouraged to save money

for emergency situations and to spend largely on items to benefit their families, whereas men are often socialized to enlarge their pot of money—to grow and invest it. Women often see money negotiations as tied to their deservingness and what is "fair," whereas men are motivated to negotiate based on what they want.[9]

According to Michael J. Silverstein, Kate Sayre, and John Butman, coauthors of *Women Want More*, women control nearly $20 trillion of the world's spending power, a share that is expected to increase to $28 trillion by 2013.[10] Even so, the fact that we generally earn less than men increases—and amplifies—our financial dependence on them. With half of all marriages ending in divorce, our own share of earning becomes even more of a vitally important lifeline. What's more, the National Committee on Pay Equity found that since the passage of the Equal Pay Act in 1963, women's wages have risen at a molasses-slow rate; less than a half-penny per year.[11] Indeed, as my mentor and top woman leader, Gail Evans, has been known to say, "A man is not a financial plan."

Women also live longer than men, which means, according to financial expert Manisha Thakor, author of *On My Own Two Feet*, we are the ones literally left holding the purse. With less earnings than men, and a tendency to let males take care of bills and savings, the stability of our retirements become endangered.[12] Consider too that over a lifetime women spend an average of twenty-seven years in the workforce, whereas men will spend almost forty years. According to advocacy and education group WISER (Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement), women leave the labor force to have children and care for family members, which means that women retirees receive about half the pension benefits retired men can count on.[13] That means that as a group we are already at an economic disadvantage compared to men, even before we account for the wage disparity between the sexes.

More than any other group, we women need to push back when it comes to getting paid fairly for our work. "What if asking for more money makes me look greedy?" and "What if my number-one priority isn't money?" you might ask. Being paid fairly isn't about being greedy or opportunistic. It's about claiming what's rightfully yours. It's about expecting to have discussions around such matters as money and benefits to reach a mutually beneficial agreement. It's about not assuming you'll be taken care of by outer forces or automatically looked after.

When we negotiate and speak up about what we want, we give our bosses and peers the opportunity to meet our needs or remedy our problem. By not asking managers for the client accounts, leadership opportunities, or visible projects that we want to be part of, we deny them and ourselves the rewards of direct, honest communications. A similar dynamic exists with something else of great import to us: our time. When we see ourselves as able, active negotiators, we consider the flexibility of our schedules, for example, to be a perfectly normal focus of conversation with our manager.

If you're suffering mercilessly day in and day out with a one-and-a-half hour commute, ask yourself, like so many of us need to, if you've done all you can to come up with alternatives and advocate for them. If you have a family, then you might be like many women who have ended up as the primary breadwinners in their household as a result of the economic downturn. Having a less-than-ideal work arrangement can have a direct bearing on the comfort level of our and our family's future. In fact, with all of our advances and modern amenities, the U.S. employment policies continue to be outdated and structured in a way that disadvantages women and their families. For example, we have one of the least generous maternity leave policies in the world, ranking among five countries that do not require employers to offer employees a form of paid maternity leave. According to a study by McGill University's Institute for Health and Social Policy, the United

States, Lesotho, Liberia, Papua New Guinea, and Swaziland were the only countries out of 173 assessed that did not guarantee any paid leave for mothers. Most of the countries studied offer mothers fourteen or more weeks of paid leave.[14] What's more, studies show that when women leave the workforce to have children, they reenter faced with few choices, inflexible boundaries, and perceived workplace penalties, often resulting in depression and pessimism.

It is true that inequity—and even sexism—still exists in corporate America, keeping women from reaching parity in pay, benefits, and top positions at our companies. At the same time, many of us give in to our own aversion to negotiating, advocacy, and pushback, which results in us losing a great deal of our power: power to change our own situation for the better, power to help advocate for someone else, *and* power to reshape the business landscape so that the glass ceiling disappears. Certain external barriers may indeed exist but let's insist that we won't play a role in adding to these inequities. What was true in the past still rings true today: not asking for what is ours and for what we want devastates our potential as women.

Young Women and Pushback

If you are a young woman at the beginning of your career, you will be just as challenged to confront the current state of the workplace, which includes largely male-made, male-driven corporate cultures. Women of your generation, Gen Yers, are known for placing a high value on independence, on achieving personal goals, and doing things on their own terms.

Yet research shows that despite their hopes and ambition, young women still see limitations. An Accenture study, for example, finds that young, working female millennials (ages twenty-two to thirty-five years old) cite a number of gender-related barriers to their current and future careers, including the pay scale for women (30 percent),

a corporate culture that favors men (28 percent), general stereotypes (26 percent), daycare availability (24 percent), lack of women in the top echelons of their organization (20 percent), and obstacles from wanting to start a family (20 percent).[15] It's up to Gen Yers to see that limitations are often the perfect proving ground for negotiating for something better.

