




W. BRAD JOHNSON, PhD & DAVID SMITH, PhD

# ATHENA RISING

How and Why

Men Should

Mentor Women



“... a powerful and practical guide for men on the steps that will make a big difference for organizations and for women.”

—**SHERYL SANDBERG**, COO OF FACEBOOK AND AUTHOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL BEST SELLER *LEAN IN*

# PREFACE

This is a guide for men.

We are writing this book for our genetic brothers, men who are upright, courageous, and visionary in their sense of how a just and dignified workplace should look—for men *and* women. This is a guy's guide to leveling the playing field for women through the medium of intentional and powerful mentorships. For too long, most of us have been part of the problem. Rewarded from birth merely for owning a penis, we're all silent beneficiaries—or whistling bystanders—in a world that persists in keeping women on the sidelines, excluded from key leadership roles, and earning less pay for equal work.

Gentlemen, this is a call to arms. In education, business, the military, and organizations of all stripes, we are in a battle for talent. Organizations and professions that exclude or marginalize 50 percent of the workforce—including half of those at the top of the curve on intellectual, emotional, and creative giftedness—are doomed. Those companies and institutions that deliberately include women in key leadership positions are simply more effective, balanced, and geared for long-term success. These are organizations that benefit from the distinctive and powerful gifts that each gender contributes to innovation and execution. Workplaces defined by flexibility, collaboration, and caring are much more likely to exist when women are deliberately integrated and valued at all levels of leadership. Welcoming and promoting women is simply key to long-term organizational survival.

Yet women today remain under-recruited, under-compensated, and

certainly, under-promoted to the upper echelons of power and leadership. And when they do get in the door, they face deliberate exclusion or an insidious—and possibly more painful—disregard fueled by stereotypes, hypercompetitive masculine work settings, and, sometimes, out-and-out hostility toward women in the workplace.

Think we're exaggerating? As we sit down to begin writing this book in the summer of 2015, a Nobel Prize-winning British scientist has just proclaimed that "girls" should never be allowed to work in research labs with men. Why? Well, because, "you fall in love with them, they fall in love with you, and when you criticize them they cry. . . ."<sup>1</sup> And a recent news article about women staffers on Capitol Hill reveals that they are often barred from ever being alone or—God forbid—ever being seen after hours with their male bosses for fear of rumors and bad publicity for the male legislators.<sup>2</sup> And the coup de grâce, our own Marine Corps recently fired a female recruit commander for being "too aggressive and abrasive."<sup>3</sup> Seriously, can you imagine a male Marine being called "too aggressive and abrasive"? Let's face it, guys, we are only scratching the surface here; you see examples of women being minimized, marginalized, cut out, and derided, merely for their gender, nearly anywhere you look. The problem, of course, is that we—men, dudes, guys, fellas, bros. . . *gentlemen*—rarely say much about it. And far too few of us actually *do* anything about it. Yet, we ignore this state of affairs to the detriment of our organizations; our own daughters, wives, and other women we care about; and even our own personal success and quality of life.

Strong mentoring relationships alter lives, not merely careers. Four decades of research on mentoring leaves no room for doubt about the impact of mentoring on career success and the ability to thrive in adult life. The benefits to the mentee can be so valuable that identification with at least one important mentor should be considered a major developmental task of the early career years. As ardent consumers of the latest mentoring research, you can trust us on this one, gentlemen: the effects of strong mentoring are remarkable, profound, and enduring; mentoring relationships have the capacity to transform individuals, groups, organizations, and communities.

And while we're on the topic of benefits, what's in it for you? The data is pretty clear. Mentors reap profound satisfaction from "giving" to



the next generation and guiding talented junior members of the profession, male and female. If you've ever mentored someone, then you also appreciate how mentoring leads to new insights, key insider information about the organization, and a larger network of colleagues over time. You will learn as much about yourself from your mentee as she will learn from you. The interpersonal skills you hone through mentorship will serve you well as you rise through the ranks.

