

D I A L O G U E

# THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF WOMEN IN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

---

## SUMMARY

---

The field of environmental law has seen many changes over the years, with demonstrable legal and policy victories for cleaner air and water. While the face of the environmental movement in its beginnings was predominantly male, women have become more prominent and influential within environmental law and policy over the decades. On July 26, 2022, the Environmental Law Institute's Women in Environmental Law and Leadership Initiative hosted a cross-generational panel of women who explored opportunities and challenges for women in environmental law and policy "then and now," and offered advice for the next generation of lawyers and policymakers breaking into the field. Below, we present a transcript of that discussion, which has been edited for style, clarity, and space considerations.

---

**Jordan Diamond** is the President of the Environmental Law Institute.

**Tanya Nesbitt** (moderator) is a Partner with Marten Law.

**Pamela Giblin** is Senior Policy Advisor with the Climate Leadership Council.

**Ignacia S. Moreno** is the Chief Executive Officer and a founding Principal of The iMoreno Group, PLC, and a former Assistant Attorney General of the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the U.S. Department of Justice (2009-2013).

**Marisa Blackshire** is the Senior Director of Environmental Compliance and Health & Safety at Bloom Energy.

**Shannon Morrissey** is Counsel with WilmerHale.

**Jordan Diamond:** Thank you for joining us for this conversation, which is sponsored and organized by the Pacific Northwest Chapter of the Environmental Law Institute's (ELI's) Women in Environmental Law and Leadership (WELL) initiative.

Our WELL initiative began in 2018 to advance female leadership in the environmental law and policy field and to inform ELI's programs as they relate to women's issues. We do this by offering networking and professional development opportunities where women can learn and share their experiences with one another. Our national and regional steering committees are composed of women on ELI's Leadership Council and Board of Directors, among other impressive professionals.

We are grateful to be joined by a panel of women who are leaders in the field with a wealth of experience between them. I will now turn things over to our moderator, Tanya Nesbitt, who is a partner at Marten Law in Seattle. She is a

seasoned environmental litigator focusing on issues arising under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA),<sup>1</sup> the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA),<sup>2</sup> the Clean Water Act (CWA),<sup>3</sup> and more. Tanya was previously a trial attorney in the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ's) Environment and Natural Resources Division, and previously served as special assistant U.S. attorney in the District of Columbia. She has also taken the lead in forming our Pacific Northwest WELL Chapter, for which we are extremely grateful.

**Tanya Nesbitt:** Today's panel is a conversation across generations of female practitioners on their journey to become leaders in the environmental law and policy field. Between now and 2030, it's estimated that 10,000 baby boomers will hit retirement age each day. As millions begin to retire, a new generation will begin to fill their shoes. Women currently constitute 37% of the legal profession,<sup>4</sup> and a growing number of women are enrolling in law school. That number has increased each year for the past four years. In 2016, women made up the majority of law students at American Bar Association-accredited schools for the very first time.<sup>5</sup>

Today's panelists will discuss what has changed, what remains the same, and how they've carved out their own

---

1. 42 U.S.C. §§4321-4370h, ELR STAT. NEPA §§2-209.

2. 42 U.S.C. §§9601-9675, ELR STAT. CERCLA §§101-405.

3. 33 U.S.C. §§1251-1387, ELR STAT. FWPCA §§101-607.

4. Jim Ash, *Study Finds Women Continue to Outpace Men in Law School Enrollment*, FLA. BAR (Aug. 25, 2022), <https://www.floridabar.org/the-florida-bar-news/study-find-women-continue-to-outpace-men-in-law-school-enrollment/>.

5. *Id.*

paths to become leaders in environmental law and policy. The first segment of our panel will focus on women at work and workplace dynamics, and the second segment will focus on career planning.

Marisa Blackshire is a senior director of environmental compliance and environmental health and safety at Bloom Energy. She has been practicing environmental law for 16 years. Prior to joining Bloom, Marisa was a senior general attorney at BNSF Railway and led BNSF's environmental, legal, air, and climate programs. Before that, she was in private practice at Alston and Bird, where she worked on similar issues. This year, Marisa was named a Woman of Influence by the *Silicon Valley Business Journal*.

