How to get the recognition you deserve at work

Lean In Circle Discussion Guide for Women with Disabilities
# How to get the recognition you deserve at work

**Lean In Circle Discussion Guide for Women with Disabilities**

## Meeting agenda  
**approx 90 mins**

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<td><strong>Member updates</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Watch video</strong></td>
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<td><strong>More context</strong></td>
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## Activities
- **Activity 1**: Discuss strategies to overcome performance bias  
  - 15 mins
- **Activity 2**: Plan to share out recent achievements  
  - 30 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.
Getting started

**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

“I've strived so hard as a woman and as a person with a disability to be successful in the workplace. Even when it's not explicitly stated, I've often felt that I have to work harder to prove myself or to move ahead.”

Nadia Mossburg, senior manager, public sector, Florida, USA (she/her)
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, women with disabilities often have to work even harder to prove their abilities.¹ When our disability is visible or known to our employer, we have our competence and judgment questioned at work more often than almost any other group. Employers are less likely to assign us challenging projects or growth opportunities, and it can be difficult to get hired in the first place.²
  - Nearly half of women with disabilities have had their judgment questioned at work. Over a third of women with disabilities say that someone else got credit for their work or idea. And nearly a quarter of women with disabilities have been mistaken for someone more junior—more often than women of any other group.

- For women with disabilities to have a fair chance, we need systemic change. But even without systemic change, 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 10 mins

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 or two of them with the group (1 minute or less per member).

“Like a lot of women with disabilities, including myself as a wheelchair user, proving myself is a constant battle. Our society often measures our work by the number of hours that we work. And so I've struggled at times to convince others that I am worthy, whether I work 60 hours or 30. We really need to work on shifting everyone's mindsets away from valuing people who can work a maximum number of hours.”

Andraéa LaVant, president and founder, consulting firm, California, 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 woman with disabilities, 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.

Continue activity on next page
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).
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.
     - 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 you 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