But here is the rub: although mentorship appears even more crucial for women when it comes to career advancement, women often have a tougher time securing mentors. And when they do, they often reap fewer career and psychosocial benefits than men. As the goddess Athena discovered in pursuing her own adventures as a woman in a male-dominated world: gender matters!

About now, you might be asking: Why can't women mentor women? There are several reasons. In many male-centric domains, senior women may be nowhere in sight or when they are visible may be reluctant to mentor other women. And the truth is that men are still more likely to hold senior leadership positions in most professions, businesses, and organizations—face it, in many cases there just aren't enough senior women around.

So why don't we (guys) mentor women often and easily? Men are too often reticent to engage promising women in the workplace, for lots of reasons. Some of us just aren't sure how to have a professional relationship with a woman. Some of us worry she'll think we're coming on to her (and sometimes we worry we might indeed be coming on). At other times, we may be anxious about gossip and innuendo around the office. (e.g., *I'll look creepy. They'll think we're dating or something. What if someone tells my girlfriend/wife?*). We'd be lying if we didn't admit that many of us have at one time worried that we might slip and say or do the wrong thing leading to a sexual harassment case—yikes, who needs that! And finally, let's not forget that most of us continue to harbor implicit biases about women (e.g., *They can't take the demands of the job. They're not as capable as men. She should be at home*).

Men, it is time. If you are reading this guide, then you *know* it is time. It is time to fully accept the critical role we can play in pulling women up and pushing them forward. Just as Sheryl Sandberg has

recently called women to “lean in” to their careers, we are calling men to lean in to the task of mentoring women. We are not asking you to mentor women exclusively or to ignore talented junior men—far from it. We are merely asking that you open your eyes, recognize some of the talented women down the hall, in the boardroom, or in the classroom, and then widen your circle of mentees to include them! Chances are, every man brave enough to be reading this page can play a crucial role—*this year*—in helping several promising junior women to persist, advance, and thrive in their profession or workplace. So gentlemen, time to lock and load! As men in positions of influence, we have all got to be more effective at mentoring rising stars of both genders—particularly in the multitude of environments where senior women are few.

This is a *practical* guide for men. It is a manual for mentoring women consciously and deliberately. Part 1 of this guide provides the background intel you’ll need to better understand women, yourself as a man, and the varieties of male–female relationships. Part 2 details the nuts and bolts or the *key elements* of being an effective mentor for women. In the pages of part 2, we’ll show you how women often need mentoring with a different character, a unique style, and, sometimes, a focus beyond just career. Each chapter in part 2 contains several distinct elements, key strategies for becoming more effective in your mentoring relationships with women. Together, these chapters constitute our “Manual for Men” on how to effectively engage, encourage, promote, and sponsor talented women at work. Excellent mentoring is equal parts art and science. It demands self-awareness, emotional intelligence, relationship know-how, political savvy, and, of course, a genuine desire to see a good person thrive in her career.

Each element, or mentoring function, covered in part 2 blends crucial knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Some of the elements emphasize specific career-promotion strategies while others focus on the mentee’s personal growth and well-being. Think of each element as a critical tool in the toolbox of a master carpenter. The skillful carpenter understands that he cannot use all his tools at once and that not every tool will be required for each job. Experience, discernment, and discretion are required.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, let's talk about the elephant in the room. We are two guys writing a book about mentoring women. Weird? Yes and no. We are good friends, naval officers (one former, one current), college professors (a psychologist and a sociologist), and men who have long been concerned about the struggle of women to earn a place at the leadership table—particularly in the military, but in other typically male settings as well. Yet, we are humble outsiders to the female experience. No amount of concern for the plight of our female colleagues can make us experts on the experience of *being* a woman in the workplace. So, early on in our planning and brainstorming for this guide, we did two things. First, we distilled the latest evidence about effective mentorship, cross-gender relationships at work, and what women say is most helpful to them in mentorships. Second, we reached out to a substantial number of high-flying, successful women in a wide array of professions and organizations, and we asked them about their own experiences with male mentors. We wanted to hear their stories and learn about what worked well for them in relationships with senior men. We asked about how the relationships got started and precisely what these men did that was most helpful in the relationship.

