

07. Negotiation:



: women,
equity,
architecture.

Good negotiation skills play a big role in the development of individual careers, in the strength of successful practices and in the continuing viability of the profession as architecture renegotiates its cultural, social and political role. Research in other fields consistently demonstrates that gender can impact negotiation styles, outcomes and even the willingness to negotiate in the first place.

This guide outlines the importance of negotiation skills in architecture. It offers advice to employers and employees about negotiating in ways that provide a fairer playing field for women and men, and are beneficial to all parties.



**PARLOUR GUIDES
TO EQUITABLE
PRACTICE**

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How is negotiation affected by gender?

Negotiation is overlaid with many myths about gender – ‘women don’t ask’, ‘women don’t like talking about money’, ‘women aren’t good at negotiation’ and so on. These myths can be traps for all involved but tools are available to navigate them effectively, and to change them.

Some of these myths point to gendered behavioural patterns that are borne out by research, while others indicate how stereotypes about gender can impact on how women may be perceived during negotiation.

Negotiation styles and perception

Some commentators argue that women’s failure to negotiate assertively explains the persistent gender pay gap and the under-representation of women at senior levels in many professions, including architecture. But recent research indicates that stereotyping around gender norms complicates negotiation. When women do ask, or adopt ‘masculine’ negotiation styles, they may be dismissed as ‘pushy’ or ‘overly aggressive’. Other research has found that many women are, in fact, excellent negotiators when speaking on behalf of others, but not so good when arguing for themselves.

Research around salary negotiation has identified that men are much more likely to actively negotiate higher salaries and better conditions while women tend to accept what is offered.

Negotiation contexts A recent American experiment found that where salary standards are ambiguous, women set less ambitious goals and accepted pay that was 10 percent lower, on average, than men. Parlour’s own surveys and consultations indicate that these tendencies are also present in the Australian architecture profession.

Language and tone Unfair though it is, the research is clear that most people are more likely to accept aggressive, strongly assertive behaviour from men than women.

A related observation is that men tend to be much more direct in their use of language, while women are likely to use more indirect language. For example, they may frame concerns as questions, pose open-ended questions as a way to elicit further information, and use more nuanced language. This can mean that both cues and nuance get lost in the negotiation.

It is important to understand that all of these characteristics are the outcome of social and cultural expectations. They are not innate qualities (nor do they apply to all, we are talking about women as a group).



Why does it matter?

Good negotiation skills help develop individual careers; practices that encourage fair negotiation reap many benefits; and the profession needs architects with strong negotiation skills.

When a woman negotiates well she is helping forge a path for others to follow, and providing one more challenge to the stereotypes.

Practices

Ensuring that practices nurture a negotiating environment that is fair to all employees is clearly the ethical thing to do. However, it is also vital for the ongoing strength of a business.

Unequal negotiating environments can bring all sorts of inequity into practices – pay inequity, unbalanced career prospects and progression, and poor distribution of projects and roles. All of these can be damaging to practices and prevent them from reaching their potential.

In contrast, employees who feel that they are fairly treated and have equal opportunity to state their case are more likely to be productive, committed and engaged.

Architecture itself is a continual process of negotiation – architects negotiate daily with consultants, clients, planners, builders, developers and many others. The better the team is at negotiation the better the outcome, so having confident, skilled negotiators on staff can be enormously beneficial.

Employees

Negotiating effectively in relation to pay, promotion, projects and working conditions is vital to developing a successful, viable career. This is particularly important for women in terms of ongoing economic security, and for those who want or need to work in non-traditional patterns while still maintaining a satisfying career.

It is also an excellent professional skill to have as negotiation permeates all aspects of architecture practice.

The profession

Skilled negotiators will play an important role in the development of the profession, particularly in the face of rapidly changing economic and procurement environments, some of which are shifting and eroding the role of the architect.



What can we do?