To be sure, the next generation of women leaders are the most educated, worldly, multitasking group yet. As such, most of you are looking for hybrid opportunities that allow you to crosspollinate your work and outside interests, integrating your professional *and* personal lives. More than any generation before you, a full 85 percent of you plan on remaining in the workforce after having children.[16]

The impression working boomer moms have left on you is significant. Economist Sylvia Ann Hewlett and her team conducted research examining that intersection in *Bookend Generations.* Sixty-two percent of Gen Y women surveyed by Hewlett confirmed that they don't want to emulate their mothers' "extreme" careers, which involved long hours. If family is going to be a priority, it is felt, the costs of extreme work are simply too great.[17]

You may feel a clear discomfort mimicking workaholic parents, but those of you who had stay-at-home mothers don't necessarily want that path either. Hewlett found that boomers' black-or-white vision of work—opt in and go full throttle or opt out and never have a career—is too constricting a philosophy for Gen Y women. Instead, the youngest female workers tend to give equal emphasis to family and career.

As young women, you are well poised to demand upgrades to the modern workplace. However, Gen Yers will be welcomed by workplaces that are more demanding—not less so—in terms of hours and performance. What's more, Americans today are working more hours per week than in previous years, upping their face time in a culture of "do more with less." Although Gen Yers' vision may

be a needed one, a rift between them and employers is certain, and it will be worsened by younger workers not advocating their needs.

But as you maneuver through the first half of your career, you may find that the workplace—and the rigid limitations it imposes, particularly on women—are sobering and disappointing. Much of what women in your generation want for themselves doesn't yet exist. If you want a career custom-built on your own terms, you *must* become a savvy negotiator. And although many Generation Y women might not be inclined toward established leadership positions, those of you who pursue them will need the ability to push and then to push back if your needs and those of your peers are rejected. Self-advocacy, particularly to push for unprecedented terms, will be essential to thrive in a work environment that's still fairly unyielding and largely built for noncaretakers.

What's more, much ado has been made about the dearth of women in substantive leadership roles in government, corporate America, and the nonprofit sector. We need to change these ratios. Whether you are just starting your career or you are well established, asking for what you want can grant you access to top jobs you never thought you could have.

When we don't push back, the effects cascade beyond us. We model for younger women and girls who mimic us—the younger sister who looks up to you with pride and awe as you graduate from an MBA program or your young subordinate who learns about leadership by watching you at work—that it's okay to accept the unacceptable. We demonstrate in the most compelling of ways—through our actions—that speaking up is a liability. If you can't get excited about pushback for your own sake, then call on your concern for others, your entire generation, and the generation that comes after yours. Think about the legacy you are leaving with every action or inaction you take.

Women and Negotiating—a Natural Fit

As I mentioned previously, many women don't like negotiating and may think they're no good at it. But the good news is that women are innately strong negotiators. You might not have gotten that impression from the various leadership training programs for women that, although well-intentioned, often suggest implicitly that women need fixing. Somehow the message those programs seem to communicate is that when it comes to negotiating men have got it right, and that women, inferior and lacking, need educating to learn what they're missing.

I believe otherwise. I believe that women are not deficient. We possess every intellectual tool—and then some—needed to negotiate. In some ways, women have even more bargaining chips than men when you consider, for example, that they earn the majority of advanced degrees today. Similarly, women's collective leadership skill set turns out to be the ideal complement for modern business, lending a collaborative, team-centric management approach to traditionally transactional business dealings. Women have traits that make negotiations into conversations, for example, our ability to see someone's discomfort or need to save face.

Dr. Daniel Goleman points out in his research that technical intelligence is less of a success indicator than we originally thought. Emotional intelligence—the process of recognizing our own feelings and those of others—accounts for a far larger piece of what is required to lead. In his book *Working with Emotional Intelligence,* Goleman notes, "Women, on average, tend to be more aware of their emotions, show more empathy, and are more adept interpersonally [than men]."[18] Reading emotions, it turns out, is a critical success tactic in negotiations, helping a person to quickly pivot, change an approach, or distinguish which issues need to be brought to the surface and further explored.

Additionally, when women negotiate, they tend to do so in a consultative way, meaning that they approach the conversation inquisitively, aiming to understand and solve a problem together with a counterpart (think *us versus the problem* rather than *me versus you*). Women excel at asking diagnostic, or deepening, questions when they need more information, a maneuver that gives a negotiator the instant benefit of more information. This consultative approach tends to put people at ease, builds rapport, and can translate to an advantage. The ability to empathize also can create a relationship where there was formerly none, allowing a woman to gain trust and avoid ego-fueled duels.

Rather than approaching negotiating as a simple business matter, a woman will often build rapport first, asking questions and getting clarity, and push her own agenda second. This way, nuances that were under the surface can come to the forefront and counterparts can be better understood and dealt with. Powerfully, this same collaborative model serves women excellently as negotiators.