Following, we include the list of women who helped us with our quest to better understand male–female mentorships. We think you will agree they constitute an all-star cast. We are deeply grateful for their stories and reflections and we include some of their most salient experiences in part 2 to illustrate the “how to” of being an excellent mentor for women. If there are any errors, oversights, or bloopers in the pages that follow, they are undoubtedly the work of your authors.

Gentlemen, thank you for taking this mission seriously. Thank you for opening your heart and mind to those everyday Athenas—talented young women who only need a fair chance and an equal start. By mentoring women intentionally and conscientiously, you'll change women's lives, improve the work environment, and make your organization more competitive. And, in the end, you'll be a better man.

Brad Johnson and David Smith  
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Rohini Anand, PhD, Sodexo Senior Vice President and Global Chief Diversity Officer

Laura Behling, PhD, Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Knox College

Dana Born, PhD, Air Force Brigadier General (ret), Currently: Lecturer at Harvard University

Virginia Brodie, Marine Corps Second Lieutenant, first female Combat Artillery Officer

Susan Chambers, Walmart Executive Vice President, Global People Division

Alice Eagly, PhD, Professor of Psychology at Northwestern University, Gender Expert

Deborah Gillis, President and CEO, Catalyst

Rebecca Halstead, Army Brigadier General (ret), Founder Steadfast Leadership

Kathy Hannan, Partner for Diversity and Corporate Responsibility, KPMG

Katie Higgins, Marine Corps Captain, first female Blue Angels pilot

Michelle Howard, Four-Star Navy Admiral, Vice Chief of Naval Operations

Nadine Kaslow, PhD, Emory University Professor, 2014 President of the American Psychological Association

Susan Madsen, EdD, Utah Valley University, Utah Women & Leadership Project

Betsy Myers, Adviser to Presidents Clinton and Obama, Currently: Founding Director of the Center for Women & Business at Bentley University

Camille Nichols, Army Major General, Commanding General Contracting Command

Janet Petro, Deputy Director, John F. Kennedy Space Center

Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook Chief Operating Officer and Founder of LeanIn.Org

Sandra Stosz, Coast Guard Rear Admiral, Currently: USCG Academy Superintendent

Tabitha Strobel, Navy Lieutenant, first woman to serve on a submarine crew

Kathy Waller, CFO and Executive Vice President, Coca-Cola Company

# 1

## The Everyday Athena

*July 1, 2004, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland;  
Plebe Summer, Day 2*

It's 5:30 in the morning. Suddenly, a metal pipe clangs down the concrete corridor in Bancroft Hall, shattering silence and wrenching Katie from a few short hours of sleep. Her eyes fly open and she sits bolt upright in unfamiliar surroundings, heart pounding like a jackhammer. Two seconds later someone—actually, it sounds like several someones—is pounding on the door and screaming orders full blast. Something about, “Get up, get dressed, and fall in, now!” Her roommates of less than twenty-four hours explode from their bunks, equally terrified and disoriented. The three of them fumble desperately for their physical training gear, pulling on shorts, T-shirts, and running shoes. A quick glance in the mirror shows Katie's newly cut chin-length hair; she feels like Bozo the Clown. She pointlessly tries to tame it with a splash of water. Fearful of being late, the three roommates race into the too-bright corridor to stand at attention with thirty equally shell-shocked eighteen-year-olds. It is still dark outside.

