

A photograph of three women in a meeting. The woman in the center, with blonde hair and bangs, is smiling broadly and has her hand on her chest. To her left, a woman with glasses is partially visible, also smiling. To her right, a woman with grey hair is looking towards the center. The background is a blurred office setting.

LEAN IN

How to get the recognition you deserve at work

Lean In Circle Discussion Guide

The
Women
at Work
Collection

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Meeting agenda

approx 80 mins

Member updates

15 mins

Watch video

8 mins

Icebreaker

10 mins

Activities

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

15 mins

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

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 okay not to have one every month!) If you have a One Action update, share that with your Circle.

Watch video

8 mins

Icebreaker

10 mins

Go around the room and have everyone answer these questions:

- What is your greatest professional ambition?
- Why does that motivate you?



“I constantly ask for feedback from my boss. In many situations, that allows me to act on his feedback and maneuver, fix things, or just act in a different way. I report back to him and he's able to see how I react to problems, and that's helped me to gain his trust.”

Clari Bravo García, entrepreneur, energy industry, Lean In Network Leader, Mexico (she/her)

Activity 1: Discuss strategies to overcome performance bias

Discuss strategies to overcome performance bias

15 mins

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 our judgment is questioned in our areas of expertise. 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 get the recognition you deserve?

Key takeaways from the 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 biased 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.

Continue activity on next page

Activity 1 (continued)

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**).



“I was promoted last year. Months beforehand, I told my manager that I’d like to go for the next step in my career. After that, I found opportunities to prove myself, advocate for myself. I was intentional about growing new skills. And because of that, I had more opportunities to lead projects and join leadership meetings. Then, right before my performance review conversation, I sent an email to my manager and really advocated for myself, my achievements, and my progress.”

Di Hu, vice president, education administration, Lean In Network Leader, Washington, DC, USA (she/her)

Activity 2: Plan to share out recent achievements

1. Plan to share out recent achievements

10 mins

- 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 or talk about shared goals whenever they promote their own achievements. This is because it can help to defuse 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

15 mins

Go around the room and share your message or announcement. Celebrate each person for what they've accomplished.

One Action

3 mins

- 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.



“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)

Congratulations on a great meeting!

Endnotes

¹ LeanIn.Org, “Performance Bias,” *50 Ways to Fight Bias* (2019).

² Joan C. Williams and Rachel Dempsey, *What Works for Women at Work* (NYU Press, 2014); Laurie A. Rudman et al., “[Reactions to Vanguard: Advances in Backlash Theory](#),” in *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 45 (Burlington: Academic Press, 2012).

³ LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, [Women in the Workplace 2021](#) (October 2021).