Pam Giblin recently joined the Climate Leadership Council as a senior policy adviser after 24 years as a partner at Baker Botts, where she led the firm's environmental practice group. Pam has practiced environmental law since 1970, and has extensive experience in advising clients on a broad array of environmental issues. Her areas of expertise include permitting, acquisitions, and enforcement under state and federal laws dealing with air, water, and hazardous waste.

Ignacia Moreno is the chief executive officer and a founding principal of The iMoreno Group, PLC, a majority woman-owned and majority minority-owned law firm that offers legal services and strategic counseling on environmental and natural resources, corporate, criminal, defense, and immigration matters. During her 32-year career, she has been corporate environmental counsel at a Fortune 10 company and practiced environmental law and litigation at prominent national law firms. In 2009, President Barack Obama nominated Ignacia to serve as assistant attorney general of the Environment and Natural Resources Division at DOJ. She was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate in a 93-to-0 vote, and served as head of the division from 2009 to 2013.

Shannon Morrissey is a counsel in WilmerHale's Energy, Environment, and Natural Resources group in the firm's San Francisco office. Shannon began her career in Sacramento, where she externed at the California State Water Resources Control Board and the California Attorney General's Office in the natural resources section. Her current practice focuses on traditional environmental, regulatory, and compliance matters, including CERCLA and the CWA; California and federal enforcement matters; workplace safety regulation enforcement; and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) and environmental justice policy advising, including civil rights audits in response to shareholder proposals.

The first question I want to pose to our panelists is about authenticity in the workplace. There's much conversation about today's generation being advised to bring their authentic selves to work. Given that women in leadership positions in the law was less common 30 to 40 years ago, how have you defined authenticity on your own terms?

**Pamela Giblin:** As the person who's sort of the "geezer" of the group, authenticity to me has always been one of the most important things that you bring to the workplace. Of

course, there are certain "true north" factors—for example, showing up on time and so on. That might not be your authentic self, but there are basic expectations that you have to meet. Meanwhile, authenticity in terms of really knowing your skill set, knowing what you do better than almost anybody, and then being true to that showcases your attributes in a way that gets you ahead in whatever area of the law you're working on.

One of the things that used to sadden me—and this includes young male lawyers and young female lawyers—is seeing people try to change who they are in terms of, say, pretending they like sports when they don't. You have to really dig down and know the skills that you have that can advance you and be true to them—again, within the framework of a fairly organized legal system.

Like I said, getting things done on time, showing up, and the like—those are not negotiable. But there's still a lot of room for authenticity in terms of the whole sweep of what each of us brings in terms of how we talk, how we dress, and so on. That's my initial thought. Authenticity is one of the things that I would always stress with young lawyers when I was hiring with the government and at Baker Botts. Don't try to be something you are not because it's not going to work. You'll be so much more successful, not to mention happy, if you dig down into who you really are.

**Ignacia Moreno:** I completely agree with Pam's assessment. I think authenticity is multifaceted. It all starts with you, who you are, and what you're like. Assessing your strengths and your weaknesses. Presenting yourself in a way that is going to garner respect so that you can influence issues.

As for choosing a workplace where you want to be your authentic self, part of the analysis starts before you even get the job. That means really assessing whether the place where you want to work is a good fit for you, and whether you're a good fit for it. This is tricky. You may not gather all the information you need at the outset, but in the interview process, don't forget you are also interviewing them to see if you want to work there.

Part of this important assessment is considering the culture of the place. The reason this is important is because, in the hustle and bustle of life and work, you want to know that the "you" you bring is going to be included. That you're going to belong. That you're going to be valued, because ultimately you want them to invest in you, to give you opportunities, to trust you, and so on. And for that to happen, you need to be in sync as best you can.

For example, I am from Cartagena, Colombia. I am a Latina. I like to wear colorful clothing and high-heeled shoes. The bottom line is that there are going to be things about me and my personality that are who I am. And I want to be in a place where that's not part of the screening process. The screening is going to be based on: am I good at what I do, what do I deliver, am I going to be given opportunities, am I going to be supported if I take on stretch assignments, and are people looking beyond what I look like and what I wear?

