



Gail McMeekin

Author of The 12 Secrets of Highly Creative Women

The 12
Secrets of
Highly
Successful
Women

A Portable Life Coach for Creative Women

Gail McMeekin Blog Tour – Excerpt from *12 Secrets of Highly Successful Women*

NEGOTIATING YOUR BEST DEAL

What I love about coaching and consulting with clients is the privilege of helping people discover and achieve what they truly want. Getting the vision together is the first step, but knowing how to communicate your plan and negotiate on your own behalf is another critical skill set needed to design a life of positive choices. Too often, we are afraid to ask for more, fearing rejection or conflict, and do not resolve our “deal-making” with comfort and contentment. For many creative types and small business owners, not creating a sound business for yourself undermines the possibilities for your work. If you are employed or job-hunting, selling yourself short or not pushing for a promotion keeps you “underemployed.”

CHOOSING THE BEST PEOPLE TO AFFILIATE WITH

Selecting the right colleagues and affiliates is a key ingredient for success. Whether you work for an organization or have created your own, the people with whom you partner impact your results as well as your fulfillment and reputation.

Creativity also thrives in relationships with complementary skills nurtured by mutual respect. Successful partnerships and alliances depend on complete honesty, self-assessment and awareness, open communication, and a dedication to resolve conflicts on the part of all participants.

Over the course of my years as a multi-faceted coach, I have cautioned many clients against taking jobs ill-suited for them or joining forces with partners where there might be a mismatch. I have seen a pattern with many female entrepreneurs where two insecure women team up together with the same weaknesses and a shaky business plan. Disaster usually strikes, and it may even end in the courtroom.

If you are considering doing contract work or becoming an employee of an organization, do your research. If the company jerks you around in the hiring process or your intuition tells you that it’s all too “perfect,” beware. You want to be connected to the best people, products, and services. Desperation and the impulse “to just get it done” both create dangerous liaisons. As a business owner, there are huge differences between collaborations and official partnerships. You can fulfill your needs for collaboration with a variety of networks, team projects, peer groups, and other modalities. You don’t have to make an alliance official unless you have road-tested it and know that it makes sense legally and professionally. Do your research and shop around.

CHALLENGE

To avoid common mistakes, try the following preparation tasks:

1. Don’t make a move until you thoroughly research all aspects of the deal. Talk to

colleagues who have done these kinds of deals before, talk with your lawyer, scan the Internet, ask for help on linked In, but protect the identities involved. look at what your product or service is selling for in the marketplace, so that you have a way to compute margins. Then write down your exact goals for this negotiation and three possible situations that you would consider. also, you need to know what breaking points will make the deal a bad choice for you.

2. Make sure that you have gotten all the necessary details from the person/organization that you are looking to partner with. Sometimes overlooking one detail turns that target person/organization into a candidate that is not viable. keep meticulous notes after each call or contact. Make sure your sales presentation covers all the points necessary to make your case.

3. above all, trust your intuition. If even the slightest hint of a red flag goes up, write down what is happening so that you can see it in black and white, and deal with it as opposed to denying it. Remember, hungry people make poor shoppers. Don't ever do anything out of desperation—it will most likely backfire.

4. Pick one issue that needs to be resolved this month to negotiate with your boss, your spouse, your friend, your neighbor, your colleague, or anyone else with whom you need to work something out.

5. write down clearly what you want and detail all of the components that you desire. anticipate the other person's possible objections and plan your responses.

6. write out a script, and then find a convenient time for both of you to discuss the matter, calmly and clearly. Try to keep the discussion logical and non-emotional so that you can achieve resolution. Do not attack, name call, or blame—simply keep repeating what you are asking for and stay on message. If the encounter blows up, end it and try again later, or request the help of a third party.

GET YOUR CREATIVITY UNSTUCK TODAY

You are a creative person—so claim your creative power. You have the ability to do innovative work and to make new connections between ideas, which are the key dynamic of the creative process. Yet, sometimes our creativity stalls, plays tricks on us, or appears to have vanished completely. It is at these moments that we need to reconnect with our inspirational powers to stimulate our ability to invent something new and useful. The following tips are meant to arouse your natural creative talents so that you can surmount the challenges on your creative quest and develop that novel product or service.

