

**How powerful
women uplift
one another and
persevere through
challenges**



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Executive Letter

In March, billions of people around the globe celebrated International Women’s Day. It was amazing to see so many people from different countries and cultures come together to celebrate how far we’ve come, and to forge a path toward a better future.

As a business leader and technologist who has spent decades building my career in a male-dominated industry, I am no stranger to the challenges that women continue to face in the workplace. It’s true that over the last several decades, we’ve made strides to improve equity at work – in our pay, in our opportunities and in our voices. I’m deeply grateful for the female leaders who came before me and helped blaze this trail. But progress isn’t permanent and this work is far from done. We have a great responsibility to continue the fight and to open the door even wider for all of the female leaders to come.

As a woman, a mother, a Brazilian-American and a product leader, I know the unique combination of experiences and perspectives we as women bring to the workplace and why our seat at the table matters so much. We bring new ideas, different ways of thinking, and diversity of thought and knowledge to the projects that we tackle, the teams that we lead, the products that we create and the legacies that we build. I challenge each of you to reflect on your unique mix of perspectives and talents, and consider how you can use your own blend of experiences to make a difference in your workplace and beyond.

I feel so fortunate that I get to see this in action in my work every day with all the incredible female leaders and allies across Slack, Salesforce, our customers and the broader tech business community. This guide is an encapsulation of that power, wisdom, innovation and resilience, and I hope it inspires you in your own workplace.

Let’s continue to lift each other up and work together to build an equitable future where all women can thrive.



Lidiane Jones
Chief Executive Officer
Slack



Introduction

Ongoing economic uncertainty and disruption continues to place stress on people's lives, both at work and at home. Research shows that these stressors can at times fall disproportionately on women's shoulders. In fact, women's jobs were **1.8 times** more vulnerable than men's throughout the pandemic.

In this guide, powerful women in financial services, consulting and technology share their experiences navigating tough times and coming out stronger on the other side. Meet:

- Meghan Gendelman, Senior Vice President of Corporate Marketing at Salesforce
- Necole Jackson-DeJoie, Global Executive Director and Tribe Lead at Boston Consulting Group
- Saadia Khilji, Head of End User Technology and Services at MassMutual

Hear how these leaders advocate for themselves and others, future-proof their careers, beat imposter syndrome, balance work and family life and redefine what failure means.

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Lidiane Jones
Chief Executive Officer
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Building trust in yourself

Overcoming imposter syndrome is one of the most common challenges women in leadership face, according to the leaders we spoke with. Because women have historically been underrepresented in the workplace, many struggle to believe that they deserve and earned their position.

Meet Saadia Khilji, the head of end user technology and services at MassMutual. She's also the president of Pakistani Women in Computing, a nonprofit organization that focuses on connecting and supporting women in tech. She offers guidance on overcoming imposter syndrome.

“The best way to overcome imposter syndrome is to look around the room and think through the fact that you're there for a reason. As you observe closely, you will realize no one is perfect and everybody is there with their own set of challenges and opportunities and that's OK,” Khilji says. “You be authentic and not push for perfection; be who you are and know that you're there for a reason.”

Another challenge facing women, especially women of color, is not having leaders who look like them to look up to as role models. What's known as the “broken rung” is holding women of color back from leadership positions. The broken rung—a term coined by McKinsey & Company—is a phenomenon where women in entry-level positions are promoted to managerial positions at a lower rate than men. For every 100 men promoted to a manager position, only 87 women are promoted, and only **82 women of color** are promoted.

For every **100 men** in entry-level positions promoted to managerial positions, only **82 women** of color are promoted.



Building trust in yourself

Khilji is from Pakistan and says she has faced microaggressions and discrimination throughout her career. She says that in the face of these microaggressions, she maintains her values and is proud of who she is.

“I will be proud of my ethnicity and my background, because the perspectives I bring to the table offer diversity of thought and hence provide value to the organization,” Khilji said.

Necole Jackson-DeJoie, a global executive director and tribe lead at Boston Consulting Group, echoes these insights. “The leaders I was used to seeing were all older white men, so I thought I needed to fit this box in order to be successful. It was very uncomfortable because that’s not who I was,” Jackson-DeJoie says. “And so from that moment forward, I just kept telling myself, I need to be who I am. I deliver, I get things done. I just need to be able to do that while feeling comfortable in my own skin.”

Jackson-DeJoie is an Atlanta-based mother of three who plays tennis multiple times a week.

Meghan Gendelman, senior vice president of corporate marketing at Salesforce, shares that learning to trust herself was essential to defeating imposter syndrome. Self-trust is also the secret sauce when it comes to building a resilient career.

"In the early part of my career, I didn't trust my gut and I didn't believe it. And what I know to be true now is if something doesn't feel right, it's not right. And maybe that means it's time to move on. And maybe it means it's time to do something else."



Meghan Gendelman
SVP of Corporate Marketing
Salesforce

Gendelman describes herself as a mother of two girls, a wife to an awesome guy, a high-heel lover and an amateur chef. Despite wearing so many hats, she says she carves out time just for herself every Friday at 3 p.m.