You should be situationally aware. Look around and get a sense of things. Make sure that it's going to work for you and you're going to work for it.

**Marisa Blackshire:** I'm pretty passionate about this topic. I think, in order to be successful anywhere, there are two things you need. You need to be competent and, even more important, you need to be able to build relationships. There's literally no way to build authentic and meaningful relationships if you're not being yourself and if you're not being authentic.

You'd be surprised to find that the things you think might be lacking in your co-workers are actually the foundation for building some of those relationships. If you're not being true to yourself, and if you're making assessments about what's appropriate and trying to fit in a box, there's almost no way that you're going to reach your maximum potential.

**Tanya Nesbitt:** I think oftentimes women still experience the likability paradox. And sometimes there is a question of, should I lead with competence or should I lead with warmth? This is often still expected of women in the work environment. How have you balanced that with authenticity?

**Pamela Giblin:** I don't think that likability is just for women. Likability is a trait that you need to have. So much of what lawyers do is advocacy. And if you're going to be an advocate, you need to know how to respond to people, how to react to people, and how to understand them. Likability, to me, doesn't mean you have to be Cinderella doing the cleanup after the lunch or whatever. Likability, as Marisa and Ignacia said, is being true to yourself.

But it is an important feature. You could be the most competent person in the world. But if you are unlikable, you're not going to get the assignments; you're not going to win the court cases; the juries are going to turn on you. Likability has gotten a bit of a bum rap because people think it means you've got to be meek. No, it means you have to be likable. And that means a lot of different things.

I would never discourage likability being part of the equation because that helps you in so many ways. The issue is how we define "likability." Because, as I said, it doesn't mean being meek or mousy. Maybe in the past, some people had interpreted it that way. I've met a few lawyers who were not likable. But, boy, they wound up paying the price in a lot of different ways.

**Shannon Morrissey:** I can speak to the likability paradox. I am a people-pleaser. I'm jealous of people who genuinely do not care what other people think. I'm not one of those people and I've tried to work on that more through the years. I'm still dealing with this in my seven-year practice, in my 30s, in my life outside of work.

I will say there are benefits to being self-aware and aware of what those in the room are thinking about and reacting to. Reading the room is helpful in many areas of life, especially in the practice of law. For example, it could mean

understanding when you see someone's eyebrows raised that they clearly are not agreeing with something you're saying. And then trying to understand why they don't agree, and not getting them to like your position, but to understand your position.

My current aim in my career is to maintain my position. Like Pam said, I'm not weak. I don't bend. If I think something is the right answer, I'll continue to advocate for that or for my client. However, I think you can be firm but likable. Frankly, you have to remember that the environmental world is really small. Being a jerk doesn't get you anywhere.

I'm sure many of us can recall the jerk in law school. I remember one time the jerk applied to a law firm I was working at, and I immediately shot them down. People remember your actions. My point is that there's no harm in being a kind person, and you can bring that to the workplace. It does not make you seem weak.

The other thing that I found helpful in my career is to understand that you are not going to like everyone in the workplace. And that's okay. You don't have to like everybody. Not everybody is going to like you. As a people-pleaser, I struggle with that concept.

What helps is having someone outside of the workplace that you can vent to about something that didn't go well in your day or about someone that you don't necessarily like or that you butt heads with. It will help you to then be professional at work and not carry that with you.

**Ignacia Moreno:** I think we all agree that "likability," an umbrella for these things we're talking about, is important. For all the reasons that Pam and Shannon mentioned, it is part of success. It is part of maximizing your interactions with people.

What I've observed over the years is that there are different measures of "likability" for men and women. We've all been on Zoom calls or courses where people talk about the different words that are used to describe a man and a woman who are doing the same thing. Much has been written about this. I think there's an additional standard of likability for women that women need to meet at all stages of their careers. You can begin by considering whether there is in fact an additional standard of likability for women in your workplace. Then, you can start to think about strategies for addressing and navigating a "likability standard" so that it doesn't become an impediment. Whatever you do, bring all of your authentic self; it's part of your success.