- 1) Start a daily excitement list about your creative project. What fascinates you and intrigues you about the topic? Why is it compelling to you personally? How does it matter to the planet and to people?
- 2) Design a collage of images that support your vision and a mind-map of your project and then post them in your work space. Let the visual images help you to know exactly what you want to create.
- 3) Take a field trip relating to your project to explore a particular facet of it. It can be local or a real trip. I have a friend who is a novelist and she is off to Italy to set the scene for her new book. What will educate or stimulate you further about your exploration?
- 4) Go to a toy store and buy a toy that reminds you of your project or process. Spend some time playing with the toy and write down all the metaphors that you discover. A stuffed giant caterpillar once guided me to organize a product into interlocking but flexible sections, similar to the body of a caterpillar.
- 5) Tell your inner critic to leave town for now and then learn to suspend all negative judgments in your thinking. Give yourself the freedom to make mistakes and take positive risks with your work. If you were fearless about your work, what “out on a limb strategies” would you try next? Trial and error will bring you to creative success!

Gail McMeekin, LICSW, is the author of two new books: *The 12 Secrets of Highly Successful Women: A Portable Life Coach for Creative Women* and *The 12 Secrets of Highly Creative Women Journal* both with RedWheelWeiserConari Press. Her website is <http://www.creativesuccess.com>.

DON'T SET YOURSELF UP WITH THE WRONG GOALS AND A BAD ACTION PLAN ACTION AGAIN THIS YEAR!

We are approaching New Year's Eve—that time when we swear that we will lose weight, exercise more, write that novel, be nicer to people, reorganize our house, ramp up our business—you know the drill. We set too many goals at once, don't allow for experimentation until we find the right action plan, and by March 1, we have declared ourselves a failure once again. We have to find the passion for our goal and the right kind of structure and support, or we will be starting over again in 2013 with the same goals. Before you set your goals for this year, fill out this worksheet and get the big picture of your life into the equation.

GOAL SETTING WORKSHEET FOR 2012

1) Write a brief description of your "Future Self" as you see him/her in a visualization. What are the guiding lessons from your internal mentor for you to follow up on this year? How can you begin to be that person TODAY? Set some daily affirmations to remind you of who you really want to be.

2) What are three top life experiences that you want to have this year? Be as detailed as possible and SCHEDULE them now. Then make a note of all of the prep work that you can begin now to make this happen. You deserve to have the life that you want. Don't put everything off, as we have no idea how much time we have or what are circumstances will be. You may need to set up a savings plan or buy tickets on sale or do research and create a fabulous time!

3) How is your health? What improves it and what keeps you stuck? What healing beliefs do you want to embrace this year to help you to take exquisite care of yourself? How will you anchor/internalize/actualize higher self-esteem and positive self-regard? In order to change out unhealthy habits, we need to value ourselves enough to do it and pick an action plan that you ENJOY. If you hate running, don't do it. If you health club floor is slimy, quit. If you need to lose weight, find some fabulous recipes and get your friends together to eat healthy.

4) If you could do anything creative, what would that be? Take some creative risks this year and pursue something that calls to you, even if it makes no sense to you right now. I'm going to try decoupage just because my intuition is telling me to try it. I am also mind-mapping everything these days and putting treasure maps everywhere. Make a list of action steps that your inner creative risk-taker is eager to explore. It will inform all your creative work.

5) What incompletes in your life bother you? Is it the sales calls to sell yourself or a product? Is it that half finished song you have been writing for 5 years? Is it selling stuff you no longer need in your new life? Decide which incompletes you are going to finish and do them. Release all the other ideas or projects that you are not longer 'into,' like the scrap booking project that bores you now, the scarf you are knitting but now you don't really like the colors, or the career that you have never liked that you stay with out of fear? It's decision time. Let go of things or embrace them as a priority. It will free up lots of new creative energy.

With the new knowledge from these questions, you can now set meaningful goals, not impossible or redundant ones. Have a great year!

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