Career Advocacy Toolkit

Leveraging Your Value

A practical toolkit for women in mining and construction navigating office housework, invisible labour, and the path to promotion and fair pay

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Principle: **We value all work toward the success of our organization.**

Challenge: Female employees in construction and mining are often overlooked for promotions and expected to do more in the emotional labour area of life. How can these employees leverage their skills and value to be recognized and obtain higher employment status and wages? It's not uncommon for female executives to be expected to take notes, get the team coffee, clean up after a meeting and effectively mother their teammates emotionally.

This has a name in workplace research — it's called "office housework" or non-promotable tasks (NPTs), and it's remarkably well-studied. The most rigorous work on this comes from *The No Club*, a book by four professors (Babcock et al., 2022) built entirely around this problem. Their research found women spend roughly 200 more hours a year than men on work that doesn't lead to advancement — about a month of extra labour annually — and that women are about 48% more likely to volunteer for these tasks, while managers of both genders are about 44% more likely to assign them to women in the first place. In a male-dominated industry like mining or construction, this often layers on top of already being one of few women in the room, which makes the "just be a team player" pressure even harder to push back on.

Name what's actually happening, even just to yourself

The tasks you're describing — note-taking, meeting cleanup, "mothering" the team emotionally — are structurally different from the technical or leadership work that gets you promoted. Babcock et al. (2022) distinguish non-promotable tasks are necessary for the organization but rarely show up in a performance review or promotion case, while promotable work (leading a project, owning a technical outcome, being visible to decision-makers) is what actually moves someone up. The problem isn't that the tasks are worthless — it's that doing them instead of promotable work is a direct trade against your own advancement, and it's happening because of assumption, not because you're better suited to it.

Learn to pause instead of reflexively saying yes

Babcock et al. (2022) recommends resisting the instinct to agree immediately when a non-promotable request comes in. A simple, low-friction line like *"Let me check my capacity and get back to you"* buys time to actually decide whether the task serves your goals or just serves the room — rather than agreeing on reflex.

Reframe a decline around workload, not reluctance

Saying a flat "no" can trigger backlash for women in a way it often doesn't for men — but framing a decline around competing priorities is much harder to argue with: *"I'm heads-down on [the technical/leadership work I need visibility on] right now — could we rotate this one?"* This does two things: it protects you from the "difficult" label, and it opens the door to distributing the task more fairly across the team going forward.

Push for rotation systems, not volunteering

Because women volunteer for these tasks more often and get asked more often, the fix isn't individual willpower — it's structural. Advocating for a simple rotation (whoever's turn it is takes notes, organizes the toolbox talk, plans the crew event) removes the gendered default entirely, and it's a concrete, reasonable thing to propose to a supervisor without it reading as a personal complaint.

Make your actual work visible — your manager likely doesn't see it all

A manager typically only has insight into what they specifically asked you to do, not the informal load of emotional and administrative work happening around them. This means the fix isn't just "work harder and hope it's noticed" — it's actively tracking and surfacing what you do:

- Keep a running log (a "brag document") of technical wins, problems you solved, projects you led, and — separately — a rough accounting of non-promotable work you've absorbed. Bring both to performance and promotion conversations.
- When non-promotable work does show up in a review, name it plainly and explain its organizational value, rather than letting it disappear into "other duties" — but frame it as *evidence you've absorbed unstated team-maintenance costs*, not as your primary contribution.

Find sponsors, not just mentors

This distinction matters a lot in male-dominated technical industries. A mentor gives advice; a **sponsor** is someone senior with real influence who advocates for you in rooms you're not in — recommends you for the promotion, the stretch assignment, the project lead role, when you're not there to advocate for yourself. Since promotion decisions in mining and construction are often made informally among senior leadership, having someone credible pushing your name into those conversations does more than almost anything else you can do alone. Identify who actually holds influence over promotion decisions, and be direct about wanting their advocacy, not just their feedback.

Build a coalition, including men who see the pattern

Naming the pattern out loud lands very differently coming from more than one voice. If a male colleague says "hold on, let's rotate who's taking notes," it carries different social weight than the same words from the woman being asked to do it every time — not because it should, but because it currently does. Finding allies (of any gender) who've noticed the same dynamic, and coordinating even informally, makes the redistribution stick rather than reverting after one conversation.

