

A Woman Engineer's Guide for

Self Advocacy & Career Messaging



with
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Host of
Her Engineering Career Podcast

A Woman Engineer's Guide to Self-Advocacy and Career Messaging

Hello my engineering friend.

Career visibility and recognition from managers and peers is important to you. It's part of your vision to become a respected engineer and leader known for the impact of your accomplishments.

You seek opportunities that are challenging and unique to your skills and talents. You want opportunities that align with your vision and goals. And this is true at every stage of your career.

What gets in your way though is that people don't know about you. Or they don't have the true picture of you.

It's easy to assume they know about your work and impact. But people don't know about you unless you tell them.

It's easy to assume your good work speaks for itself. But it doesn't always work that way.

I've prepared this guide to give you insights and tips for practicing self-advocacy and effective messaging with managers and colleagues.

Optimize your career visibility and opportunities by talking more often about your vision, your goals and preferences, your talents and abilities.

By using the lessons in this guide, you can strengthen and improve these skills.

You'll learn to speak up and share your message of impact with confidence.



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SPEAKING UP SETS YOU UP FOR PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS

Two common communication challenges in the workplace are probably familiar to you: Having the confidence to speak up. And being heard.

Do you sit back and observe or wait to be called on before you add to the discussion?

Do you wait to say anything until you're sure of yourself? Until you know more? Until you have more data? Or until you have the exact "right" thing to say?

Your hesitation may come from feeling vulnerable, a fear of being wrong or ridiculed. But it's also holding you back. To help you refrain from hesitating, remember how speaking up benefits you:

- It's how you contribute your ideas and perspectives to enhance innovation in your organization.
- It strengthens your professionalism by teaching you how to convey ideas, be tactful, persuade, and find solutions.
- It helps you
 - Get what you want and need
 - Be more visible
 - Gain trust and credibility
 - Grow your network.

When you do speak up, sometimes you're not heard. You're ignored. Or your idea is claimed by someone else.

Other times you get interrupted, or people talk over you or on top of you. When these things happen:



1. The best practice is to call it out in real time as directly and courteously as you can.
2. The second best practice is to address it off line as soon as possible. You have to judge what's best in your work culture and in each particular situation.
3. You can also ask your colleagues to support you when these situations arise. They can reinforce what you're saying. Or speak up on your behalf.

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Another important part of self-advocacy and speaking up is asking for what you need and want. If you have trouble doing this, you may have to first get rid of some limiting beliefs, like

- Asking for things doesn't make me look good.
- My boss knows what I need – so, no need to ask.
- I don't really need anything. I can get by.
- I'm probably not going to get it anyway.

None of these is true.

Instead, counteract your limiting beliefs by remembering that:

1. **Asking for what you need and want is *critical* to advancing your career.** You can't progress or succeed without getting it. Everyone needs resources to accomplish their jobs.
2. **Asking is not only a useful skill, it's expected of you as an engineer and a professional.** Your employer wants you to get what you need to do your job well and be content in your work.
3. **Not every request will be a struggle.** Most of the time you haven't gotten what you need and want because you haven't asked. Not because you don't deserve it. And not because your boss doesn't think you need it.



Go to [Her Engineering Career Podcast](#) and listen to [Episode 7](#) "Finding Your Voice and Speaking Up" and [Episode 8](#) "How to Ask For What You Need and Want" for more guidance on these topics.

Another good one is [Episode 21](#) "Waking from Trances that Undermine Your Engineering Career."

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SELF-ADVOCACY LEADS TO KEY CONNECTIONS AND THE RIGHT OPPORTUNITIES

If the message about your excellent work and value comes across clearly and often, you'll likely get what you deserve in your engineering career.

The way you get that message out is to advocate for yourself.

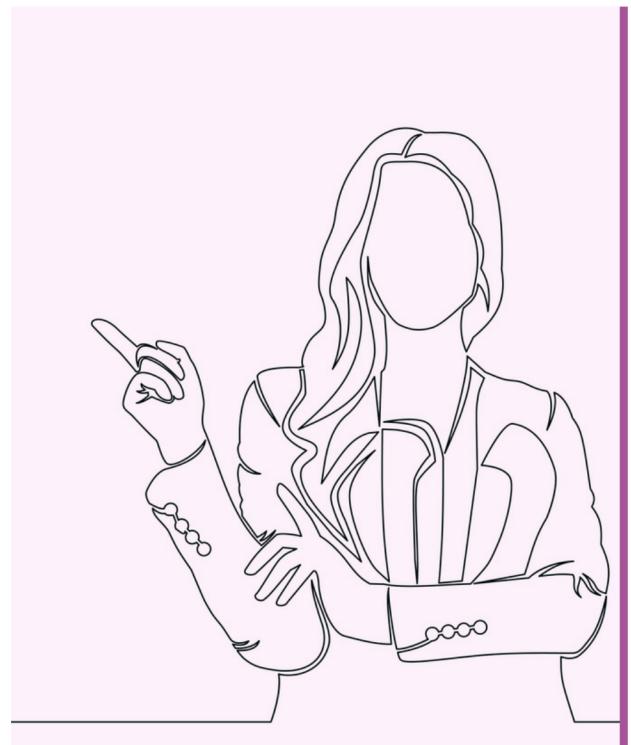
If you don't advocate for yourself, no one else will. And you'll more likely be overlooked and underappreciated.

