

Almost 40% of women experience imposter syndrome when offered a promotion

Submitted by: BlueSky Public Relations Ltd

Wednesday, 3 August 2022

Imposter syndrome is amongst the top reasons why women reject promotions, new research from ESSEC Business School (<https://www.essec.edu/en/>) confirms.

Professor Viviane de Beaufort studied why female leaders may sidestep promotions. As well as citing imposter syndrome, almost half of respondents also felt there to be a big difference between a promotion in theory and the job reality, emphasising a lack of professional autonomy to complete the work however best suited them.

When citing personal reasons, 20% would be dissuaded due to fear of professional exhaustion, and 55% would not want the promotion to inhibit on a different life goal. When it came to family reasons, 44% would be concerned about having less time for their families.

“It is more about a desire for meaning, for work that is fulfilling. Perceived as distinguished and rare to have gained positions of power, even some women who do reach senior positions tend to remain grateful nonetheless because they are convinced they do not deserve their position due to the impostor complex that plagues minorities,” says Professor de Beaufort.

“Do the cards ever change hands? No one can say, but now women with valuable backgrounds are more often daring to demand new rules for the game.”

The respondents suggest that women rising to positions of power should result in a more balanced way of working for everyone, men included. Companies should therefore have an equitable recruitment process, a strong integration process for people in new roles, implement flexible working conditions, and have internal policies that support diversity. Companies that aren't female-friendly risk losing talent.

These findings come from surveys and interviews of over 100 alumnae from ESSEC with professional careers.

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For more information, or to speak to Professor Viviane de Beaufort, contact Alex Lopez at alex@blueksy-pr.com or call 01582 797959.