

## The 3 R's of Workplace Empowerment

**Speaker:** Katrina Landis

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**Venue:** Women's Energy Network lunch

Good afternoon.

It's such a pleasure and honour to be invited to participate in this lunch today.

I'm really pleased to see that this Network continues to grow, with over 1000 members and 5 chapters around the country.

It's evidence of the importance we attach to being able to meet and share our learning and experience as female professionals in this industry.

That said, I couldn't help but notice that the Network wine and chocolate tasting events are both sell outs this year!

It's perhaps a great sign that we women can do real business and not lose sight of the other vitally important things in life.

To move on to a more serious note, one of the reasons I accepted this kind invitation was the opportunity to join you in supporting the work of the Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse. I applaud this choice by the Network because it allows us to show our support and empathy with the many women and children whose lives are so damaged by violence within the family environment.

The statistics are chilling. In 2009, nearly 200,000 Family Violence incidents were reported. 142 women were killed.

That's not US-wide. That's just here in Texas alone.

Underneath those cold statistics lie two startling facts. 75% of all Texans report that they would be likely to call the police if they were to experience some form of domestic violence.

Yet only 20% indicated that they actually did call the police when they or a family member experienced domestic violence.

I wouldn't dare to assume that I could offer advice to the many victims of this violence.

Or be able to explain the individual circumstances which prevent so many from being able to act and to involve others.

But what I do recognize here is the effective dis-empowerment of women, children - and yes - men - to act and change what is happening to them or going on around them.

How many of you either read the book or saw the film 'The Help' by Kathryn Stockett?

It's set in 1960's Mississippi during the time of segregation and explores the experience of black women working as domestic maids for white women.

It has several powerful themes running through it - of racism, domestic abuse, love and loss – but I think ultimately it's a story which has the empowerment of women at its heart.

The black maids join together under great threat to themselves and their families and with the help of a white woman record their stories which are subsequently published nationally.

It is a metaphor of the power of working together to achieve some goal.

Most of all it is a remarkable insight into the relationship between women – black and white - and how little we're separated.

It's a great read and I recommend it.

Empowerment of women in the workplace is my theme today.

I think it fair to say that the world of energy is a not a particularly female friendly industry when compared to many others.

I won't bore you with lots of dry statistics to make my point.

A flick through the front pages of annual reports of many great companies – large and small – Western or Eastern – will give a clear sense that women have yet to penetrate the very senior levels of corporate life.

That said, more and more women are being appointed to key positions. They have shown the skills, knowledge and ability to excel.

But it takes us longer to rise up the levels than in some other industries.

This isn't simply down to some inability to deliver results equal to or superior to male counterparts.

Something else is going on which is within our control to manage.

We can categorise this as the 3 R's:

- Relationships
- Reputation
- Results

### Relationships

I think women are prone to believing that simply doing the work well is what really counts and that if we work hard, we will progress in our career.

In reality, that is simply the starting point.

The importance of developing and maintaining relationships up/down and across an organisation cannot be overstated.

Women have a tendency to 'short-change' that aspect of our working lives – we fail to devote the time to develop and nurture strategic relationships that will play a vital role in how organisations engage with and assess individuals.

Now, as a more senior level woman, I know the onus is on me to reach out to other women trying to map the right relationships and to share my experience and offer connections to the networks that matter.

That is why the Women's Energy Network is so important. Not simply as an end in itself.

It's not enough for us to proudly list our membership on our profile like some membership of a secret and exclusive sorority!

We need to invest time and energy in such networks as active, dynamic hubs which constantly challenge us to work hard at developing our knowledge and our relationships – and in a way that can be quite distinctive to our male colleagues.

### Reputation

My second R is Reputation.

Let me ask you all a question.

When was the last time you thought really hard about what your reputation is as a working woman?

When did you hold up a mirror to yourself as a leader or as a co-worker?

