How to get the recognition you deserve at work

Lean In Circle Discussion Guide for Black Women
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Meeting agenda  approx 90 mins

**Member updates**  15 mins

**Watch video**  8 mins

**More context**  5 mins

**Icebreaker**  10 mins

**Activities**

- Activity 1: Discuss strategies to overcome performance bias  15 mins
- Activity 2: Plan to share out recent achievements  25 mins

**One Action**  3 mins

For Circles with only 60 mins, here are suggestions to shorten this agenda:

- Encourage members to watch the video in advance
- Spend 5 mins on member updates

The stock photography used in this guide is courtesy of Getty Images.
Member updates

| 2 mins or less per member | 15-20 mins depending on group size |

Go around your Circle and share personal updates. As a general rule, personal updates should be brief and focus on big changes and important decisions in your life. (It’s OK not to have one every month!) If you have a One Action update, share that with your Circle.

Watch video 8 mins
More context for Black women

Read the information below aloud to your Circle so that everyone starts the meeting with a shared sense of purpose:

Why are we here today?

- In our video How to get the recognition you deserve, you saw that many women struggle to get recognition at work due to performance bias.

- Unfairly, Black women often have to work even harder than most other women to prove their abilities at work.¹ Black women in white-majority workplaces are more likely to have their competence questioned than almost any other major ethnic group of women or men.²

- In spite of this, Black women have been able to push forward and succeed. We are ambitious: 37% of Black women say that they want to become top executives, compared to 27% of white women.³

- We want to help others succeed, too: Of the Black women who want to become top executives, around half say they are motivated by the desire to be role models for others like them.⁴

- For Black women to have a fair chance to succeed at work, we need systemic change.

- But in the meantime, research shows that there are ways you can get the recognition you deserve without having to work twice as hard.

- This meeting will help you put this research into practice in your own working life.
Icebreaker  

Go around the room and have everyone answer this question:

- Can you think of any recent achievements that you would like to get more recognition or credit for? Share one of them with the group (1 minute or less per member).

“I highly suggest everyone have a Brag folder or a Confidence folder or whatever, and just stick all that good stuff in there, no matter how small, no matter how big. If you’re having a bad day or if you feel like you don’t bring value to the team, open up that Brag folder and just read all the stuff you have in there.”

Gladine Frasso, regional manager, environmental health and safety, Lean In Network Leader, Virginia, USA (she/her)
Discuss strategies to overcome performance bias

We can face performance bias in many contexts: when we’re passed over for a promotion, when we receive an unfair performance review, or when colleagues mansplain to us or question our judgment in areas we know well. So it’s a good idea to think about what strategies you’ll use to combat performance bias when it happens—and protect yourself against it by building a reputation for excellence.

Below is Lean In’s list of tips for reducing the impact of performance bias on your career. Read the key takeaways below and discuss as a group:

- Which of these strategies do you think will be most effective in your workplace?
- What additional strategies have helped you, as a Black woman, to get the recognition you deserve?

Key takeaways from video

1. If you doubt your own abilities, take steps to build your confidence.
   - Remind yourself that lacking confidence is **not** a reflection of your abilities. Understand that you might lack confidence because of sexist or discriminatory messages you’ve received.
   - Review evidence of your strengths to build your confidence back up.
   - Prepare as much as you can in advance for meetings, public speaking, or difficult conversations.
   - Refuse to let insecurity hold you back and choose to act anyway. Taking a small step can lead to bigger things.
2. When someone questions your competence, push back strategically.
   ● Ask specific follow-up questions. This can help the person recognize that their assumptions might be wrong.
   ● Be prepared ahead of time. Regularly review evidence of your skills and achievements so you have them top of mind.

3. Take proactive steps to make it more likely your work will be recognized.
   ● Align with your manager on what strong performance looks like in your role.
   ● Talk to your manager about your performance on a regular basis.
   ● Look for opportunities to share the impact of your work with colleagues.
   ● Build relationships with colleagues who can advocate for you. (To learn more about building these relationships, we encourage you to watch our How to find sponsors who’ll accelerate your career video and do the activities in the discussion guide).

“Someone assuming I lack the experience, skills, or competence is such a regular occurrence. I actually can't remember a time when this didn't happen in my life and it's continued throughout my now 20+ year career. In senior leadership roles, I've had countless times as a Black woman when I've walked into a meeting and watched people gasp when I entered. Because my name is not stereotypically Black, people assumed that I was not a Black woman. I've succeeded in spite of these biases because I'm driven by a desire to conquer and prove wrong the people who doubt me. I worked to make sure my achievements were seen. I prioritized high-visibility projects and made sure my manager knew all my success metrics.”

Dawn Cornelius, CEO and entrepreneur, tech and consulting industries, Tennessee, USA (she/her)
1. **Plan to share out recent achievements**

- Spend a few minutes writing a longer list of recent work-related achievements that you did not get full recognition or credit for (e.g., a recently completed project, a client meeting that went well, a higher-than-usual metric).

- Go around the room and have each Circle member read their list.
  - After each list is shared, the group should weigh in on which achievements they admire most.

- Then, write out some notes of how you would communicate one of the achievements to your manager, supervisor, client, or team.

- In writing your notes, think about these questions:
  - How did the achievement impact your organization and advance its mission?
  - Which other team members can you praise for their contributions?
    - List their names and contributions to help you get a clear picture of who did what.
    - Note: Research suggests that it’s important for women to celebrate their colleagues and talk about shared goals whenever they promote their own achievements. This is because it can help to defuse sexist backlash that can sometimes crop up when women talk about their own accomplishments.

- Recognizing teammates is even more critical for Black women, as Black women can unfairly face more backlash than other groups when they talk up their achievements.5

- If it makes sense after sharing your achievement with a manager or supervisor, you may want to follow up with a question like, "How high would your rate this achievement in terms of priority for this role?" or "Would you say this achievement aligns with your biggest priorities for me in this role?" That can help keep you and your manager aligned on your path to success.

2. **Discuss as a group**

Go around the room and share your message or announcement. Celebrate each person for what they’ve accomplished.
Think about one concrete action (big or small) you’ll do to step outside your comfort zone or try something new in the next 30 days.

You might want to commit to sharing out an achievement you’d like more recognition for, as you planned today in Activity 2.

When you meet next time, you can check in on each other’s progress.

Congratulations on a great meeting!

Endnotes


