

Sideways To The Top

10 Stories Of Successful Women That Will Change Your Thinking About Careers Forever

Do women lead differently than men? Are they inherently more nurturing? Do women rely on the 'women's network', and is there really a glass ceiling that needs breaking?

Sideways To The Top is a unique, thought-provoking book that addresses these questions along with other longstanding assumptions about women. It chronicles the experiences of 11 women leaders — some of whom are Australian icons — who challenged the status quo and took alternative career pathways to the top.

The book also features discussions on the realities and current issues facing women through conversations with and essays by experts in career transitions and gender differences.

Sideways To The Top brings case studies and expert analysis together into a practical checklist and action plan to help women navigate their careers and achieve success.

The Author:

Norah Breekveldt is a Director of Macfarlan Lane, leaders in executive career management and coaching. She has over 25 years' line management and consulting experience in human resource management, change management and organisational effectiveness across a range of sectors, and has held a number of positions on boards of not-for-profit organisations. Norah is a Telstra Business Women's Award winner.

The 11 Women:

- **Janine Allis**
Founder, Boost Juice
- **Farah Farouque**
Senior Advisor, Brotherhood of St Laurence
- **Jane Fenton, AM**
Founder, Fenton Communications
- **Theresa Gattung**
Former CEO, Telecom NZ
- **Annwyn Godwin**
Merit Protection Commissioner
- **Terri Janke**
Indigenous Arts Lawyer
- **Katie Lahey**
Managing Director, Australasia, Korn/Ferry
- **Sarah Rey and Mary-Jane Ierodionou**
Founders, Justitia Lawyers
- **Ann Sherry, AO**
CEO, Carnival Australia
- **Naomi Simson**
Founder, RedBalloon

The Experts:

- **Dr Kerry Baxter**
Academic and Management Consultant
- **Heather Carmody**
Principal Consultant, The Nous Group
- **Hugh Davies**
Managing Director, Macfarlan Lane
- **Catherine Nance**
Partner and Actuary,
PricewaterhouseCoopers
- **Dr Hannah Piterman**
Advisor to Boards, Executive Coach,
and Director of HPCG
- **Katherine Teh-White**
Founder and Managing Director, Futureye
- **Kathleen Townsend**
Managing Director,
Kathleen Townsend Executive Solutions
- **Paul Waterman**
President, BP ANZ

Sideways To The Top 10 Stories Of Successful Women That Will Change Your Thinking About Careers Forever **Norah Breekveldt**

"The subtlety and depth of the discussion about women and work in Australia has transformed in recent times and Norah Breekveldt's book reflects this: it is layered with practical advice, solid research and a rich and nuanced analysis of how a range of women have negotiated extraordinary lives and careers. A welcome addition indeed."

— **Catherine Fox**
Journalist, commentator on gender in the workplace, and former *Corporate Woman* columnist



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Q&As For *Sideways To The Top*

What is the book about?

This book explores what success looks like from the perspective of women who have challenged the status quo and explored alternative pathways to the top.

Why this book?

Enabling women to succeed seems to be a continual challenge in Australia and elsewhere. Despite the fact that just over 50% of University graduates are women, only around 9% of senior leadership positions are held by women. Somewhere along the way we are losing women from the workforce.

These facts could be disheartening for women wishing to aspire to senior roles in business. We therefore decided to produce a book that tells positive stories about women who have taken charge of their careers and become successful. We hope the stories in this book will inspire women who may be feeling stuck, dejected or defeated by the glass ceiling and give them the courage to follow their career aspirations.

Why are women not progressing to senior leadership positions?

One of the latest books that addresses this issue is *Lean In*, written by Sheryl Sandberg, the COO of Facebook. She argues that bias and stereotyping holds women back. For instance, when women pursue positions of power traditionally held by men they violate the expectations of society around how they should behave – as caregivers not as breadwinners. This leads to women being criticised, not liked or considered unsuitable for roles or situations that don't fit the stereotype. So it can be difficult for women to move into positions traditionally held by men. When they do get there, they often receive greater scrutiny and have to work harder for their achievements to be recognised.

Sideways to the Top aims to contribute to dismantling stereotypes so that women can aspire to careers on an equal basis to men, irrespective of their gender.

What are the key findings?

The overarching finding of this book is that successful women take charge of their careers. They don't rely on their employer, their manager or others to recognise their efforts and reward their achievements. Additionally, the women profiled in this book:

- Had supportive parents who raised them to believe that anything was possible, that their gender was not a barrier and who encouraged them to pursue the career they wanted.
- Had life partners who actively supported them along the way.
- Were without exception passionate and hard-working. They did not seek or expect work-life balance when pursuing their careers. In fact they spoke about the hardships of juggling work and home life. However, they had strategies in place to deal with these stresses.
- Developed strong friendships and working relationships with powerful people, often men but also women, who became their advocates
- Embraced the concept of a less prescriptive career path and possessed the courage to take leaps across industry sectors or roles. They were on the look-out for opportunities, recognised when it was time to leave and seized opportunities when they came along.

Ten lessons women can take from this book:

1. Choosing your life partner is just as important as choosing your career.
2. All jobs require some sacrifice. Men don't have it all, few men have optimal work life balance, so as a woman don't expect or demand that you can have it either.
3. Negotiate and plan important family responsibilities with your partner and family.
4. Choose a company to work for that has a strong track record in supporting, developing and promoting women. Find out what the women are doing in the organisation – are they involved in the big issues facing the business?
5. Be strong; speak up for what you believe you deserve – a promotion, a pay rise, recognition.
6. Where you experience the glass ceiling or discrimination fight it but if you are getting nowhere, leave and find an employer where you are valued.
7. Mentoring is important. However, finding your own sponsors and supporters will be more effective than settling for one you are allocated.
8. Develop and nurture your professional network.
9. When looking to move on, research the CEO as thoroughly as the prospective organisation and the role. The CEO sets down the culture of the organisation.
10. Do your research, then follow your heart.