Once we get to the negotiating table, women have every opportunity to succeed, outside of our own distaste for self-advocacy and potential conflict, that is. That's precisely why we need a different negotiation mind-set to help us get over the hump. As someone who once pictured negotiation unenthusiastically (think bloody bullfight where someone's going to end up half-dead), I have come to think of it as one exquisitely simple process: a conversation that ends in agreement. This win-win model of negotiating is the one I'll be teaching in this book—it's in line with the stories and insights shared by the women executives I interviewed, it's a good fit with the skills and affinities many women already possess, and it works. Getting clear on why we're asking, knowing that we deserve a seat at the table, and recognizing that our case is worth pursuing are actions that free us to advocate and negotiate from a position of real power.

A Four-Step Model of Negotiation

One of the best investments you'll make in your career is spending time learning a reliable and effective system for negotiation. As you build your skills and learn the art of negotiating, you'll begin to see it not just as a one-time or occasional (and somehow mysterious) transaction but as an everyday necessity. After all, when it comes to daily workplace matters, the question is not *whether* you will have to deal with change, negotiate, or push back accordingly—it's *when* and *how*.

Over the years, I've developed a system for negotiating that is repeatable and adaptable to numerous situations. In the chapters that follow, I will lay out that system and show you how you can apply it and trust it to work. The model has four steps. I'll spend a chapter on each, teaching a mixture of skill-building, strategy, and in-the-moment techniques, so that by the end you will have a box of tools and be well on your way to mastering their use. The last chapter of the book steps back to view a bigger picture, exploring some of the ways the skills of workplace negotiating, advocating, and pushback can further your larger ambitions and goals.

Here are the steps of a thorough, complete, well-conducted negotiation process; you'll notice that more than half of the work takes place before you even sit down at the table.

Step One: Prepare Psychologically

Understanding our own feelings, disposition, strengths, weaknesses, and style is an often overlooked or deemphasized part of the negotiation process but self-understanding can help you better regulate your demeanor during an actual negotiation, among other benefits. If negotiations feel confrontational or uncomfortable to you, understanding the roots of your discomfort with negotiating and pushing back can clear the fog and allow for forward movement. Having a

good picture of your existing strengths and style can help you identify different strengths to build up and new styles to try on, adding to your repertoire of skills.

Step Two: Do Your Homework

Successful women who have become particularly adept at pushing back always do their homework. They work to be the most informed and smartest in the room when it comes to the facts. I will show you how to leverage different levels of information, from data, to opinions, to the environmental and social factors, that buoy support for your cause. This step also involves sussing out your counterpart's driving forces, temperament, and style; preparing the way for the main conversation by soliciting input from other people; crafting a compelling story out of all the data you've gathered; and choosing your style, time, and turf.

Step Three: Maneuver Through the Conversation

Preparing—internally and by doing your homework on your subject and your counterpart—is fine and good but you will demonstrate your true abilities when you steer your way through a real negotiation. Managing yourself in the middle of a tough conversation can be tricky but there are many effective strategies and tactics for navigating it, including the art of making concessions and of dealing with a range of agreeable, dismissive, or even combative partners, the use of what I call *deepening* questions, and the strategic uses of silence.

Step Four: Follow Up

This chapter will cover two different kinds of follow-up practiced by the best negotiators. One is internal, involving reflection on how the conversation went: which techniques were used (on both

sides of the table) and how effective they were, and what factors went into your success (or lack of success, sometimes). This kind of calm, thorough, inquisitive assessment after the fact is a powerful practice for boosting your skills. The other kind of follow-up is really the final step in the negotiating conversation itself. Once you've finalized a negotiation—whether it's a conversation with your boss about getting assigned to a plum project or advocating for one of your ideas—it is critical to view the negotiation as incomplete and still in process. Summarizing the terms that were discussed is an underestimated step of negotiating, and it allows you to protect yourself by making clarifications as needed and minimizing misunderstandings between you and the other party. I will show you strategies to safeguard agreements in writing and verbally, and I'll share with you the importance of maintaining the relationship with your counterpart and your own reputation for professionalism, no matter how the negotiation goes.

SHOOT FOR THE MOON

The pushback skills of negotiation and advocacy aren't just two of several leadership competencies. They're the most important tools at a woman's disposal. A woman can work on being well networked or technically brilliant, but without the ability to skillfully ask for what she wants, she has nothing.

Negotiating and advocating are skill sets you will call on during the length of your career—and they involve skills you can begin building now, starting right where you are. Using exercises, structured advice, and the wisdom and insight of a score of women leaders who've walked the road before you, this book will help you prepare for negotiations by understanding your own emotions and style, building a case, preparing to meet your counterpart, navigating tough conversations, and following up. I wrote this book to get you

thinking, reflecting, and most of all shifting from where you are to where you want to be.

You see, negotiating on your own behalf is about far more than getting a material good. It's about having a voice, piping up, and advocating for yourself. As you strengthen your muscles of self-agency, a whole new world of possibilities will open up. Beyond simply asking more often for what you want and what is rightfully yours, you'll ignite a deep, healthy self-respect. Your strength may even astonish you.