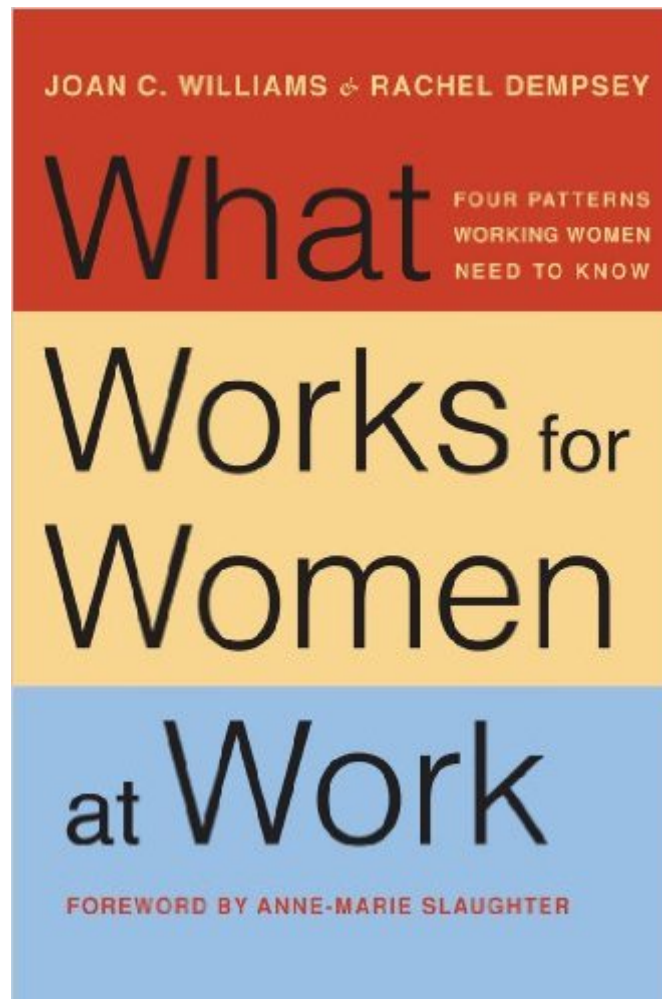


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# What Works For Women At Work: Four Patterns Working Women Need To Know



## Synopsis

An essential resource for any working woman, *What Works for Women at Work* is a comprehensive and insightful guide for mastering office politics as a woman. Authored by Joan C. Williams, one of the nation's most-cited experts on women and work, and her daughter, writer Rachel Dempsey, this unique book offers a multi-generational perspective into the realities of today's workplace. Often women receive messages that they have only themselves to blame for failing to get ahead: "Negotiate more! Stop being such a wimp! Stop being such a witch!" *What Works for Women at Work* tells women it's not their fault. The simple fact is that office politics often benefits men over women. Based on interviews with 127 successful working women, over half of them women of color, *What Works for Women at Work* presents a toolkit for getting ahead in today's workplace. Distilling over 35 years of research, Williams and Dempsey offer four crisp patterns that affect working women: Prove-It-Again!, the Tightrope, the Maternal Wall, and the Tug of War. Each represents different challenges and requires different strategies which is why women need to be savvier than men to survive and thrive in high-powered careers. Williams and Dempsey's analysis of working women is nuanced and in-depth, going far beyond the traditional cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all approaches of most career guides for women. Throughout the book, they weave real-life anecdotes from the women they interviewed, along with quick kernels of advice like a "New Girl Action Plan," ways to "Take Care of Yourself," and even "Comeback Lines" for dealing with sexual harassment and other difficult situations. Up-beat, pragmatic, and chock full of advice, *What Works for Women at Work* is an indispensable guide for working women.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In the Foreword, Anne-Marie Slaughter observes, and I agree, "If women act on the prescriptions in these pages and men begin to understand the deep culturally embedded biases and assumptions that mean a book like this still needs to be written, the workplace will be a better place, the United States will be more competitive, and the intertwining of work and family life will be easier for all caregivers." Joan Williams and Rachel Dempsey focus on "four crisp patterns that provide the framework for this book." They are Prove-It-Again! (a descriptive bias), the Tightrope (a prescriptive bias), the Maternal Wall (both a descriptive and prescriptive bias), and Tug of War (i.e. between accepting or resisting masculine traditions based on various biases). Williams and Dempsey devote a separate chapter to each of the four patterns. Throughout their lively as well as thoughtful and thought-provoking narrative, they provide an abundance of information, insights, and counsel from a wide variety of sources - including their own wide and deep experience - so that their readers will have the tools needed now to navigate the world as they find it. That said, I commend them for acknowledging, "Simple formulas are highly misleading, not only because different women face different problems but because different women can face different problems at different points in their careers. The truth is that women have to be politically savvy to survive and thrive in historically male careers." That is, play with much greater skill the hand they are dealt or go find a different game. "Better yet, become the dealer or invent your own game.

If you work in a male-dominated environment and find that you aren't advancing as quickly as your work should merit, or that there's gender-related tension, this may be the right book for you. I picked it up simply thinking that the occasional career advice book couldn't hurt, but didn't find any takeaways to apply to my own work in the near future. Despite the title, *What Works for Women* is long on problems women can face in the workplace, and short on solutions. There are four major problems discussed. First, women's accomplishments tend to be discredited or forgotten more easily than men's, and men tend to be viewed as more competent and having better leadership qualities. Second, women are disliked if they're too aggressive, but not respected if they're too passive or girly. Third, mothers often aren't seen as serious employees, or are judged as bad mothers if they are. Fourth, all this pressure can cause women to feel they must compete with each other for a limited number of "female" seats, or to resent or feel the need to dissociate themselves from other women, particularly those who have made

different choices. As far as the discussion of problems, the book is thorough and backs up anecdotes with research. The tone is non-judgmental and the authors take a big-picture view â “ noting, for instance, that women donâ™t just make less money because theyâ™re too timid to negotiate; women who do negotiate their salaries are seen as less likeable to work with. So success isnâ™t simply a matter of overcoming your own ingrained expectations, when those around you have them as well. How to succeed, then? The book has less to say about that, and much of what it does say is fairly general or obvious.

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