Much can be done to ensure a fairer negotiating environment in architecture using considerable research, discussion and advice from the business and corporate sectors.

Architecture itself involves extensive negotiation every day and this key professional skill can be extended into the negotiation of individual careers and workplace conditions.

Change is not a simple matter of women adapting their negotiation styles to dominant paradigms. Architectural practices – like other businesses and organisations – also need to change to respond to the ways their workforces negotiate. This is likely to result in more effective negotiation altogether. That said, women employees simply don't have time to wait for this change to be complete – they need to skilfully navigate current systems even as we all work to change them.

Much of the advice about good negotiation applies to both sides of the table, and it is important to understand each other's perspectives.

Practices

Much of the available research and advice about negotiation focuses on the individual or employee, and how women employees can successfully navigate negotiation. Material for businesses is more limited, yet businesses play an important role in establishing a fair context for negotiation. This will be to the advantage of the practice, not its detriment. • See also *Parlour guides: Pay equity and Recruitment.*

Understand what makes effective negotiation

Good negotiation is a matter of give and take, where each party is respected and leaves the negotiating table feeling satisfied that they have gained something and have been treated fairly. The best negotiations have outcomes that are beneficial to all.

- Create a negotiation environment that fosters constructive interaction, where all parties behave in a courteous yet focused and determined manner.
- Aim for goodwill and understanding on both sides, regardless of the different interests that each brings to the table.
- Don't aim to intimidate and don't be dismissive of the other's concerns or requests. You might 'win' in the short term, but you will undermine respect and trust, which does not lead to a productive and stable workplace.
- Think creatively about what your practice can offer an employee – what might mean a lot to them yet could be readily accommodated by the practice?
- Explain the practice's perspective. Negotiation is more likely to be successful when everyone understands the context in which decisions are made.



- Don't use requests for flexibility as an opportunity to push down salaries. This will build inequity into your practice. Remember to reward skill and competence and outcomes, rather than time in the office.

Be clear what is up for negotiation

Research suggests that men tend to negotiate salaries much more frequently and vigorously, especially when the 'rules' around negotiation are ambiguous. The same research indicates that men are more likely to apply for jobs than women where salaries and conditions are not clear – skewing the pool in the first place.

An explicit statement that conditions and pay are open to negotiation can dramatically increase the likelihood of women entering into negotiation, thereby improving employees' chances of having fair and equal opportunities. This also helps broaden your applicant pool. Being clear about what is negotiable, and the limits of negotiation, also helps employers with strategic planning.

- If you are prepared to negotiate on salaries and/or working conditions, declare this in the job advertisement or in the information about promotion processes.
- Have clear position descriptions and salary bands in place. These provide a good framework for negotiation in both recruitment and promotion.
- If a role could be undertaken through a flexible work arrangement, make it clear that this possibility is up for discussion.

Be prepared

All parties should aim to be as well prepared as possible going into any negotiation.

- Make sure you understand the Architects Award and the relevant federal minimum standards (currently the *National Employment Standards*). Observe the mandated salary rates as a minimum. These ensure a base level playing field, and should not be undermined.
- Understand current rates in the profession and how other practices and organisations use flexible work arrangements to their advantage.
- Consider what you can offer an employee in terms of flexible workplace conditions and other non-traditional benefits.
- Have clear bands that apply to all employees of similar skill, expertise and experience. Negotiate within these boundaries.

Understand different modes of negotiation

Be aware of the strengths and weaknesses in different styles of negotiation – from the aggressive to the collaborative – and be wary of making gender-based assumptions regarding behaviour.

- Double-check your reactions to guard against gender bias – for example, if you find yourself thinking a woman is being 'pushy', ask yourself if you would interpret this behaviour in the same way if you were negotiating with a man.

Have women on the employer's side of the table

If practices are serious about equity they need to have women involved in negotiations and decisions that relate to appointments, salaries, promotion, workplace arrangements, project allocation and resourcing.



