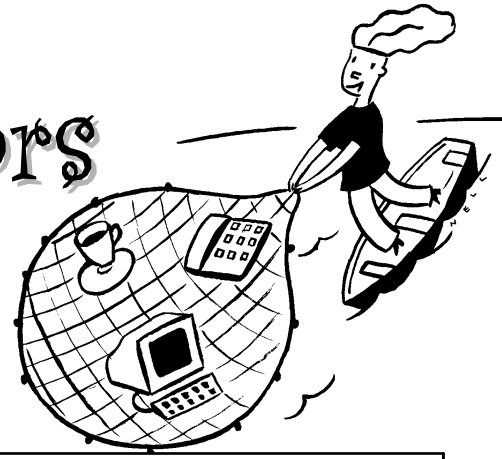


Networking, mentors and lobbying



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Networking

Networks are the people you know, or the people you know who know other people who can help you achieve your goals. They can be informal or organised. Another label for networks in the past was 'having contacts'.

Informal networks include your family, friends, acquaintances, work colleagues, neighbours, church or social group members, and people who share common interests.

There are also formal networks you can join. For example, women's organisations, networks within companies, interdisciplinary working parties or committees involving professionals with a common goal or purpose, industry and professional networks. Some require a subscription and you receive regular newsletters that contain information about issues, events, training opportunities, seminars and workshops, and conferences.

Networks:

- provide an invaluable information resource;
- enable you to receive and distribute information, advice and ideas;
- can help you to find out about vacant positions on boards or committees;
- can support and encourage you to take risks;
- remind you that you are not alone;
- allow you to tap into a wider community;
- allow you to gain from others' experiences and to share your own;
- provide opportunities to meet other women who can become role models and/or mentors and vice versa;
- can boost your confidence.

'It can be a really lonely occupation if you do not have those sort of networks ... It is quite possible even to call together a group of people you do not know and say, "I want you to brief me on this particular issue"... people who have something to say are very happy to come to that sort of meeting and you can use your position on a committee, particularly if it is seen as having some clout, to ask people for information ...' Clare Petre

Mentors

They are people who will:

- be a role model;
- believe in your potential;
- support and encourage you;
- protect you if need be;
- provide you with opportunities for growing and learning;
- give you access to a wide network of contacts;
- nurture personal growth;
- act as a sounding board;
- give you advice.

Anyone can be a mentor. He or she can be someone you work with or for, someone you have met, a friend or partner. A person may have many mentors from whom they draw support and expertise. It can be a formal or informal arrangement.

Some formal mentoring programs include:

- Women in Business Mentor Program (run through the Department of State and Regional Development).
- The Women in Arts Program (joint initiative of the Department for State and Regional Development and the Commonwealth Department for Communication and the Arts).
- Women in Film and Television Mentor Scheme.

'You are often working on fairly sensitive issues, and you can prepare for meetings, but things come up all the time and you need to be involved in decision making on the run sometimes. So it really helps to have someone either on the committee or elsewhere in a related committee—or just someone you know—that you can go and talk to and say you did really badly, or that you thought you did well, but that you need to talk through some issues. I think mentoring and networking are really important, and it also extends your own knowledge.' Clare Petre

'As women we should be supporting all female colleagues to take on more responsibilities within the workplace.' Judy Galloway

Lobbying

Lobbying is the art of persuading or influencing people who have the power to support or bring about political or legal changes that you, your group or community think are important.

For example, you may want to lobby:

- newspaper editors
- local councillors
- members of parliament
- political parties, including government and opposition, or other marginal parties

Combining lobbying with imaginative or dramatic community action to maximise media coverage can be a very effective way of getting across your agenda. Some ideas include:

- demonstrations
- street theatre
- tent embassy
- Sea of Hands
- boycotts