Fifteen minutes later, Katie has joined 1,188 other plebes for a long session of push-ups, sit-ups, pull-ups, and all varieties of calisthenics, followed by a long run along the Severn River. As the sun comes up she wonders if she was crazy to devote so much effort to earning top grades, top SAT scores, a congressional nomination, and, eventually, a coveted appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy. As she looks around, she sees that less than a quarter of the new plebe class is female. For the first time, she feels like a minority. Although she thought she was in peak physical shape as a high school varsity



athlete, her legs feel like rubber from the “six round trips,” and she wonders if she’ll be able to keep up with the guys. As she runs in formation with her company, she is sweating profusely in the already humid air. Later, she knows she’ll be at the firing range, tackling the obstacle course, learning to march, practicing standard sailing and seamanship commands, and beginning a series of demanding summer courses. In between each of these events, she takes advantage of every minute to memorize the seemingly never-ending list of daily minutiae, traditions, customs, and history that her upperclassmen demand she regurgitate without error and with confidence and conviction. Failure to do so would bring unwanted attention.

How often had her high school friends told her she was crazy to do this? For the first time Katie wonders if they were right. She wonders if she’ll make it to graduation and commissioning four long years down the road. She’s always been tough, always self-assured, and always up for a challenge, but this seems like something else altogether. As one of the company upperclassmen jogs next to her barking orders and critiquing her form, she hopes she’ll find the support she needs to make it through the Naval Academy gauntlet.

### ***July 2014, United States Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida***

U.S. Marine Corps Captain Katie Higgins is designated as a pilot for the famous Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron, the Blue Angels. Having logged more than four hundred combat hours as a Marine Corps pilot, she is the first woman to be designated a Blue Angel since the inception of the elite team in 1946.

We count ourselves fortunate. We get to work with rising stars like Katie every day. Each morning, we drive through the gates of our nation’s premier educational institution for Navy and Marine Corps officers to find academy midshipmen up early exercising, participating in military drills, and preparing for a full day of demanding engineering-oriented classes, athletic practice, and leadership training. Why do they prepare so diligently? After all, they’re just college kids! The answer is both sobering and awe-inspiring. In just four short years, those who make

it through the academy will be commissioned as officers; each of them must be prepared to immediately lead Sailors and Marines in combat, and lead them well.

Katie and the other remarkable young women at the U.S. Naval Academy—academically and athletically gifted women who have decided to tackle a rigorous program historically open only to men—prepare for careers as combat leaders despite all forces working against them.

We refer to these young women as *everyday Athenas*. You may recall that in Greek mythology, Athena was the goddess of the arts, reason, wisdom, and war. As the patron goddess of heroic endeavor, she was often a shrewd companion of heroes. Although Athena is typically depicted holding a spear and wearing a golden helmet—as though preparing to attack—she is known in mythology not only for her status as fierce warrior, but also for her role as diplomat, mediator, and wise advisor. Though she is the goddess of war strategy, she preferred to resolve conflicts through wisdom and reason whenever possible. As some Athena scholars have observed: “Wise, courageous, humane, and cooperative, Athena represents the best of all of us.”<sup>1</sup>

We think the goddess Athena perfectly captures the character, wisdom, courage, and promise of female midshipmen at the Naval Academy. We choose to regard each of them as rising stars who have taken the more difficult path through life and career—women in a military culture dominated by men.

This chapter will briefly address the importance of *perception*. If men decide to frame the women they encounter at work as talented, capable, likely to succeed, and unique in terms of the gifts and skills linked to the feminine gender, then the obligation and inclination to help them as mentors will be glaring and unavoidable. See her as a rising Athena, not just a girl. Promise dwells in the eye of the beholder. We think that everyday Athenas at the Naval Academy serve as a nice exemplar for how to “see” women more generally. Finally, we will show how even future highfliers, women like Captain Katie Higgins, may need help to bridge the leadership-ambition gap identified by Sheryl Sandberg. Men must double down on deliberately helping female mentees to broaden

their perspectives on what they can do and what they can achieve as leaders in their careers.

