

DON'T DO IT ALONE

I wanted to share with you some thoughts about coping successfully during this period of disruption in which we find ourselves. As I talk with participants, their managers, corporate partners, mentors and WOMEN Unlimited, Inc. associates, I am heartened by how adaptable and tolerant of ambiguity we have all become.

According to a recent Korn Ferry study, these are qualities that are the true definers of successful leaders, *whatever the circumstances*. They are not just for a pandemic; they are the hallmarks of individual and corporate success—boom or bust.

“Adaptability” and “tolerance of ambiguity” don’t happen by themselves or in isolation. They are honed and developed through:

- Increasing your emphasis on reaching out and listening
- Changing behaviors to be in synch with changing times and changing needs
- Defining what is most important and taking calculated risks
- Interacting with your networks, who are themselves adaptable to changing needs and requirements.

Across all WOMEN Unlimited programs, we continually emphasize the importance of these leadership-building relationships. We provide numerous opportunities for our participants to put into practice successful strategies for developing career-advancing networking and mentoring relationships.

JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE WORKING ALONE...DON'T GO IT ALONE

As we adapt to this new and isolated paradigm for work, while often simultaneously juggling family responsibilities, there can be a tendency to let relationship building fall by the wayside. A big mistake...which ambushes not just the present, but the future. During these times, it makes sense to get bigger, not smaller. Outreach to mentors and networks is a successful antidote to feeling stalled, uncertain, overwhelmed and insulated. Relationship building is also a best practice for coming out the other side stronger and more prepared for corporate growth and advancement.

How can relationships be developed and nurtured when working from home and social distancing are the norms? Here are a few suggestions.

- Use technology aggressively: If there is a bright side to the situation we are in, it is that reaching out is faster and easier than it has ever been. Make the most of it. Stay in touch with your mentors and networks via email, LinkedIn or video meeting platforms.

Whatever platforms you use, be ready to initiate honest, meaningful dialogue. Be intentional. Be prepared with questions and concerns. Don't make it just a social visit. Make it a career-enhancing opportunity. As I pointed out in a recent interview with *Fast Company* "Email and text is just a transfer of information, but it's not good for dialogue. When you can, create time to have conversations. Then be curious."

[Read the Fast Company article.](#)

- **Keep Growing:** Like many of us, you probably have put professional goals on hold to some extent. Get past that. Find learning opportunities in the here and now. Think of ways to grow and expand. Ask yourself questions like: What are my long-term goals? Who can help me get there? How do I help them help me? Find ways to gain momentum by interacting with mentors, peer networks, colleagues and managers.
- **Expand your contacts:** Don't let the present environment draw you inward. Think of new people to whom you should reach out: influencers within and outside your current organization. Take this opportunity to make the connection through a variety of social media. Let it be the first step to forging career-advancing relationships that will become even stronger when you return to a more normal work environment. Don't be afraid to give it a try. As that old saying goes: "If you don't ask, it's a definite no."
- **Think beyond just getting the job done:** Women have a tendency to believe doing a good job is enough. It's not! In order to get ahead, you have to be noticed by those who matter. Think of ways that you can make yourself seen and heard in this environment and beyond. Consult with your mentors and networks for thoughts and suggestions. Bounce your ideas off of them. Listen to theirs and don't be afraid to take calculated risks. The steps you take now will be remembered later and work to your advantage.

At WOMEN Unlimited, we remain committed to helping our participants, their managers and their mentors use these difficult times as an opportunity to interact, develop and create impact. As we all learn to expand our relationships in new and different ways, we are not just dealing with our present; we are forging our future.

Dr. Rosina Racioppi

President & CEO

WOMEN Unlimited, Inc.

P.S. In my newly-released book, *Relationships Matter*, I detail mentoring and networking strategies that have proven successful for some of the country's top business leaders. Although I wrote the book long before any of us knew of COVID-19, the insights are more relevant now than ever. It underscored for me, the importance of staying connected, whatever comes our way.