

FEATURE

# Credit Where Credit's Due

*"When you get a chance to do even the smallest job for an exec, make it your highest priority."*

**Mentor**

By  
Chester Billingsley

As men go through their business life, there will always be a handful of older guys that will teach them the ropes. Mel taught me to tie a tie, Ed taught me to delegate, Al to write, and John about the law. Yesterday, an ambitious young fellow mentioned to me he no longer carries his trusty pocket knife, since I mentioned to him it does not seem very executive. All these little things add up and eventually give an advantage to those who listen. Unfortunately, it seems that young women both don't seek and aren't as often extended this type of career enhancing advice from more senior men, or more senior women, for that matter.

In our company, I have seen and helped along several successful women, and thought their experiences may be of benefit to some of the young professionals out there. The advice is universal, but where there may be some gender differences I'll try to emphasize the women's perspective as may seem to suit this forum.

Many of you may at this point scoff and dismiss this approach as unnecessary because you do a great job. If you want to advance more quickly you need to establish

the optimal balance of performance and self-promotion. Fellows tend to over report their achievements, which is not optimal. On the other hand, professional women tend not to seek to get proper credit for hardly any of their work.

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At Mentor Capital, I insist that each woman staff member put their name, in small type, on each and every one of their reports. This is a handy starting place in the race for advancement in your industry. Especially in a big company, your distribution of your work product can be a good way to shed some light on your good efforts. When you send out a report, highlight, tab, or fold back the page to the exact section that will be of interest to the particular reader. Then personalize the page with a comment that reflects your efforts or what you would like the reader to note, influence, or pay attention to.

When you are talking to the senior folks in the hallway, elevator, or on the way to the parking lot, mention that you are more than willing to help in their projects if they ever need the extra support. When you become more familiar with them, ask if there is any exciting position for you to next move into. When you get a chance to do even the smallest project for one of the execs, make it your highest priority. They should see flawless execution, and your very best effort. You may not get a chance to have your name and work in front of them for another six months, so now is not the time to put your regular daily hum drum tasks at the top of the list. If you do, you will be doing the same job five years later.

These have all been some specifics. The general approach is to do good hard work 90% of your effort, but don't forget to take an extra 10% and make sure that the powers that be know you are respectful, but eager to advance your career, and when they need you for whatever the task, you're the man – or rather, woman, as this happy case may be. ♦