

Women don't network because they don't see themselves as valuable enough

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Women hesitate to build networks because they underestimate their ability, according to research by Aalto University School of Business.

The study, conducted by Marjo-Riitta Diehl and her research co-authors, investigated the motivational aspects of networking, especially for women.

They found that women don't believe that they will add value to other members of their networks and as a result feel that they derive more benefits from the networks, leading to a fear that they owe a debt of gratitude to others.

The researchers suggest that such difficulty in relying on others, and accepting benefits combined with the underestimation of one's value, form an obstacle that discourages networking for the purposes of career development.

"Women's tendencies to underestimate their value in professional networks and on the job market are at odds with the demand for qualified women. Now is a good time to act! Women can be convinced of their qualities and of their 'professional value' and engage proactively in powerful networks," says Diehl, Associate Professor of Management studies.

She also says that powerful people can actually support women's engagement in networking by taking the first step towards establishing networks and towards reaching out to women who might hide behind their modesty.

In addition, Diehl says that individual empowerment resulting from, for example, training programmes tailored towards women's needs can create a 'push effect' that encourages women to engage in networking.

That being said, despite previous research suggesting that networks exclusively to women would solve the problem – the researcher does not recommend this.

"Unfortunately, our research does not unequivocally support the idea that networks for women alone would work better. The reason for this is that the networking needs for women in different stages of their careers do not necessarily link up with each other," says Diehl.

The research was published in the journal Academy of Management.

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For more information, to see a copy of the research or to speak with Professor Diehl, contact Jamie Hose at BlueSky Education on jamie@bluesky-pr.com, or call +44 (0)1582 790 706.