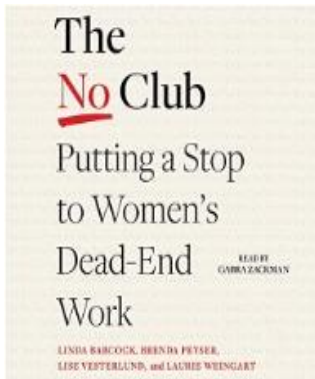


'CliffsNotes' Book Club Recap

DO YOU LOVE BOOKS ON LEADERSHIP, NEUROSCIENCE, AND BUSINESS, BUT NOT HAVE TIME TO READ ALL THE BOOKS?

Join the '**CliffsNotes' club**—where there's no pressure to pre-read the book, no membership required, no cost, and lots of discussion in just 90 minutes. Each month, you will hear a **summary of highlights** from a recently-published business book. This discussion summary is intended to provide a recap of the conversation at Book Club, rather than serve as a thorough book summary. We'll keep you "in the know" on the latest and greatest concepts and models. **Register here** for upcoming events.



January 2024

The No Club: Putting a Stop to Women's Dead-End Work

By Linda Babcock, Brenda Peyser, Lise Vesterlund & Laurie Weingart

Discussion Highlights

Presented by Janice Shack-Marquez

Overview

This book is a valuable resource for coaches who are working with clients who struggle with saying no and then pay for the consequences of that struggle and for OD experts who want to help organizations improve their culture.

This book grew out of the work of a group of five women who each struggled with the frustration of never finding the time to do the work that mattered most to their careers. The women were struck by how often they took on tasks in an effort to fulfill other people's needs and expectations and by how quickly they were to take on these tasks. They began to refer to these tasks, which were important to their organizations, but which took time away from the work that was core to their jobs and which didn't advance their individual careers, as **non-promotable tasks** or NPTs.

This book presents overwhelming evidence that women more than men are tasked with non-promotable work. In exploring why this might be, their research uncovered two drivers:

- We ask women more often than men to do such tasks, and
- When we ask, women are more likely than men to agree to doing them.

They discovered that the key explanation for these drivers is the collective expectation that women, more than men, will do the unrewarded and non-promotable work. This finding not only pointed to effective solutions, but it made clear that:

- Women aren't the problem, and
- Organization practices are.

So this is not a "fix-the-women" book. Instead it is a "fix-the-organization" book.

The notes below are almost entirely copied from the book.

Chapter 2: What are non-promotable tasks?

A non-promotable task matters to your organization, but will not help you advance your career.

- The *currency* of your organization determines the promotability of your tasks: Tasks that align closely with your organization's goals have high currency.

How do you know if a task is promotable?

- Promotable tasks are instrumental to increasing the organization's currency
- Promotable tasks are visible to others
- Promotable tasks often require specialized skills that can differentiate you from others
- Tasks that prepare you for future promotable work are indirectly promotable
- Tasks that improve your access to future promotable work are indirectly promotable

How do you identify a non-promotable task?

- Non-promotable tasks are not instrumental to increasing the organization's currency
- Non-promotable tasks are often not visible
- Non-promotable tasks may not require specialized skills. Many people can do them (not just you)

The No Club's Top Ten NPTs

1. Helping others do their work and filling in when people are absent
2. Organizing and coordinating (but not managing) the work of others
3. Editing, proofreading, and compiling, especially the work of others
4. Logistical planning and special events
5. Governance work, such as safety, ethics, diversity, climate, and review committees
6. Recruiting
7. Resolving conflict among coworkers
8. Helping coworkers with their personal problems
9. Onboarding, training, and mentoring
10. Office housework such as getting coffee and cleaning

There are some great exercises in the book that will help you identify NPTs in your work and how much time you are devoting to those NPTs as well as whether there is a gender divide in the distribution of promotable and non-promotable work in your organization.

Chapter 4: Why Do Women Say Yes?

- Women are more likely than men are to say yes to requests for NPTs
 - We (both men AND women) expect women to say yes (so they do)
 - If women decline and don't fulfill others' expectations, they may be subject to retaliation
 - Women feel guilty when they say no – because we expect them to say yes
 - Women experience backlash when they say no – because we expect them to say yes
 - An aside on helping behavior from research results:
 - Women were not rewarded when they helped, but when they didn't help, they were penalized
 - When men didn't help, they weren't penalized, and when they did help, they were rewarded – the opposite of what happened to women.
- Women more than men will take on nonpromotable work, and it isn't because they are more willing or eager to do this work, but because we expect them to. And, disturbingly women of color face expectations for both their gender and their race, resulting in an even narrower band of expected behavior for NPTs.

Chapter 5: Why do Women Get Asked?

- We (men AND women) ask women more than men to do non-promotable tasks.
- Why?
 - We ask people we expect will say yes (because it is faster, easier and less stressful)
 - When we think about who is a “good fit” for non-promotable work, women come to mind more easily
 - Women are victims of their own “success”
 - Cultural taxation
 - Benevolent sexism
- Over time, the cumulative effect of an ever-increasing load of NPTs derails women's careers as they miss out on recognition, advancement and outside offers.