**Tanya Nesbitt:** One theme that you all have mentioned is the ability to influence and how that eventually dictates your leadership style depending on the forum.

Pam, you worked as a litigator and had to influence juries, judges, and even opposing counsel at times. Sometimes, you may not have had a female leader that you could emulate. You might have had to look to male leaders and adapt different traits depending on the workplace setting that you were in. How did you go about formulating a leadership style that truly worked for you—one that was authentic and worked for your workplace setting?

**Pamela Giblin:** When I started practicing law back when the earth was cool, there were not a lot of women in the practice. Out of my University of Texas Law School class of 400, there were eight women. In a way, it helped that we were the odd ones out. We were the exotic birds and people tended to underestimate us, which I've always found to be an advantage.

Early in my career, I was very fortunate to have had three wonderful mentors. They were all men because that was who was available, but they were superb in helping and guiding me. I had a lot of cases in weird little Texas towns where we were the out-of-town interlopers.

I'm Mexican American. I speak better Spanish than English, and I speak two other languages. That skill set gives me an understanding of language. It helps me understand the way people process information because we all process through words. Long story short, I found that those early experiences of getting outside my comfort zone, and trying a case in front of a judge that had never seen a woman lawyer or a jury that was largely made up of farmers and school teachers in a small town, was such a wonderful challenge.

We got the largest air pollution jury verdict that had ever been awarded in the United States in 1972, suing the largest employer in the county. We tried it not as an environmental case, but as a law-and-order case, because we adapted. We read the room and, again, I watched people. I watched a male lawyer in San Antonio, Texas, which is in Bexar County. He kept saying Bexar County phonetically, "Bexar," rather than "Be-har," which is how it is actually pronounced. You'd think by the third time he's heard "Be-har" County he'd adjust.

I think women read the room better than men. That's an advantage, but also bring your other skill sets. It could be music. It could be sports. It could be languages. I love the ability to pivot, where you suddenly land in a place and you're wondering what are we doing here, and who are these people? And then you figure it out. Navigating those new challenges has been one of the joys of my practice.

And because advocacy is a big part of our work, you do the analysis. You do the research. At the end of the day, you're trying to persuade the agency, the neighbors, or someone else. That's what it's all about. You have to present your argument in a way that they understand. At the same time, you can't fall in love with your argument. In environmental law, there's a tendency to fall in love with your science—but don't.

One last thing. I hate the term "fake it till you make it." That is something that should be erased from language because that's the antithesis of what we're talking about.

**Marisa Blackshire:** When you think about what your leadership style is going to be, you have to understand what you bring to the table and what your strengths and weaknesses are.

I know I can be loud. I know I can be feisty. I know I don't suffer fools gladly. But my people all know that I have their back. That I will take all of the lumps in the face

of criticism. That I will scream from the rooftops when they nail it. That I've got their best interests at heart when it comes to salary, when it comes to development, and so on. That allows me to be all of those other things. It allows them to know, when I am hard on them, that I do care about them.

You might have other characteristics than the ones I talked about, but you have to take those traits into consideration when you're thinking about how you want to lead and how you want to deal with people.

**Pamela Giblin:** I'm the only one wearing dangly earrings, by the way, and a flashy necklace, because I've done that from day one. I'm like Ignacia. I didn't wear those traditional navy-blue suits. I didn't care. I'd wear whatever I wanted.

**Ignacia Moreno:** I'd like to go back to a point that Pam made earlier: if you're not a sports person, don't fake it. I totally agree. But consider whether it would be helpful to learn something new that may be helpful.

Early in my career, when I was an associate at Hogan and Hartson, I worked for a partner whose client was the Washington Redskins, now the Washington Commanders. On Monday mornings, I sat in on a call with the partner and the team's general counsel, who would start the call by talking about Sunday's football game.