No one, not even your mentors and managers, has their full attention on your work. So be sure that

- People know your capabilities and qualifications.
- The right people are up to date on your progress and abilities.
- Your preferences and plans are known.
- Your boundaries are clear.
- Expectations are set.
- Your needs and wants are communicated.

Put together your own little pitch or elevator speech using the **Magic 4**: Tell people

1. What you're doing
2. What your role is
3. The impact you're having
4. What you're planning next.



Advocate to key people, like your boss, your boss's boss and your boss's colleagues.

Also advocate to your own colleagues and people in your network. These are the conversations that lead to connections and opportunities down the road.

Go to [Her Engineering Career Podcast](#) and listen to [Episode 30](#) "Self Advocacy to Get What You Deserve in Your Engineering Career" for more guidance on this topic.

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YOUR WINNING MESSAGE IS CLEAR AND STRATEGIC

Getting the message out about you and your work is important for your career advancement. It'll help you be known and get recognition. It'll keep the right people informed about your potential. And it'll expand your network.

As you craft your message of impact, keep the following tips in mind:



1. Beware of diminishing speech patterns. These include diminishing words. Like
 - Just, a little, and only
 - Maybe, kind of, probably and sometimes.

2. Get rid of qualifying phrases, like "I'm no expert but..." or "You all know better than me but..."

3. Get out of the bad habit of apologizing for no reason.

4. Edit your message down for greatest impact. Know it and have it at the ready. And at every opportunity deliver it with confidence.

5. Strategize when to share your message. For example:

- As an elevator speech, when you find yourself one-on-one with influential people
- In interviews and other formal discussions
- In an introduction to a presentation you're giving
- In mentoring and networking interactions and other informal conversations.

Once you nail down your winning message, your next step is to communicate it. Sharing your vision makes it real. Speaking it out loud gives it recognition and actual tangibility. And allows you to get useful feedback to keep your vision alive and vibrant.

Lastly, communicating your message allows you to share your why. It aligns you with a purpose and seeds your future success.

For more guidance, go to [Her Engineering Career Podcast](#) and listen to [Episode 6](#) "A Woman Engineer's Guide to Communicating Her Career Vision" and [Episode 37](#) "Crafting Your Message of Impact."

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I INVITE YOU TO TAKE THIS CHALLENGE NOW

No matter where you are in your engineering career, you can improve your ability to speak up and practice effective messaging.

In the next week:

1. Start building a habit of speaking up more often. Let people hear your ideas and see your talents.
2. Determine the key aspects of your message based on your vision and goals. Create different versions of it. And share it among the influencers in your organization.



YOUR CALL TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Clearly you're a person who seeks excellence in her career. You strive to be your best self. You have a vision to become a renowned engineer and stellar leader.

I work with women like you to give them the tools and confidence to move forward faster. To propel their careers into the realm of widely impactful contributions and supreme opportunities for making a difference.

They want to do more than just continue their engineering work. They want to thrive and prosper. They want to influence and inspire. They want to change the world.

If you're looking to invest in yourself and your career for the ultimate return on that investment, let's talk.

Tell me about you [here](#) and I'll invite you to a private call with *just the two of us*.

Best,

ABOUT *Mary*

As an engineer you have the chance to solve problems, design products, improve systems and help people, while constantly learning and challenging yourself.

You've put in a lot of effort to get where you are.

But now you find that your work environment is not exactly welcoming. You don't get the respect and recognition you deserve. And that makes it hard to get what you want in your career.

That's where I come in.

With more than 30 years of engineering experience, three degrees in engineering and applied science, plus coaching certification, I am uniquely qualified to be your career strategist.



I understand first hand how difficult it is to realize the career you want. I've felt the exclusion. I've experienced the biases that rob you of opportunity. I've lived the struggles women face in engineering.

My whole motivation is help you align your career with you. To get you on the right track to fulfill your aspiration to be a renowned expert and a venturesome leader.

I launched Her Engineering Career so I can help you over obstacles and on to master the inspiring career you've envisioned!

Find out more about: [My Signature Program](#)

Listen to: [Her Engineering Career Podcast](#)



Mary's Professional Background and Education

- Program Leadership and Project Engineering experience spanning 3 decades
- PhD in Industrial and Systems Engineering, The Ohio State University, Columbus OH
- Master Degree in Materials Engineering, University of Dayton, Dayton OH
- Founder of AFWiSE, an employee resource group for women engineers and scientists
- Coach Training Alliance Certification, recognized by International Coach Federation

When not working with women in engineering, Mary spends time puzzling and making. She enjoys yoga, walking and other wellness practices. She and her husband support the arts in their community, and she loves playing the violin with a local orchestra.