ed by CAREY-ANN GRESTCHER

As an executive coach, I work with a lot of amazing people, both women and men. Over time, I have seen some themes that women tend to follow throughout their careers that can either hold them back or help them break through barriers at a high level.

There seems to be a five step cycle that women go through in their careers. If an individual plays her cards right in each area, she is home free on the career front.

Yet, if she hesitates or lets fear and insecurities hold her back, then she will have to play a game of catch up later on. To help women in their careers, I would like to share my advice with you for each decade.

WOMEN IN THEIR THIRTIES

First of all, have fun. This is the time in your life when your biggest stresses are often related to school or work. This is when you are discovering your fit in the world.

Apply to all kinds of roles. Go for the ones you are interested in and support diversity for a change. Good networking, mentoring and possessing soft skills can also help you widen your horizons and develop your career.

Make flexibility and work-life balance a part of your wider corporate culture. Companies should offer a broad range of different options. Even in situations where gender diversity is not explicitly pushed through as an official policy, companies accommodate and accept the diversity for the overall agenda in the long term.

GENDER DIVERSITY

Education and awareness are key because people understand how stereotypes work, they will rationalise their own decision-making and communication more carefully.

There can also be cultural biases. Issues that are apparent or invisible stereotypes based on a group of norms or values are at work. In terms of language used at the workplace, for instance, we often don’t speak that language with people who are not from the same ‘race’. We need to ensure that there is representation in leadership. Women need to speak out and be role models.

As we are not always aware of our personal biases, we won’t realise when we are influencing our decision-making. Women are often the primary caregivers and support others. Education and awareness are key because, when people understand how stereotypes work, they will rationalise their own decision-making and communication more carefully.

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