I'm not a football person. I wasn't, anyway, at the time. So, when the team's general counsel asked me a question about the game one day, of course, I had no answer. The partner who knew me stepped in and smoothed it out. After the call, he said to me, I have bad news for you: you're going to have to start watching football to establish a rapport with the client. I immediately started doing just that. A while later, I got to watch my first football game ever at RFK Stadium from the owner's box. Instead of faking it, I adapted to the opportunity to learn something new that ultimately was good for client relations, my career, and my marriage.

**Pamela Giblin:** Adaptation is not inconsistent with authenticity. You have to be able to adapt. All of us have had to learn things that weren't in our comfort zone. Well said, Ignacia.

**Tanya Nesbitt:** Let's move to our second segment and talk about career planning. I know many of you have gone in-house, have founded your own law firms, have worked in big law, or have worked for the government at both state and federal levels. How did you know it was time to transition to the next thing? How did you go about planning and mapping out your career?

**Pamela Giblin:** Well, Ignacia has some of the best stories. But I'll say it sometimes falls into your lap. It's serendipity. I never planned anything in my career. Opportunities just plopped there, and you have to be receptive to them. People who have a very rigid plan for their careers, it almost never works. Sometimes, there's just a phone call. When I

was thinking of retiring from Baker Botts, I got a call from the Climate Leadership Council saying, hey, we're working on climate, which was such a fascinating topic and very exciting to me.

**Ignacia Moreno:** I'd like to offer some observations before answering your question. Your career path is uniquely yours. Everything we're saying here is based on our individual experiences. There's no rulebook for any of this.

It's important for you to feel that you don't need to follow the herd. Although I like the herd, I rarely follow the herd. I do things that make sense for me and my family, that inspire me, and that I'm passionate about.

You want to do what makes sense for you and your family. Every career decision that I have ever made has been a family decision. Your family, as you get older and more settled, may include children. You need to think about them, too, and what they need from you. As you pursue your career, don't forget to fall in love and don't forget to take care of yourself.

When Pam talked about serendipity, I was smiling, because that's my story as well. Opportunities have come to me. When opportunities come to you, don't be afraid to make a change. Don't be afraid to take a risk. If you don't take some risks, you may miss the opportunity to learn and grow professionally. At the same time, it has to be a well-informed risk. Don't go blind into anything. Know your value and your worth as you think about leaving a place where they love you already to go somewhere else. Be scrutinizing. Always ask, if you go to this next opportunity, what is that a platform to? What doors are you going to open by going there? What doors are going to close? What are you going to leave behind?

I have practiced environmental law my whole career from different seats—private sector, public sector, and as in-house counsel. Each of these opportunities, one way or another, came to me. As Pam was saying about serendipity—sometimes, you just get a phone call that changes the trajectory of your career.

**Tanya Nesbitt:** Many of you may have worked in places where—as we discussed—there was no female leadership. It may have been difficult to envision a career path in that organization. How have you gone about finding allies and people to help you within your organization, particularly where there may not have been people who were female or looked like you?

**Marisa Blackshire:** Obviously, we all want to have great female mentors. I've had them formally and informally. I also had a lot of female examples of what I don't want to be. And, if we're being frank, we have to acknowledge that side of the coin as well.

Whenever I get this question, I like to make this point: women and diverse folks are not going to sit in rooms and solve these problems of equity on their own. If we're going to get to a place where we see the glass ceiling being shattered, we've got to have men and more specifically white men at the table to mentor us, to open up their networks,

to offer us a relationship, and to offer their tips of the trade. We all need to be open to that and look for that.

In a couple different workplaces, I've encountered someone I thought I had nothing in common with and I wondered where I would find common ground for building a relationship. And then we ended up being the best of friends. They opened up their network and their relationships to me, and it was beneficial for both of us.

I think if we're going to break down traditional power structures and get to the heart of things, we need to be able to build relationships with folks who aren't like us.

**Pamela Giblin:** I want to add a practical point here that I've observed. When I managed lawyers in government and in private practice heading up the environmental department at Baker Botts, men were very precise about their expectations, especially around compensation. They'd come in and say, here's what I want and here's what I think. I have coached and mentored women to do this: to ask and to make it clear what their expectations are because no one is going to read their minds. You need to come in and say, here's what I want and here's why I want it.