## PERCEIVING EVERYDAY ATHENAS

Whether at the boardroom table or the break room table, women are more likely to be overlooked or just plain ignored by men. Sometimes, they don't even get a seat at the table. And when they do get a seat, their ideas and contributions are not always taken seriously. Thinking about her own early career experience at the executive table, Kathy Hannan, partner for diversity and corporate responsibility for KPMG, said, "I had been sitting around the key leadership table. At times, I would make a comment and it would get a tepid response, maybe some head nodding. Then, two or three people down the line, a male says exactly what I just said and everyone says 'wow' and starts discussing it like it's a new idea." Several women interviewed for this book recounted stories in which their input was dismissed by male bosses; some felt so undervalued that they quit contributing their insights.

In the twenty-first-century workplace, how do we make sense of these women's experiences? When asked, men often fail to even recognize that these dismissive episodes are occurring. Our tendency as men is to unknowingly sell women at work short, largely as a by-product of the way we have come to understand men's and women's roles in society. Despite the fact that there are almost twice as many women in the workforce today, by percentage, than there were in 1950, we still find persistent stereotypes about women's roles at work and home. Automatic perceptions and assumptions that women are nurturing, warm, and communal may sound positive, yet they can be limiting and undermine women's opportunities to compete and excel in the workplace. Our gendered perceptions make it too easy to overlook those everyday Athenas around us.

As you can surmise, our biased man perceptions about women create for them a prickly *double bind*. On one hand, we may perceive our female mentees as compassionate and caring nurturers but in so doing we may be unable to envision them as the "take charge and move out"

leaders we need for key projects and challenging missions. In a similar vein, men may avoid recommending women for assignments that are too challenging or “in the trenches” because we don’t see them as capable or aspiring to these tasks. Sometimes, our deeply engrained protective *man scripts* get triggered. When this happens, our efforts to “protect” a talented woman actually sabotage her opportunity to compete and prove herself. In our world, the U.S. military, these stereotypes reinforce the perception that women are better suited for staff or support roles than for operational “combatant” roles that lead to the higher echelons of power and leadership.

Unfortunately, the negative consequences of our man perceptions don’t end there. For instance, women who are directive and authoritative at work often get labeled “dragon ladies” and “iron bitches”; they are perceived to be coldhearted, abrasive, and bossy. As guys, we tend to steer clear of these women, often some of the most promising future leaders for our organizations and our nation. And if we find strong women noxious in some way, what does that say about our ability to see them as potential mentees? What are the chances we’ll seek them out, engage, and begin providing crucial career support? In part 2 of this guide, “Mentoring Women: A Manual for Men,” we’ll challenge you to not reinforce these unrealistic perceptions when women at work demonstrate confident, decisive, and industrious behavior.

Volumes of social psychology research reveal that men evaluate certain behaviors quite differently when exhibited by a man or a woman. If you think you judge John’s behavior the same as Jill’s—even in identical situations—you’re kidding yourself. For instance, as guys we might be comfortable with yelling at work, or give each other a pass when it happens—what dude doesn’t lose his temper on occasion? But what about a woman who yells? Well, she’s got to be overemotional or dangerous—return of the “PMSing dragon lady.” And if a woman cries, well . . . what’s new? But for a dude to cry or tear up when getting critical feedback . . . now, that’s awkward, just plain “unmanly.” Our perceptions about “appropriate” emotions create another double bind for women. If *she* doesn’t cry she’s cold and emotionless. But if *he* is dry eyed we applaud him for controlling his emotions. Getting the picture? Women who aspire to rise through the ranks and assume leadership roles must

confront persistent double binds and inconsistent standards for leadership potential.