Overcoming fear and navigating career transitions

One of the hardest parts of being a leader is overcoming the fear of failure. The women leaders we spoke with agree: in order to grow in any career, you have to be willing to take risks and try new things, which inevitably leads to failure at times.

Over **80% of executive women** believe that they put more pressure on themselves not to fail than men do. But shedding this fear is key to reaching your fullest potential.

"If there's a failure, ask yourself what did I learn from it? How can I get better? And then move on. When you can get away from the fear of failure, you have a more open mindset and you're able to take more risks."



Saadia Khilji
Head of End User Technology and Services
MassMutual



Overcoming fear and navigating career transitions

Jackson-DeJoie agrees that fear must be taken off the table to deliver your best work. She says she was once afraid she wouldn't be able to follow through on everything she wanted to do, but then she realized that everyone's going to fail, and that she can too.

“Everyone here has failed at something, right?” Jackson-DeJoie says. “We try to not do critical failure, but that's happened and it's going to happen. So take it off the table and figure out how you react to it versus living and hoping that you won't fail, because it's going to happen.”

The leaders agreed that another fear that can arise at work for women is the fear of not being liked. Sometimes women can be over-accommodating and get in the habit of not standing up for themselves in the pursuit of people pleasing.

Gendelman says she has a sticky note on her computer monitor that says, “Do I want to be respected or liked?”

“I fought for so many years to be liked, but sometimes you can't be both liked and respected,” Gendelman said. “Now I'm going to choose to be respected. And that helped me take some of the fear away.”



Maintaining core values and a healthy work-life balance

The women we spoke with agree that maintaining a healthy balance between work and home lives is an ongoing challenge. That's why it's important to keep one's core values in sight, and use those values as a compass for navigating decisions.

For example, Gendelman defines her core values as gratitude, honesty and family, and she uses these values to base her decisions.

"[During the pandemic] my kids were literally under my desk crying because it turns out I can't teach a kindergartener how to read or tie their shoes. I had this giant business and everything was hard," Gendelman says. "I just asked myself: Can I answer this situation with gratitude, with honesty or family?"

Jackson-DeJoie says she also bases her decisions on returning to her values. She asks herself what things are most important to her, who are the people most important to her, and what purpose she wants to serve during her short time on Earth.

"Anything that I'm doing, I try to go back and say if I look at my value system, am I doing the things that support my values? Am I imbalanced or not right? If I'm imbalanced, it's a bit of a check that says, hold on, you're doing too much of this one thing and you need to go back to what your values are because you're not doing enough with this other thing."



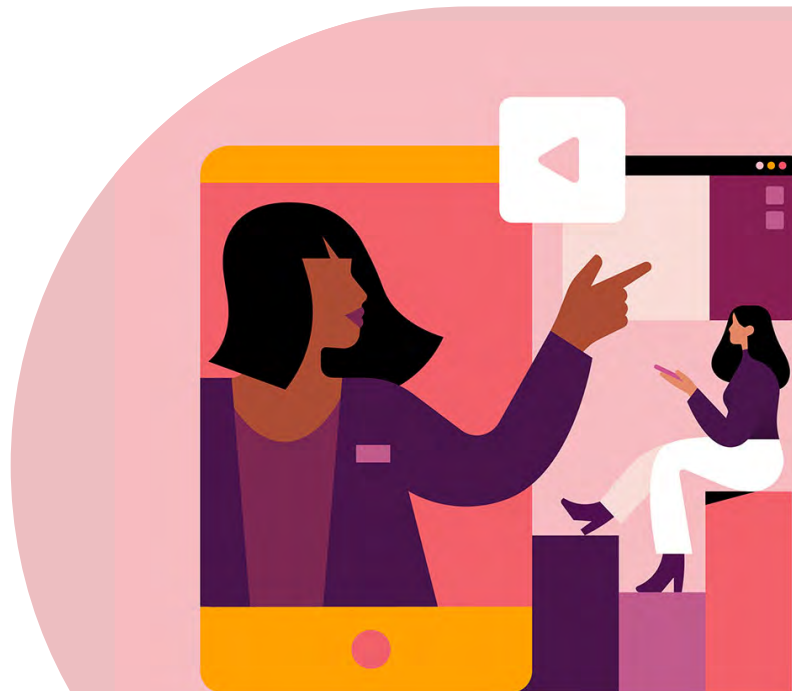
Necole Jackson-DeJoie
Global Executive Director and Tribe Lead
Boston Consulting Group



Reflect on the past, work for the future

As we move into the future, it's important we remember and reflect on all the women leaders who have come before us. We walk a path that was carved by these trailblazing women. It's also important we lift other women up and continue working together to build a more equitable future for everyone.

There will inevitably be times when you don't know all the answers, and that's OK. In these moments, don't be afraid to be vulnerable. "One thing I'm really taking into 2023 is being really vulnerable," Jackson-DeJoie said. "Being vulnerable with my team in terms of making it clear when I don't have all the answers, and getting rid of this sense of like I need to be perfect. I do not need to be perfect."





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