

# FORTUNE

## What It Really Takes For Women To Take On Wall Street

COMMENTARY by

[Janice Ellig](#) August 15, 2016, 10:30 AM EDT



Photograph by Spencer Platt — Getty Images

### **And other ways for women to make it in male-dominated industries.**

*The MPW Insiders Network is an online community where the biggest names in business and beyond answer timely career and leadership questions. Today's answer for: "How do you excel in a male-dominated industry?" is written by Janice Ellig, chair of the Women's Forum of New York and co-CEO of Chadick Ellig.*

Men continue to hold most of the top positions in corporate America — that is, 96% of the S&P 500 CEO slots and 99% in Silicon Valley. In the movie that I am an investor of, *Equity*, which premiered last month, I wanted to tell the story of what women have dealt with on Wall Street. Making an investment in the film's production was a no-brainer for me and my colleagues after many years working in finance. The stories have to be told, and I hope efforts will be made to cease and desist the demeaning way women are treated.

To be sure, women can succeed working in male-dominated industries. The women I know in Silicon Valley and Wall Street are indomitable, determined and persevering. And while tired of the mistreatment, some are more successful in their quest to get a seat at the table, have their voices heard, and accepted for their minds, not their bodies.

How do these women do it? It requires navigating five paths — simultaneously. Here's a look at how:

**Be better than everyone else.** To be recognized, rewarded, and invited to participate, women still have to be better than men at what they do. Women who succeed know and accept this dirty little fact.

**Be known.** Not only do they know their stuff, but the “key power players” know them and what they have done. You may not be Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg, Melody Hobson, or Ruth Porat, but being known in wider circles for your brilliance helps expand your network of power players.

**Fill the gap.** Women who succeed go where their unique talents are needed and valued. Else, they will move on. They go where they will be paid, included, and have a voice. Of course, we all know no one is indispensable forever, but hitting the ground running when you can fill a gap, and the boss knows that, gives women runway to make a name for themselves.

**Be inclusively engaging.** Winning women set themselves apart from the pack by connecting with others; they are inclusively engaging; they listen; they constantly build a network of influential promoters. Fundamentally “they are well-liked!!” Let’s face it – people like to do business with those they are comfortable with, and enjoy being with.

**See it and be it.** To reach a goal you have to have it your mind’s eye, stay focused and not deviate from your path. Even when life throws you a curve ball, resiliency to move forward will get you there. Winning women are in control of their destiny.

Going for the gold is never easy. Ask any Olympic champion what got them over the finish line ahead of others. In any competition it is the survival of the fittest; those who kept focused on their goal and overcame all adversity to achieve victory. Women may not know all the “man-made rules,” but winning women break through those obstacles. It is sheer determination to win – to reach their goal – to never give up. Men make the rules; women win despite the rules.