Just as important for women at work is what men fail to perceive. The perception that women are nurturing and caring is largely based on our experience of seeing women in family roles as primary caregivers. In fact, women in general *do* perform more childcare and household chores than men. Evidence shows that working women are 60 percent more likely than men to have full-time working spouses.<sup>2</sup> Why is this important? Because dual-career families have more challenges related to childcare and managing a household, and women in these families end up doing the lion's share of the domestic work. And, of course, mothers are seen as less committed to their careers. This affects wages, promotions, and hiring, a *de facto* "motherhood penalty."<sup>3</sup> Effective male mentors must become alert to stereotypical perceptions of women in the workplace and then find strategies for mitigating their effects on the promising women they champion.

## FRAMING ENCOUNTERS AT WORK

Angela had finally landed a major account and just finished the final touches on her proposal presentation to the partners for the next day. Now she was considering what to wear. She wanted to present an image of confidence and competence—dressed to kill—yet maintain her personal sense of self as both competitive *and* feminine. Ultimately, she decided on a dark "power suit" with pants, white open-neck blouse with a gold necklace, heels, hair down, and a little less makeup than she would normally wear in a social setting.

The next day, during the presentation, all seemed to be going well. At the table were the senior partners, all men, who were nodding with approval as she delivered the presentation. What Angela didn't see was that some of the men were distracted by her attractiveness. In fact, one of them was brazenly staring at her cleavage. When she finished, the group was uncharacteristically quiet. There were no questions. Although Angela missed her effect on the men in the room, her mentor, Charles, did not. He made a mental note to have an honest conversation with the



senior partner about the way the men in the room reacted to Angela. The leering and the silent treatment—Charles suspected this had more to do with inattention than disapproval of Angela’s work—were flat-out inappropriate, unprofessional, and had to stop. Later he would also follow-up with Angela to make her aware of how her attractiveness would likely influence men’s perceptions of her generally, and how her awareness of this fact would be important for her success moving forward.

Everyone wants to make a good impression at work. Effective impression management begins with identifying a desired social impression and then managing our own behavior to achieve the preferred effect. But often, women face more obstacles to coming across as competent, professional, and credible. One of those obstacles, highlighted in Angela’s story, is the perception that women must choose between attractiveness and competence. Too often, everyday Athenas are subject to visual inspection, leers, and flirtatious comments from men that serve to undermine their sense of selves as rising professionals. A good mentor won’t hesitate to address these reactions openly with the offending men, while helping the mentee develop strategies for neutralizing unwanted sexual attention and redirecting the focus to her competence, performance, and success.

Beyond the more obvious visual cues and attraction-based perceptions, women may also struggle when it comes to taking explicit credit for their contributions and achievements. This may be particularly challenging in team environments where it is not clear who is responsible for the team’s successes.<sup>4</sup> In these contexts, men will naturally speak up for themselves and take credit. Taking credit may not come as naturally for even the best and brightest women. Proactive mentors explicitly encourage women to communicate their successes and accomplishments, and are their behind-the-scenes champions in settings where they can’t necessarily advocate for themselves.

A final factor that can sharply define the way a woman is perceived at work is her apparent access to power in the organization. Because men and women network differently, women are sometimes seen as less connected to power sources than their male counterparts, resulting in fewer assignments to high-profile projects and fewer opportunities for advancement up the corporate ladder.

Women's professional networks tend to include primarily other women. But because there are more men in the power-holding positions in most organizations, women are less often networked with men who could effectively promote them for key opportunities and jobs. The lack of connection with men—potential sponsors and career champions—in their networks, coupled with their lower status at work, often creates more disadvantages for the everyday Athena.<sup>5</sup>

Ironically, unequal access to resources is particularly evident for women in more cohesive and project-based teams.<sup>6</sup> In the military, we build cohesion and group identity during training that result in loyalty and commitment—strong relational ties—to both the team and the mission. Researchers have discovered that information flow in cohesive teams is more likely to be within the same gender, making critical information gender exclusive.<sup>7</sup> Closed networks limit information flow to those with the strongest ties and exclude outsiders and those with weaker ties—women.<sup>8</sup> Because more gender-diverse networks rely on inclusivity and open information flow, they are more beneficial to women.<sup>9</sup> Effective male allies for women not only are loyal and proactive sponsors, they are furthermore proactive in shaping diverse network architectures for women. Teams with diverse networks reduce disadvantage for women and increase retention and promotion of our best and brightest.