I don't think we spend enough time considering what we wish our reputations to be if we are to stand out and accelerate our career paths.

We need to step back on occasion and ask the question: 'What do I want to be known as?' What is my claim to fame?

Perhaps a strong developer of projects and people?

A go-to person for a different, fresh perspective on business issues?

Or perhaps a leader with intuition who draws out the best from diverse, talented teams?

We need to work hard at establishing our own reputations rather than be prey to the inaccurate or unfair perceptions of others.

It was Warren Buffet who said: "It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you'll do things differently."

Buffet wasn't talking about women – but he might as well have been.

So how do you discover what your workplace reputation is?

It's important to find people – trusted colleagues or a boss - who are willing to provide honest, open feedback and appraisal.

That's a very different appraisal conversation to the one you may be used to engaging in once or twice a year at your workplace.

And just remember, this isn't weakness or an admission of shortcomings.

It shows strength and confidence that you are willing to ask the difficult questions of yourself as much as you are of others in life and business.

### And finally, the third R: Results

There is no question that women are high performers. We are goal-oriented – and we get the job done.

We wouldn't be where we are today without having demonstrated that.

But it's not enough.

We need to bring that excellence in delivery into how we approach the management of our careers.

I was shocked by comments made recently by the head of an executive recruitment firm whose clients are principally female.

She said "You ask a woman for her CV and it will be with you in a few days. You ask a man and he will hand it to you on a memory stick".

Barbara – now Lady – Judge was appointed by President Carter as the youngest-ever Commissioner of the US Securities and Exchange Commission. She recently said "Men apply for jobs whether they are qualified or not but a woman will apply only when she's over-qualified."

Can that still be true today?

Well Lady Judge can be measured by the many results she achieved in a long career in both the financial and energy industries.

But I'm sure she would be the first to acknowledge it's not simply about results.

Earlier this year she was described as "the best connected women in the United Kingdom" – not bad for an American dame!

Reputation and relationships count – and she is a great role model for an empowered woman of our times.

So my point is that the three Rs are inter-twined.

We need to hit on all of them if we are to match or exceed the progress and achievement of men in this sphere.

### BP Experience

I want to say a few things about the experience in my own company BP.

I'm not going to blow a trumpet here. BP has as much to do as the next company in empowering the women who work for it.

In terms of the three Rs, I am privileged to lead BP's Women's International Network (WIN) which provides a vital system for connecting the thousands of women who work for us across 80 countries of the world.

It is here that our women can connect and develop the network of relationships they need to help direct their careers or to manage the career issues they face as women in a strongly male industry.

Here too they can connect with those women whose reputations they respect and from whom they can seek mentoring or other advice.

You know - someone has **always** already been there, done that, got the scars to prove it.

In BP, we're on a journey to match the progress we're making in attracting women to the company with our ambition to ensure women make it in numbers to the senior levels of the company and then flourish.

We're looking at strategy, leadership, capability, culture and improvement.

We need to avoid the complacency that arises from assuming that if we have a policy then the problem is fixed.

To help empower women in the workplace – we're seeking to champion much greater transparency and dialogue about the needs and ambitions of women.

I'm encouraged that these types of initiative are becoming common to all progressive, forward looking companies. But we also need to work hard at supporting and networking with women in those companies who have yet to begin that journey of empowerment.

At the end of her story 'The Help', Kathryn Stockett writes a very touching personal epilogue.

She recounts her own childhood growing up in Mississippi with a family maid to whom she was very close - especially after her parents' divorce.

She picks out one line from the story that she wrote which in her own words "she truly prized".

"Wasn't that the point of the book? For women to realise – we are just two people. Not that much separates us. Not nearly as much as I had thought."

I think that's a great thought to hold onto in our own lives. The empowerment of women begins with the confidence to know that not very much separates **any of us** at all.

I hope the 3 R's can be a helpful step in proving that to be the case – whether at home, in the workplace or in society in general.

Thank you.