Early in my career, I had just started at a state agency and the general counsel quit. The man who later became my husband was with the Attorney General's Office at the time. He called me and said they're starting to interview for the general counsel job. I said I was interested in it. He said, go tell them. I said, they must already know that I'm interested in this job. He said, Pam, walk in there and speak with the executive director—who later became one of my mentors. I walked in and I said, I understand you are interviewing for the job. The director asked if I was interested, and I said yes. And he said, it's yours. It was just stunning. I have never forgotten that.

Later, when I went to a law firm and I would meet with a managing partner, I would say, here are my expectations and what I want. But you'd be amazed how many people don't do that. Now you don't go in and kick the desk over. You have to know how to do it, but you have to be precise about asking. That's something that I think we women need to learn how to do. It can feel embarrassing, and sometimes you think, I don't want to ask because they may say no. Well, it's better than just sitting there waiting for somebody to read your mind.

**Tanya Nesbitt:** Shannon, I want to ask you for any tips you might share with less experienced career professionals who are just starting out and trying to network across generations. What differences should they be mindful of?

One of my mentors at DOJ always complains that Generation Z does not send thank-you cards or thank-you e-mails. That seems to be a relic of the past now. But there are other differences, of course, and we should be mindful of them. What tips would you have for early-career professionals?

**Shannon Morrissey:** At pivotal moments, I think mentors can provide you support. I do think thank-you notes are important. When future attorneys that I interview for

positions at the firm send a thank-you, I remember that. I don't think it's old-school.

I'll echo what Pam just said: if you're looking for a mentor, start by asking. You don't have to run up to the first woman you see and formally ask her to be your mentor, but you could ask her to go to coffee. Ask her to go to lunch. Ask her if you could work with her if she's in your organization. And male mentors are very important as well. But if you're seeking a female mentor, just start by asking. I hope many women will be excited if you ask.

Even within my firm, there was someone recently who I thought was beyond me, or too important at the firm. Someone asked, why don't you ask her to get coffee? She would love that. She would love to mentor you for those opportunities. And I'm sitting there wondering why I hadn't done that yet. So, start by asking.

The other thing I'll say is, it's helpful to keep in contact with colleagues that you went to law school with. Maybe I'm bringing up law school because I'm the closest to law school out of this group, but you may well run into those people again. Some of my closest friends in San Francisco are my law school girlfriends. We try to meet up for dinner, and we really like each other. But that's also important for networking, whether we're intending to or not.

Yesterday, one of them asked me, my firm's hiring, do you know anyone who needs a job? I can also bounce ideas off those ladies and ask them what they think of a tricky situation I'm in at work. They're lawyers too, so they get it. I think that's super important.

There are a few more points I'd like to add. First, you should be a mentor. Seek out these opportunities. Whether it's the summer associate or the intern in your office or someone you interact with in your personal life—you have space to be a mentor there too. Practicing the act of mentoring may reveal to you what you want in your mentor. It goes both ways. You're both mentoring and being mentored when you have those relationships.

Part and parcel of that is to try to be empathetic, especially in the workplace. We're not working at 100% capacity every single day. There's probably one day a week where you're "off." Be supportive to other people who are having a down day. Maybe they didn't sleep well. Maybe their dog is sick. Maybe their kid is sick. You never know. But I think being empathetic helps gain trust and build relationships. You can also be a good person to the people around you, not just a mentor.

**Tanya Nesbitt:** One audience question is about a situation that I think many women have experienced, where you're in a room full of people and everyone's giving their advice. You give a recommendation. Presumably, nobody hears it or maybe someone shoots it down. Then, the male colleague next to you says the exact same thing, and suddenly everybody falls all over it.

How do you prevent that from happening again? What is it indicative of? Is it an influence issue? Could it be a work setting issue? How have you gone about tackling that kind of workplace dynamic?

