



DANA BLANKENSHIP | 2020 MAURA WOMEN HELPING WOMEN AWARD RECIPIENT

LEADERSHIP FORUM VIRTUAL EVENT SERIES Q&A

What advice do you have for a young female just starting out in my career?

- Don't let the little things hurt your reputation – always get to work a little early, never leave first and always look and act professionally. I was always told to dress like the level I aspired to be and I think that worked for me. Always do what you say you are going to do.
- Look at every opportunity as a learning opportunity. Do your own post mortem on every project to learn from it. Ask people you work with/for for feedback. Don't assume you know what they are thinking. It takes courage to ask for and to give feedback. Even when it stings a little to hear it; listen and evaluate.
- Look for people in your organization that you respect – peers as well as people above you. Find people that you can learn from and offer to help them on something they are working on – even if it means taking on extra work.
- Trust your instincts on everything from people to safety to risk taking. If you feel like you are in a situation you need to get out of then do it.
- Focus on building relationships at work. Relationships outlast projects and jobs. If someone knows you care about them as a person it has a lasting impact.

Have you ever thought about entering politics? As a chapter 3?

- I am flattered by this question, but I don't think I have the stomach for it. I am a bit to mouthy! I will absolutely vote and support campaigns of candidates who are committed to gender and racial equality and human rights.

How do I find a mentor?

- Many companies have official mentoring programs within them. That's a great place to start. If yours does not, then I would encourage you to look for a person in a role a level or 2 above you that you respect and ask if they would be able to have coffee with you. I would encourage you to start with a mentor close to your level because they are most likely to have the time to give to mentoring you and someone in your own organization because they know the challenges in the company you work in.
- Another thing I found helpful in my career was getting a group of peers who meet up periodically for coffee/lunch to be able to coach and help each other. Sometimes your peers have experiences and lessons learned to help you in your own career.

- One thing I would suggest is that you make good use of any time a mentor gives to you. Be organized and succinct. If you are asking for someone's time at a level above you, you need to be a good steward of their time. They are more likely to give you more time, as well as positive reference, if you show them your best self.

How does your mindset and approach translate into improved outcomes for your clients? I feel like they reap the benefits in so many ways as well!

- Our clients benefit from our creative approach to consulting by getting real partners in managing organizational change. Our firm takes a small list of clients so we get to know their companies extremely well. We are able to do projects with much lower start up costs since we know their business as well as their employees.
- We deliver big firm quality of work but at a deeply discounted rate in exchange for our work hour flexibility.
- We find that clients understand the value proposition we offer. We require a few things that big firms don't insist on like minimal travel, flexibility to work from home (even not when in a pandemic! 😊), fewer work hours for those who want that, geographically desirable client locations, interesting work and respectful clients. We are willing to trade rates for quality of life. We select our clients as carefully as they select us - we are looking for partnerships. Every single client we have is either a repeat client or a referral from another client.

How have you found the women you've hired? Do women apply to work with your firm?

- Most of the women in our firm came from big firms or big agency backgrounds. We also have some women who had corporate careers in learning, change management, talent development, corporate communications, etc. We don't have a robust training program so we generally have consultants join us who already have deep skills in the people side of change management. We are always looking at resumes and meeting people who might be a good match for us.