Chapter 6: The Cost of Non-Promotable Work

- Consciously or not, women's workloads fall into one of two unfortunate categories: work/work imbalance and work overload.
- Work/work imbalance: imbalance between promotable and non-promotable tasks
 - Negative effects of work/work imbalance
 - Career stagnation,
 - Questioning your professional identity and competence,
 - Emotional exhaustion,
 - Tension with coworkers, and
 - Job dissatisfaction, stress and turnover (from the job, field, or even the labor force).
- Work Overload: you manage non-promotable tasks by increasing the number of hours you work
 - Negative effects of work overload
 - Negative effects on family,
 - Social isolation,
 - Mental and physical problems including stress, poor sleep, and negative health outcomes such as hypertension, and
 - Career stagnation.

Chapter 7: The No Club Playbook

- Three steps to assess whether a request for an NPT warranted a no:
 - Get the information you need to understand the task
 - Consider who is asking
 - Avoid the traps that lead to yes
 - Impose a waiting period before you respond with an automatic yes
 - Don't underestimate the cost
 - Consider your implicit no (i.e., if you say yes, what are you saying no to)
 - Remember the future you (i.e., imagine the request is for tomorrow, not eleven months from now)
 - Beware of your triggers
 - Ignore the diva moment
 - Don't get cornered into saying yes
- Crafting an effective NO
 - Ensure they take NO for an answer
 - "I am going to be unable to do that."
 - "That is not going to work for me."
 - "No."
 - Ways we fail to say no clearly:
 - Failing to be direct
 - Hedging
 - Avoid negative repercussions from saying no
 - People feel most positively toward a decliner when they gave a referral to someone else who could help or offer to help at a later date.
 - Use a "Yes, No, Yes" Strategy
 - YES: Say yes to yourself by recognizing and expressing your needs and values
 - NO: Assert your agency and personal power by saying no and providing a brief (baggage-free) explanation of why
 - YES: Further the relationship by finding something to say yes to; for example, get them the help they need without suggesting others who are already overburdened with NPTs
 - Have the requester justify why you are being asked
 - Get outside help to evaluate (and decline) a request
- Say yes while saying no
 - Offer an alternative
 - Put conditions on your yes
 - Consider asking for additional resources
 - Set a time limit
 - Do a B+ job rather than an A+ job
 - Turn a request for help into a negotiation

Chapter 8: Optimize Your Portfolio of Work

This chapter focuses on four steps to creating an ideal portfolio of work

- Determine how much time you should spend on NPTs
 - What NPT load does your organization expect for someone in your business, in your position and with your rank?
 - What NPT load is best for you?
- Which NPTs are right for you?

- NPTs that fulfill you
- NPTs that leverage your expertise
- NPTs that provide a good return on your time spent
- NPTs that give you a mental break
- NPTs that fit with your current assignments
- Align your current assignments with your ideal work portfolio
 - Engage your supervisor in the conversation
 - Be strategic when realigning your portfolio of work
- Maintain a well-balanced portfolio of work
 - Form a no club
 - Enlist a “no” buddy
 - Form a “no” advisory council

Chapter 9: Organizations Benefit When Employees Share Non-Promotable Work

Improving the management of NPTs doesn't only help women; it helps organizations meet key business objectives to:

- Utilize the workforce most efficiently,
- Create a culture where everyone pitches in,
- Promote an engaged and satisfied workforce,
- Retain valuable employees, and
- Attract the best talent.

Chapter 10: How to Seed Change in Your Organization

- Create awareness
 - Present the issue in relatable terms
 - Tie the issue to important organizational goals
 - Be persistent
- Identify and mobilize your allies
 - Colleagues who carry excessive loads of NPTs
 - Colleagues who get it
 - Existing affinity groups
 - Your supervisor or other management
 - Informal leaders
- Take action
 - Interrupt the status quo
 - Engage in coordinated stealth initiatives
 - Use any power you have
 - Speak out
 - Mentor early career colleagues
 - Create an NPT innovation team

Chapter 11: Managing Non-promotable Work to Advance Women and Organizations

The only real and lasting solution is to change organizational practices and policies for allocating and rewarding work.

- Phase 1: Diagnose the problem and set objectives
 - Task-oriented – identify NPTs and record which subset of employees are assigned to each
 - Employee-oriented – identify if specific employees spend an unusually high number or low number of hours on promotable tasks
- Phase 2: Select, design and develop solutions
 - Department-specific initiatives
 - Random assignment
 - Take turns
 - Assign NPTs strategically, based on the skill sets of your employees
 - Develop a list of people who can do NPTs
 - Train new people to do NPTs
 - Use mentors and sponsors and be ready to intervene
 - Reassign and redistribute NPTs to boost employee success
 - Organization-wide initiatives
 - Enforce standards for doing NPTs
 - Provide incentives for doing NPTs
 - Avoid cultural taxation
 - Eliminate NPTs that aren't worth it
 - Redesign jobs so that NPTs for one role become PTs for another
 - Provide feedback on work/work balance as part of the performance evaluation process
 - Change the way performance is evaluated
- Phase 3: Communicate the Change Vision
- Phase 4: Institutionalize the Change
 - Monitor the new practices
 - Assess progress toward goals
 - Institutionalize what works

Chapter 12: What We've Learned

The bottom line: Organizations need to fully embrace responsibility for correcting the current imbalance of NPTs. This is not a fix-the-women problem.

About the Book Club In this monthly club, a presenter shares highlights from a book related to leadership, business, neuroscience, or coaching. Membership is not required, and there's no obligation to pre-read the book. This discussion summary is intended to provide a recap of the conversation at Book Club, rather than serve as a thorough book summary. [Register here](#) for upcoming events. For the full set of discussion summaries, [click here](#).