

came the Neolithic revolution and things took a turn for the worse for women for a while with the invention of agriculture, patriarchy, wars, nation states, banks, lawyers, global warming, rap music, and those really annoying video screens in pubs. Which is kind of ironical since (given the usual division of labour in hunter gatherer societies) it was almost certainly women who invented agriculture. If only someone had said to the woman who decided it would be easier to save some of the seeds and plant them near the hut—STOP! Can't you see where this is will lead?! But don't worry, the last 10 000 years have been exceptional and I think we can confidently expect things to get back to normal any day now.

So back in the present: What helps a woman to succeed? (I remember being shocked to my puritanical bootstraps at law school when one of our lecturers asked rhetorically, "What does it take to succeed in the law?" and then said "Well first, you have to be a snappy dresser." He looked at us shook his head, and said, "You lot have a lot of work to do in that department." Anyway, that's not it.

In my experience, one thing that does help (in fact is pretty much essential) is something men have always known about and often in the past taken for granted, namely a supportive partner.

To illustrate by means of an anecdote: when I was in private practice as a solicitor, there were four solicitors in our Darwin office—we were a branch office of a large Queensland law firm, struggling to build up the practice and working some fairly insane hours. From time-to-time, if I wasn't home for dinner by about 8:30, my husband would arrive with an esky. He'd remove a bunch of files from the round table in my office, set the table with table cloth, knives, forks, wine glasses, flower in a small vase, and serve dinner (along with a bottle of white wine). We'd eat, talk and have a few laughs, then he'd pack it all up and go home and I would keep working. It was fun. (I should say by way of contrast, that one of the other solicitors in the firm had a spouse who suffered from extreme dependency. Said spouse was a student, younger than he was, and if he was ever late home she would be sitting there whimpering because he was late cooking her dinner. I don't know where he is now, or what he has done but whatever it is, it can't have been easy!)

I cannot end a speech at a Women Lawyers function with an anecdote in praise of a man and I did promise to get back to the virtues of a great PA. Most of you know Liz Hochman. She has been my secretary / PA off and on (mostly on) for over twenty years, and if there is one thing that rivals a supportive spouse in making life easier it is a great secretary. Lizzie managed my practice, and me and she now

manages me, my associates and my chambers. It was years before I even knew what the word 'administration' meant. I've got a fair idea now. It's the stuff Lizzie does.

That fact that illustrates one aspect of modern business and professional life that still needs a great deal of improvement and that is the undervaluing of work that has traditionally been done by women and the overvaluing of work that has traditionally been done by men. Quite simply, the practical day-to-day management of an office, a practice or a business is a specialised skill that is not adequately reflected in the remuneration paid to secretaries and PAs who often do the bulk of it.

The relative status accorded to various jobs in society changes over time of course, as does the average remuneration attached to those jobs, but I think I have detected a trend. The status of an occupation takes a plunge whenever women become a majority in that occupation, along with the average remuneration received by its practitioners. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in a large country town or smallish city, the elite, most respected members of that society would have been the town bank manager, the town solicitor, the doctor and the head teacher and the accountant if the town was big enough to have one and they would all have been men.

Women have long been in the majority in the teaching profession and teachers are no longer accorded either high status or high pay—more's the pity as they perform just about the most important function in society. If not the majority, then close to the majority of GPs are now women and GPs have lost both status and pay, unlike specialists where I understand men are still in the majority. More than half of all law graduates are now women. The cultural image of the solicitor in movies and TV shows is now a bright young power dressing woman and while partners in the big law firms (many of whom are women) are still raking it in (if you will excuse the expression), employed solicitors are no longer as well paid relatively speaking as they once were and solicitors have lost status: the bar is still (so far) dominated by men.

Any men who are concerned about the future wealth and status of their own particular profession would be well advised to bar the door and put up a glass ceiling. Fortunately, we have no intention of letting them do so."

Our sincere thanks to Justice Kelly for entertaining and inspiring us and to our Patron Justice Blokland for again being a delightful and magnanimous host.