



DeW Life

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WHAT HOLDS WOMEN BACK?



It was a sunny spring morning during my last semester in college when the call came in. “Mary, we’re excited to offer you the assistant account executive role at our growing advertising agency. We’d like to offer you a \$28,000 annual salary, full benefits, and access to a 401K plan.” I immediately got chills all over my body and quickly responded with “YES! I’ll take it! I’m so thankful for this opportunity”. After spending a week in Dallas interviewing for my first full time job, I was beyond excited to get a job offer.

During my last semester in college, my main goal was to find a job that offered a salary and benefits. The last thing I wanted to do was graduate with a degree and go back to babysitting and waiting tables, so I felt on top of the world landing my first “real” job. I had no idea what was on the horizon, but I was wide-eyed and ready to learn as much as I possibly could.

It wasn’t until I signed the lease on my apartment when I realized that the salary I agreed to would cover my rent, car payment, a few bills, and maybe a box of Kraft Macaroni. This is when I first became curious about how I could create more income for myself and my future.

I did my best with what I knew at the time, so I got busy. I took on several part time jobs, I started a blog, and I began networking. Then I thought, why don’t I just ask for more money at my current job? What was holding me back from approaching the company I was at?

For me, it was a combination of a lack of confidence, experience, and knowledge. I didn’t realize that my salary was negotiable, and it was actually my boyfriend at the time who encouraged me to go back and ask for more. But before I asked for more, I wanted to prove myself by showing where I added value. I spent the first six months working hard, delivering beyond the set expectations, and consistently asking for more responsibilities.

When I finally mustered up the courage to schedule a meeting with my boss and ask for a raise, it was a simple five minute conversation that ended in, “sure, you do a great job.”

That was it.

This big conversation that had caused me anxiety for weeks ended with an easy “yes”.

And that’s when I learned the concept - you get what you ask for.

Fast forward to the first company Christmas party. I intentionally sat next to the owners so I could get to know them better and continue to build a solid relationship. During the conversation, someone asked the owner, “So what’s it like working with Mary?” He answered with some nice things, but the main thing I heard was, “well, she’s aggressive” followed by a short laugh.

At the time I was slightly embarrassed that he saw me as an aggressive woman. Despite being raised by a strong woman, my confidence was still dependent upon what others thought about me. As a woman, our culture encouraged me to be soft, calm, chill, passive, empathetic, submissive and easily approachable. Many of these traits were a challenge for me as I was always highly energetic, full of big ideas and had dreams that required more traditionally masculine traits.

There have been many moments in my life where someone with authority said or did something that made me feel like I was either too much or not enough. I don't think it was always with bad intentions. But I had to learn that the only person who had control of the outcome of my life was me. Either I was going to let what others think define me, or I would sharpen my confidence and get real with myself on who I am.

Fast forward almost ten years later, and aggressive has allowed me to build a company I have spent my entire life dreaming about. My accomplishments in business are beyond what I could've ever imagined. And if I had allowed what other people said to distract me, I would not have been strong enough to handle all that comes with owning a business.

Aggressive makes a passionate entrepreneur. Aggressive makes a proactive executer. Aggressive makes a fantastic visionary. Aggressive increases the bottom line. I eventually learned that a small talk dinner conversation would end up being a statement that – while it stung at the time – was true. And it was something I actually should not be ashamed of.

One of the most common reasons I see women holding back is a lack of confidence. It's the fear of trying and failing. It's the fear that you don't want to be "that person" to rock the boat or cause a scene. Sometimes it's the fear of being "too much" in anything - too smart, too direct, too focused, too intimidating, the list goes on.

That's where I've learned to flip the script and ask myself – but what if you succeed? What if you find something on the other side that positively changes your entire world? Or what if your courage positively impacts your family and friends?

Some people are born with confidence, and some people have to build it on their own. I was definitely the woman who needed to make sure I had enough knowledge before having the confidence to chase after my dreams.

What really helped me during that process was learning what my top 5 strengths were and owning them fully. Shout out to Anne Duffy who is a huge advocate for the

Gallup Clifton Strengths. Once I confirmed what my God given strengths were, it gave me the confidence to show up fully and only work on the parts of the business that I was most impactful in.

My top 5 are mostly in the "influencer" category which is heavy in communication, relationships, and influence. So I spend at least 50% of my time on sales, marketing, and building mutually beneficial relationships.

Beyond that, I've gained confidence from surrounding myself with like minded women who share similar large – yet sometimes scary – goals. Iron sharpens iron, and when I get to witness my friends just going for it - it gives me the courage to do that for my business as well.

Lastly, but most importantly, my confidence lies in my faith. I believe that at the end of the day, everything is in God's hands. While my natural tendency is to plan, control, and execute, I've learned (especially over the past two years) that I can't control everything. The outcome of my life is in the hands of a God I can trust and lean on wholeheartedly.

Discovering how to build our confidence so that we find & fulfill our purpose has been life-changing for me. Women hold a power that is beyond what most of us can fully comprehend. My challenge for anyone reading, is to ask yourself – what is holding me back from pursuing a life, relationship, job, career, passion, anything – and how does my level of confidence get in my way?

About the author:

Mary Robb is the CEO and Founder of Social Practice, a boutique social media agency that offers social media services for businesses. They specialize in helping businesses grow through organic & paid social media marketing, influencer marketing, and content driven email campaigns. After working in advertising and marketing for 10 years, Mary discovered a gap in the market for social media as a service. In 2019, she took a leap of faith and founded her first agency. With leadership, excellence, and love at the core of what they do, the Social Practice team enjoys helping clients increase their bottom line through social media marketing strategies. Mary finds her purpose in mentoring others - particularly women - and helping them grow in their career. She has been involved in the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization since 2015, has a Little who is now a senior in high school, and spent two years serving on the BBBS board. Being social and active, she lives an active lifestyle whether it's traveling, trying new restaurants, wine tasting, getting her fitness on, or spending time with family and friends. She is currently a dog mom of two sweet rescue pups, and looks forward to having a husband and kids in the future!