Train your staff in negotiation

Ensuring your employees are good negotiators may sound counter-intuitive, but many benefits accrue to businesses with skilled negotiators on their staff. It is also a good way to ensure that all employees have equal opportunity, and that you are not inadvertently rewarding confidence over competence.

- Teach your staff how to negotiate effectively in different contexts and with different personalities with different negotiation styles.

Employees

There are many things that an employee can do to improve their negotiation skills and to navigate different negotiation environments. There is also a wide array of resources and advice available to help.

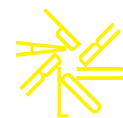
Don't be trapped by the myths

The research around women and negotiation seems dispiriting at times. It is important to understand how gender bias and ingrained expectations of gender roles and behaviour affect negotiation but don't let this limit or constrain you.

- Understand the systemic issues relating to gender and negotiation as a way to help navigate them. Talk to colleagues and mentors to help recognise the structural factors at play in particular situations, then strategise around them.
- Identify if and when you are falling into limiting gendered behaviour patterns and have some techniques at hand to manage this. For example, if you are hesitant about applying for promotion, asking to be involved in an interesting project, or seeking a pay raise, ask yourself how you will feel if a male colleague with an equivalent or lesser experience was successful when you haven't had a go. Then, take a deep breath, get prepared and go in and negotiate!
- Think about how well you can negotiate for the sake of a project, or for others. Now, think about how you can apply these skills to your own career.

Don't wait for an invitation to negotiate

When there is an explicit invitation or cue to negotiate, most women do so with great results. In contrast, men tend to negotiate much more frequently and effectively when



there are no cues or when the rules around negotiation are ambiguous.

- Be proactive. Don't wait for someone else to notice how hard you are working and how well you are doing your job.
- If there's no cue for negotiation in your workplace, try creating your own by arranging a date linked to an external event, such as handing over an important project to the client or the end of the financial year.
- Be canny about the best time to negotiate better conditions or a higher salary – for example, around the time of a good performance review, when you have just completed a well-received project, or when you are about to take on extra responsibility.

Be prepared and well informed

The better informed you are, the better position you are in to negotiate effectively. Arming yourself with knowledge pays off – for example, gender gaps in salary negotiations tend to dissolve when people have a clear idea about what to ask for.

- Try to research a company's history with pay and conditions. If you are the first employee to request part-time hours or differing working conditions, think about strategies that might make your flexible arrangement work effectively. If you are planning to request a higher starting salary than offered in the past, be prepared to argue your case.
- When negotiating salaries, understand the relevant minimums by checking the provisions of the Architects Award and the relevant federal minimum standards (currently the *National Employment Standards*). These minimums ensure a base level playing field, and should not be undermined.
- For salary negotiations, do some research to find out what you're worth. Consult relevant careers or recruitment websites, check any recent industry research, and talk to peers and

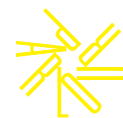
colleagues. Make sure you talk to men as well as women – if you only talk to other women you are likely to come up with systematically lower figures. (Remember, pitching too high can be as damaging as pitching too low.)

- If you want to negotiate a working arrangement that is new to your practice, consider citing how other offices make it work and demonstrate how it could work effectively in your office as well.
- If your employer has unsuccessfully tried flexible work arrangements in the past, find out why they didn't work. Come up with solutions that will remedy any past problems.
- Keep track of your achievements and successes and positive feedback about this. For example, if you've received testimonials or thank you notes from clients, awards or other recognition, you can use these as evidence of your value to the practice.
 - See also *Parlour guides Pay equity*.
- Seek advice from mentors and colleagues.
- Remember, employers and managers are much more interested in solutions than problems – having one (or two) ready is a good way forward.

Make the business case

Whether you're negotiating a pay rise, a promotion or flexible working conditions, you'll need to make a strong argument for the advantages to your employer. The fact that it will be enormously beneficial to you just isn't enough. Make the business case – why will your pay rise, promotion or flexible working conditions be good for the practice?