Negotiate promotion and pay with data, explicitly

- Bring market-rate data for your role and region — industry associations, salary surveys, and even public job postings for comparable roles are useful ammunition.
- Ask directly what specific, measurable achievements would justify the next title or pay band, and get the answer in writing if possible — this converts a vague "keep doing good work" into a concrete target you can actually hit and later point back to.
- If the promotion criteria seem to reward visibility on technical or project-leadership work specifically, be deliberate about pursuing exactly that kind of assignment rather than the tasks you're currently being handed by default.

Connect with industry-specific networks

Organizations like Women in Mining and similar construction-sector networks exist specifically because this dynamic is common industry-wide, not unique to any one company. They're useful for benchmarking what fair treatment and compensation actually look like elsewhere, finding sponsors outside your own reporting line, and simply confirming you're not imagining the pattern — which matters when you're one of very few women in a room and the informal message is often that you should just be grateful to be there.

Part 1 — Scripts for Non-Promotable Requests

The goal isn't to never help — it's to stop defaulting into the role and to make the trade-off visible when it happens.

When a request comes in

> *"Let me check my capacity and get back to you."*

Buys time to decide whether the task serves your goals or just serves the room, instead of agreeing on reflex.

When you need to decline

> *"I'm heads-down on [specific technical or leadership work] right now — could we rotate this one?"*

Reframes the decline around competing priorities rather than reluctance, which is harder to push back on and avoids the "difficult" label women often face for a flat no.

When you want to propose a fix, not just decline

> *"Rather than it defaulting to me, what if we rotated note-taking / setup / cleanup across the team?"*

Moves the conversation from your individual refusal to a structural, reasonable fix — far easier for a supervisor to say yes to.

When you're already overloaded with it

> *"I've noticed I'm doing more of the day-to-day team coordination than the technical/project work I want to be evaluated on. Can we talk about rebalancing that?"*

Names the pattern directly and ties it explicitly to your advancement, which is the actual issue.

Part 2 — Brag Document Template

A manager typically only sees what they specifically asked you to do — not the full picture of your contributions. Keep this updated continuously, not just before a review, so nothing gets forgotten by the time it matters.

Promotable Wins (technical, project, leadership)

Date	What happened / your role	Measurable outcome

Absorbed Non-Promotable Work (track separately)

Not to complain about it in a review, but to make the invisible visible and support a conversation about rebalancing.

Date	Task absorbed	Approx. time cost

Part 3 — Sponsor Identification Worksheet

A mentor gives advice. A sponsor is someone senior with real influence who advocates for you in rooms you're not in. Promotion decisions in mining and construction are often made informally among senior leadership — having a credible sponsor pushing your name into those conversations matters more than almost anything you can do alone.

Who holds real influence over promotion decisions in my organization:

_____

Who already knows my work is strong: _____

What I want them to advocate for specifically (a project, a title, a stretch assignment):

_____

How I will ask for their sponsorship directly (not just feedback):

_____

A Direct Ask You Can Use

> *"I respect your judgment and I'd value having you advocate for me when [promotion / project / assignment] decisions come up. Would you be willing to do that?"*

Part 4 — Promotion & Pay Conversation Prep Sheet

Target role or pay band: _____

Market rate data gathered (source, figure): _____

Top 3 promotable achievements to lead with: _____

Specific, measurable criteria my manager has confirmed for this promotion:

_____

Sponsor(s) briefed before this conversation: _____

Opening Line You Can Use

> *"I'd like to talk about what it would take for me to move into [role/band]. Based on [achievements], I believe I'm ready, and I'd like to understand specifically what's needed to get there."*

If the Answer Is Vague

> *"Can we agree on specific, measurable criteria I can work toward, so we both have something concrete to check progress against?"*

Part 5 — Where to Go for Outside Perspective

- **Industry-specific networks:** Organizations like Women in Mining and comparable construction-sector networks exist specifically because this pattern is common industry-wide. Useful for benchmarking fair treatment and pay, and finding sponsors outside your own reporting line.
- **Market-rate data sources:** Salary surveys, industry association data, and public job postings for comparable roles and regions — useful ammunition for a pay conversation.
- **Allies who see the pattern:** Colleagues, of any gender, who've noticed the same pattern. A coalition makes redistribution of non-promotable work stick, rather than reverting after one conversation.

For personal use — update the brag document continuously, and revisit the prep sheet before every performance or pay conversation