

What Every Woman Needs on the Journey from Intern to C-Suite: A #GirlSquad



By Sandra Fathi, President and Founder, [Affect](#)

I have been running my own agency for going on 14 years this April and even before I started on this journey, I sought out mentors and advisers to help me make difficult decisions, avoid costly mistakes and accelerate the growth of my business. Some of the most valuable investments that I have made have been going out to lunch, drinks or dinner with powerful women. I have always found that the female leaders that I've encountered have a special place in their heart for helping other women climb to the top – and often, give them a boost. Most female executives that I know have always been willing to lend their advice, their time and their connections to help others. The most difficult problem that I encounter is not asking for help at all. I wasn't always at ease asking the [CEO](#) of a company out to lunch or approaching a keynote speaker at a conference. However, I've found that if I make the investment to get to know them, to be forthcoming about my agenda but also to provide reciprocal value where I can, the response is overwhelmingly positive.

I am not saying that every woman I've worked with was a saint. No, I've had my fair share of female bosses that had no intention of helping anyone else break the glass ceiling, but those ladies didn't make it into my [#GirlSquad](#). The group of

women that I've come back to over and over again have continued to rise to the tops of their organizations, to be recognized by their industry peers and to be admired by both their male and female colleagues for their generosity of spirit as well as professional achievements.

So how do you go about building your own professional Girl Squad? Here are some tips regardless of where you are in your career:

- **Be That Girl** – Be the person you want to encounter in your professional journey. When someone approaches you and asks for help or advice, be generous and be patient. You never know where that colleague or client might end up in the future and when they'll be in a position to help you.
- **Join The Team** – Get involved in networking and professional organizations. I have been involved in PRSA for nearly two decades and I started by volunteering at events. Since then, I've served as the Chair of the Technology Section, Chair of the Tri-State District, President of PRSA-NY and now I sit on the board. I am also on the board of the PR Council and I can't tell you how many incredible people I have met through these organizations.
- **Ask Her Out** – Make a short list of women you know, women you want to know and or women you admire and consider reaching out to them to see if they are willing to meet for coffee, for lunch or a quick phone call. As long as you are honest about your intentions and show a genuine interest and willingness to make an effort, you'll be surprised how many women will happily accept your invitation.
- **Let the Guys In** – Don't discriminate either. If you find a man who is willing and able to help support his female colleagues, don't be afraid to invite them to the club as well.

- **Invest in Relationships** – Continue to invest time and effort into building your #GirlSquad. It's not easy to create a network of powerful, intelligent, benevolent women but, it can be done, and it's worth it.
- **Celebrate Achievements** – When someone on your squad is promoted, recognized or achieves success, take the time to celebrate with them. It's always important to support each other and when one of your members rises, she elevates everyone in the group.

About the Author: Sandra Fathi is President and Founder of [Affect](#), a public relations and social media firm specializing in technology, healthcare and professional services. Sandra is an expert on crisis communications and is a sought-after speaker and writer on the topic. She is currently on the board of [PRSA-NY](#) and the [PR Council](#). She can be reached at sfathi@affect.com or on twitter at [@sandrafathi](#)