- Think laterally and positively about what you bring to the practice, and what more you could bring if your request is met.



Practise, practise, practise

The more you negotiate, the better you get at it – whether it's negotiating pay and conditions for yourself or negotiating with clients and contractors.

- Consider setting up mock interviews and practising strategic answers. Find a partner to give you feedback (ideally one with experience as a manager – mentors can be great for this).
- Have some tactics in place to help overcome any uncertainty or lack of confidence that may creep in.
- Explore how you can use negotiation skills developed in other contexts when negotiating your career.

Be firm but flexible

Know what you want, and whether it's reasonable in the context. This applies to working flexibly, pay rises, promotions and commencing salaries.

- Know what you'll settle for before you start the conversation. (Some people ask for more than they want, seeing it as a way to test the waters and have something to concede.)
- Beware of making an ultimatum – even if you're prepared to follow through, architecture is a surprisingly small profession and you can easily burn bridges.
- Understand the context from the practice's perspective, and explain why your request is appropriate in this context.

Consider language and tone

Be mindful of the research indicating that many people find strongly assertive behaviour more confronting from women than men.

There is a range of advice about how to deal with this. Some commentators recommend women stay within 'gender boundaries' – that is, to frame their requests in ways that fit within expectations, to be collaborative, and avoid anything that could be seen as 'pushy' or demanding. Others point out change is slow when we stay within accepted roles.

How you navigate this will depend on your own attitudes and negotiation style, who you are negotiating with, what relationship you have with them, and the context in which you are negotiating.

- Consider your own negotiation style(s), and identify how they could work in the particular context.
- Read the negotiation style of those on the other side of the table and respond to this. Choose a strategy that responds effectively to their interests and tactics.
- Enter the discussions with the goal of reaching a mutually satisfactory outcome. Avoid combative language.

The profession

Professional bodies can help educate both practices and employees in negotiation skills through continuing professional development programs and other resources.

Increased negotiation abilities across the board will be advantageous to the profession as a whole.



Credits

The Parlour Guides to Equitable Practice are an outcome of the research project 'Equity and Diversity in the Australian Architecture Profession: Women, Work and Leadership' (2011–2014), led by Naomi Stead of the University of Queensland.

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Further resources

There is a wide range of resources available about negotiation, most of which come from the business world. It is well worth exploring these.

Negotiating Successfully

Business and industry portal, Queensland Government

Excellent resource that covers the Do's and Don'ts of negotiating effectively, outlines strategies for negotiation, and discusses the next step to take when negotiation fails.

<http://www.business.qld.gov.au/business/running/managing-business-relationships/negotiating-successfully>

Negotiating Women

An American site with many resources.

<https://www.negotiatingwomen.com/>

She Negotiates

This section of the website Forbes includes a range of articles aimed at helping women improve negotiation skills.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/shenegotiates/>

Further reading

'Negotiate Your Worth: How Women Can Help Narrow the Gender Pay Gap'

Gillian Franklin, Women's Agenda

<http://www.womensagenda.com.au/talking-about/opinions/negotiate-your-worth-how-women-can-help-narrow-the-gender-pay-gap/201307082475>

'Tell Women Wages are Negotiable and Women Will Negotiate: Study'

Sunanda Creagh, Women's Agenda

<http://www.womensagenda.com.au/talking-about/top-stories/tell-women-wages-are-negotiable-and-women-will-negotiate-study/201211281236>

'Social Incentives for Gender Differences in the Propensity to Initiate Negotiations: Sometimes it Does Hurt to Ask'

Hannah Riley Bowles, Linda Babcock and Lei Lai, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 103 (2007).

'Ask For A Raise? Most Women Hesitate'

Jennifer Ludden, NPR

<http://www.npr.org/2011/02/14/133599768/ask-for-a-raise-most-women-hesitate>

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