How women can negotiate for pay rise

Female job candidates should think strategically about how to present themselves when negotiating for salaries and positions. PHOTO | FOTOSEARCH

Following millennia of hyper-defined gender roles and painful explicit bias against women in the official and public space, women since World War II count numerous cultural and professional successes towards breaking down gender barriers and baseless ceilings.

While around the world and right here in Kenya, women hold senior government positions and sit on corporate boards in ways unthinkable a generation ago, they are still disproportionately represented compared to men.

On the micro level, the gap between male and female salaries in the workplace has also reduced dramatically, but has not disappeared entirely. Depending on the industry, women still earn
between 50 per cent and 80 per cent that of men who do the exact same job. June O’Neill’s research shows that even when women join unions, stay committed to an organisation longer, obtain more training, and show more loyalty, they still earn less than men.

Unfortunately, part of the wage disparity originates from women displaying lower negotiating effectiveness. Women in the workplace show, on average, less tendency towards aggressive self-serving negotiating positions and are more accommodating to the needs of other parties. Biologically, women’s bodies produce only a fraction of the aggression-causing testosterone hormone which may appear to observers as outwardly politer. Then cultural upbringing and socialisation develop steep unconscious bias in our brains that relegate women to certain psychological categories.

Thankfully, Harvard University social scientists Hannah Bowles and Kathleen McGinn delineate different techniques that women may utilise to even the playing field to negotiate at the same level as men.

First, acknowledge that entrenched insidious unconscious bias exists against women in the workplace. So, ladies can use it to their advantage. Female job candidates should think strategically about how to present themselves when negotiating for salaries and positions.

Since unconscious bias relegates women to more social and less professional pursuits in the minds of interviewers, then women who are aware of the bias can capture the unfortunate expectations by communicating how they can socially boost a work team, increase cohesion in the group, and interact effectively with customers, as well as then highlighting their strong specific job skill competencies for the role.

Such dual self-representation makes women far more persuasive than just speaking about skills alone. Additionally, if women frame their compensation and promotion requests as maintaining good working relationships inside the organisation, then they will experience less social risk for being viewed as aggressive.

Next, women can boost their negotiating confidence by reducing ambiguity. Since women are socialised to become more sensitive and caring adults, they are more likely to not want to inconveniences a company’s leadership with their personal professional requests. However, women hold every right to demand what they deserve.

They should conduct more research on pay scales and comparisons within their specific industry in order to feel like their request stands on solid ground and they really deserve the salary or promotion they desire. The added knowledge propels women’s confidence to seek what is rightfully theirs.

Numerous studies show that promoting women to management levels improves corporate performance and that ensuring pay parity between the genders increases motivation and feelings of fairness by female workers.
To achieve greater equity between pay scales, women should master the above scientific techniques to improve their negotiating power and obtain what they deserve.

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