



World's Largest Conference for
Women in Engineering and Technology

WE22 Presentation: Gimme a break! Stepping back in mid-career to achieve balance

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Learning Outcomes

Our presentation today will:

1. Discuss the Decision Process mid-career women go through to "get ahead"
2. Provide insight and some tools to
 - 1.) get clarity on your situation and
 - 2.) evaluate whether it is in line with your goals.

Introduction

- ★ What “getting ahead” mean for you?
- ★ What is the “norm” for pursuing career advancement?
- ★ Four-Step Mid-Career Decision Making Process

This session will describe one woman’s engineer journey through this path less traveled and a now-retired woman’s insight on how to evaluate if this is the right choice for you.

Getting Ahead

- ★ What does getting ahead in mid career mean to you?





Misconceptions

Myth

- ★ It's bad for your career progression to take a step back for your family.
- ★ You'll set your earnings potential back years. You'll never recover!
- ★ Your technical skills will suffer if you take less challenging work to achieve balance."

Reality

- ★ It depends on your company culture, your level in the organization, and other factors, but most companies today embrace work-life balance and will be willing to work with you.
- ★ How important is annual earnings in your financial planning over 30 or more years of career? Probably less than you think. Consult a financial advisor.
- ★ A step down or to the side doesn't need to be less technical – just less demanding for a temporary period. It may broaden your experience for your next challenge.

Statistics

- ★ 39% of women - nearly 4 in 10 - working women (39%) are actively considering leaving the workforce or reducing their hours due to increased remote schooling and caregiving responsibilities.
- ★ 80% of the 1.1 million workers who dropped out of the workforce in Sept 2020 were women- and the number continues to grow
- ★ In 2021 - 1 in 3 women have considered downshifting their career or leaving the workforce entirely this year, McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.org's [2021 report found](#). That's down from last year's figure of 1 in 4.

1 Women who are currently working and identify as caregivers.

2 US Bureau of Labor Statistics, September 2020

3 McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.org's [2021 report found](#)



Four-Step Mid-Career Decision Making Process

- ★ STEP 1: Self-Assessment
- ★ STEP 2: Evaluate and Prioritize
- ★ STEP 3: Take Action
- ★ STEP 4: Reflect & Re-evaluate



STEP 1: Self-Assessment

- **Assess:** What are your skills, personality, and values.
 - What is important to you?
 - What does getting ahead mean to you?
 - What is your current situation? (ex: family, advancement)
 - What are your career goals? (ex: management)

Making choices consistent with your values is a key component of both your personal and career satisfaction. Take time to define what your values mean to you.

Defining Values

- ★ **Definition:** “Values are ideals that guide our behavior, especially in difficult situations.” (Guideposts). They are things that your heart says are important, as well as your mind.
- ★ **Why is this Important:** “When you know your values and are clear about them, it becomes easier to make good decisions in the face of uncertainty, confusion, or difficult emotions like fear or frustration.”

Every choice we make or don't make is driven by our values.

STEP 2: Evaluate and Prioritize

- ★ The next step is to reflect. It is important to:
 - undergo a reality check for your career goals,
 - weigh the pros and cons, and
 - evaluate how it matches up with who you are and what you want (skills, values, and personality).
- ★ Use the following questions to guide your reflection.
 - What appeals to you about your career goals?
 - How does your career goals line up with your current situation. List the pros and cons.
 - How much adapting will be necessary for you to be satisfied in this career area? No career is a perfect match, but are the less desirable components minimal?

STEP 3: Take Action

- ★ Set yourself up to get ahead. Regardless of whether you're in a management position—displaying leadership skills helps you gain visibility within an organization, which can lead to more opportunities for promotions.
- ★ Utilize your pros and cons list to help decide

STEP 4: Reflect & Re-evaluate

Stick to what's right for you and your values

- ★ Mentor once said 'getting ahead' now doesn't mean it can't happen later. It just isn't the right time.
- ★ Value what is important to you now

Recap

- ★ Getting Clarity on your situation
- ★ Misconceptions – Myths vs Truths
- ★ Sticking to your Values
- ★ Four-Step Mid-Career Decision Making Process

References

- ★ 1 Women who are currently working and identify as caregivers.
- ★ 2 US Bureau of Labor Statistics, September 2020
- ★ 3 McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.org's 2021 report found
- ★ <https://ocs.yale.edu/blog/2021/01/26/explore-five-step-career-decision-making-process/>
- ★ <http://www.artofwellbeing.com/2017/10/04/define-your-values>



Defining Values Exercise

List of values from 'How to Define your Values (including Values Clarification Exercise)'

<http://www.artofwellbeing.com/2017/10/04/define-your-values>

Defining Values Exercise:

1. For each life area (work, relationships, health, spiritual/personal development), write down how your values. Use the list of values below to help.
2. From that, narrow the list down to 3-7 core desired values/ feelings behind everything you do.
3. Identify what you need to do to feel the way you want to feel. This is the intention-setting element. Get as specific as you can. It should help to think about where in your life you already experience your core desired values/ feelings.
4. Select three or four major intentions to work with, or perhaps just one if it is especially large.
5. Check in with your core desired feelings weekly and monthly. Are they informing your actions generally? If not, edit your life. Plan your week by your core desired feelings. Ask yourself 'what do I need to do more of this week to feel x'?





Defining Values Cont.

List of values from 'How to Define your Values (including Values Clarification Exercise)'
<http://www.artofwellbeing.com/2017/10/04/define-your-values>

List of Values

Authenticity, Achievement, Adventure, Authority, Autonomy
Balance, Beauty, Boldness, Belonging
Compassion, Challenge, Citizenship, Community, Competency, Contribution, Creativity, Curiosity, Collaboration, Change, Communication
Determination, Decisiveness, Democracy, Diversity
Equality, Excellence (personal), Excitement, Expertise, Effectiveness
Fairness, Faith, Fame, Friendship, Freedom, Fun, Family
Growth
Happiness, Honesty, Humor, Harmony,
Integrity, Independence, Innovation, Intellectualism,
Justice
Kindness, Knowledge
Leadership, Learning, Love, Loyalty, Leisure
Meaningful Work, Mastery
Nature
Openness, Optimism, Order
Peace, Pleasure, Power, Prestige, Privacy, Productivity
Quality
Recognition, Religion, Respect, Responsibility, Relationships
Security, Self-Respect, Service, Spirituality, Stability, Success, Status, Self-Awareness, Self-realization, Serenity, Self-expression
Trustworthiness, Truth, Teamwork
Variety
Wealth, Wisdom

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