



## AS I SEE IT

### CONFIDENCE - DO WE NEED IT? - AS 'EXECUTIVE WOMEN' IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY – YES

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How does it make us feel? Our voice projects energy and conviction, our body language is open and there is an air of authority in our stance.

When adversity presents itself we step back, assess the situation and resolve the issues with aplomb.

As an executive coach specialising in career management and confidence building, I see clients literally sparkle with energy and charisma, once they let go of their own real or perceived blockages.

Below are case studies where conflict in the workplace was resolved by analysing the problem, taking action and confidently taking control.

Jane joined a charity as Director of Marketing & Communications, recruited by the chairman who had faith in her abilities to lead. The issue was - did she?

Jane was having difficulty balancing all her tasks. The days flew by and she took work home which, as a wife and mother, was not ideal.

As Jane's confidence began to diminish, Slessor Maclean was brought in to mentor her. We looked at her time management and delegation skills, and her continuous open-door policy.

An informal attitude survey gave positive feedback. Her staff respected and liked working for her but felt regular meetings were needed to keep them in the loop.

Jane had difficulty asserting authority e.g. telling staff off and in some cases terminating employment. In each case, we role-played how the different personalities would react and how to take control.

Jane is now able to manage and lead her team by recognising her strengths and minimising her weaknesses.

Sometimes, it may be existing conflict in the work place troubling the executive.

When Mary joined her employer as secretary/administrator, she and her boss were the only employees. As the company grew, so did Mary's role. She became Head of Corporate Services, ran Personnel, managed the office move and six staff.

By nature she was a positive, organised and capable person who spent four hours a day commuting. When we met, she was feeling overwhelmed. To her face her boss praised her but, behind her back, a different story emerged.

The crunch came after an appraisal, when her boss informed her that both he and the Chief Executive felt she lacked focus and the confidence to manage her responsibilities.

I was brought in to restore the status quo. After a couple of sessions, and with her agreement, I met Mary's boss. I asked him how he viewed her. He repeated how much he valued and supported her - so why did she not believe it?

Over the next six months, we looked at how she could change her boss's perception of her and become the confident superwoman he expected. It soon became apparent that whatever she did, his opinion would not alter. Eventually, we agreed it was time to look for another job.

Mary now works as a Practice Manager for a group of doctors near her home, earning the same salary she did in London. She loves it and gets the support and recognition she craved. She believes she is very capable of handling a variety of tasks and now has faith in herself.

To cap it all, after handing in her notice, she was informed her previous job has been split into two - how's that for telling you how capable you are!

We met up again recently and I could not believe the change in her. Not only did she look ten years younger, her energy and vitality had returned and she was definitely back in the driving seat of her own career direction.

Carol Slessor founded Slessor Maclean in 1990. She has a natural talent for coaching clients to open their minds to possibility, recognise and acknowledge their uniqueness, hidden talents and transferable skills. Carol works with individuals and corporate clients.

## MY GOLDEN TIPS FOR EXECUTIVE WOMEN

1. At the beginning of every year, take time to step back and assess where you are now and where you want to be.
2. Assertiveness is the way forward. Aggressiveness closes the door.
3. Always keep staff in the loop - when they feel disengaged problems arise.

Remember to compliment them when they have done well - they will feel empowered.

4. Self belief is the key to success. If you need to resolve a conflict situation, use the power of positive thinking to reach the desired outcome and, if necessary, role-play the situation prior to the event.

5. Pat yourself on the back and celebrate when you have your successes.