Athena is rising. Women are entering the workplace in increasing numbers—including more than half of management positions—yet organizations continue to experience poor retention and promotion of the talented women they spend so much to recruit and train. As men concerned about the future of our organizations and the glaring gender gap in the C-suite, we must work to create effective networks and constellations of support for the women we champion.

## **BRIDGING THE CAREER-AMBITION GAP**

Throughout our interviews with the highly accomplished women who shared their stories with us, two common experiences on the road to success occurred over and over again: first was the difficult journey

these women faced to achieving mastery of the most important skill sets in their career fields and second was the presence of influential people who recognized their accomplishments and championed their cause. In fact, these two factors are considered essential for career ambition in *both* women and men.<sup>10</sup>

With some exceptions, the playing field in the workplace is leveling out. Women increasingly have opportunities to master essential career skills and compete at the highest levels. So why do we still find fewer women promoted to the higher levels of leadership? The stress and pressure associated with significant leadership roles can dissuade *both* men and women from seeking advancement.<sup>11</sup> And both men and women worry that they will be unable to balance work and family commitments as they progress up the corporate ladder. But here is the truth: men remain more likely to advance and stay on track with their careers than women.<sup>12</sup>

While the satisfaction of a job well done is sometimes enough to keep us motivated on the arduous journey to the top, for most of us, long-term career persistence requires more than self-motivation. Early in our careers, when we feel like imposters, we need affirmation that we belong. We also need encouragement, support, and the message from someone we admire that he or she believes that we have what it takes. Those champions of our lives and careers, the ones who recognize our potential and then affirm it out loud over and over again, are our mentors.

As men, we have learned to seek recognition for our accomplishments. Women, on the other hand, have learned that talking about their achievements is not culturally feminine. Instead, they divert attention and credit to someone else or even to luck. It requires an astute and persistent mentor to affirm and promote women's accomplishments so that their career aspirations and ambitions are fueled and endorsed.

At all levels of management and leadership, women report lower aspirations than men to advance to the higher levels of the organization. Women more than men find that the workplace disadvantages them based on gender. McKinsey & Company's 2015 report *Women in the Workplace* finds that even at the entry level almost 25 percent of women have experienced some gender obstacle at work that they feel

has detracted from a raise, promotion, or assignment.<sup>13</sup> Chances are, the women you work with are feeling something similar.

Gentlemen, it's time to get busy. There's a lot we need to learn about women and the way the presence and persistence of women in organizations add to both the bottom line and the quality of life for both genders. Deliberately and skillfully mentoring women is an opportunity for us to open our minds, listen, and become better employees, colleagues, and men. We should approach everyday Athenas with authentic respect, openness, and encouragement, and in a spirit of collaboration. Healthy and productive mentoring relationships with women will require equal parts commitment and humility.

The past few decades have proven that trying to "fix" women to make them more like men in the workplace is not a viable pursuit, nor does it yield a desired outcome. For women and men to succeed at work, we need to take a page out of the military strategist's book and look for an asymmetric solution—to change the way we fight, or in this case, the way we work. We see evidence that this is occurring in a variety of occupations and professions as senior leaders begin to acknowledge the contributions and talents women bring to their businesses. Even the most traditional of male professions, the military, is instituting gender equality across all military occupational specialties and increasing parental leave, on-site childcare availability, career path flexibility, and dual-career family-friendly policies.<sup>14</sup> As thoughtful, dedicated, and forward-leaning men, we are responsible for first seeing, then valuing, and ultimately advocating for everyday Athenas around us.