**Pamela Giblin:** I think it's a delivery issue. To be honest, I have never had that experience.

I'm always going back to that question of, who are you trying to influence or persuade? If you're in a client meeting, how you deliver your recommendation so that, if somebody later repeats it, they won't have done it the same way you did? A lot of it is based on style. You need to develop your own style of delivery. But if you just utter it and present this information dispassionately because you have fallen in love with the data, it's not going to resonate as much as if you approach it as an advocate. That's been my experience.

As we go around the table and I am asked what I think, and then somebody says the same thing, they usually don't say it the same way I do. A lot of that has to do with not thinking that the data speaks for itself. The white paper, the memo, or the brief doesn't speak for itself. You've got to sell it.

**Ignacia Moreno:** There's a difference between this scenario happening once, and this happening all the time. The woman in this case might be feeling demoralized.

One of your questions might be, when do you know it's time to leave? Nobody answered that one. If the person is feeling demoralized, you're just not getting traction. It is worth having conversations with whoever your immediate supervisor is about why you're not getting traction.

If it's due to passive-aggressive behavior or microaggressions, then you might need some allies. If there's a senior woman in the room, she could say, Mary made that point just now—Mary and Joe, maybe the two of you should work together on that. In this scenario, the senior-level woman recognizes that Mary just made that point. And if you're sitting with peers in a team, you can do that for each other. There are different strategies. Mary could say, Joe, thanks for reaffirming the point that I just made.

You've got to be very careful, though, because these situations can be fraught with peril. You have to be very confident that you can pull off saying, yes, thanks for agreeing with me. It depends. It's tricky. This is where mentors are great because you can call your mentor, even if it's your peer mentor, and ask: Am I crazy or did something bad just happen? Having that sounding board, as Shannon mentioned, is like gold because you're talking to people who know you, whom you can trust, who can walk you through it, and maybe calm you down before you say something that you will regret saying.

You need multiple strategies and data points. Does it happen only when I talk, or is it happening when other people are talking? Do I need to work on something, or do they need to work on something, or do we all need to work on how we interact?

**Tanya Nesbitt:** I want to go back to Pam's point about the phrase "fake it till you make it." Can you talk about situations where you weren't as confident dealing with a new area, or being a new leader, or juggling more work than you might have felt comfortable with at the time? How did you

manage to project confidence and assert influence in situations where you might have felt less sure?

**Pamela Giblin:** All of us have had situations where we walk into something and it is not exactly what we thought was going to happen, or it's not in our comfort zone. But I think there's a difference between faking it and drawing from the reservoir of skill sets that you already have. You may be drawing on some other experience or knowledge, but faking it in law practice—going in and just shooting from the hip and making things up—is perilous.

It could work better in some professions. If you're an aluminum-siding salesperson, maybe you can fake it till you make it. But in law, it's a bad premise. I did not mean to imply that there are not going to be times when you need to adapt when walking into a room or a client meeting. You have to be able to pivot, and that's not faking it. Again, it's adaptability.

One last anecdote about the need to have a strong sense of your skill set. Whenever I used to interview young potential associates, I'd always ask, what do you think you're really good at? What do you consider to be your strength? One guy I was interviewing was first in his class at Yale Law School and editor-in-chief of the *Yale Law Journal*. This was years ago, so you can't recognize him from what I'm saying. He thought for a minute as though nobody had ever asked him this question. He said, they tell me that I am very good at citations. I thought okay, this is not a part of your strong skill set. So, we didn't hire him.

I think if you try to fake it rather than draw from a broader array of your skills, you're just headed for trouble.

**Marisa Blackshire:** There's a difference between faking it and selling yourself short. A lot of times, women sell themselves short in terms of their skill set and what they're capable of. I think men will apply for whatever job, with the attitude of, I meet 10% of the qualifications; I am the best thing since sliced bread; they will pick me. Whereas women may think, I don't know about these two bullet points. Should I really submit my resume?

You have to know the difference between the two. You shouldn't be shooting from the hip on something you have no idea about. If it's a new emerging area of the law and nobody knows that practice, but you have a skill set that shows you're well-suited to do it, why not you? Or if it's a

job where you meet 75% of the criteria, throw your hat in the ring.

**Ignacia Moreno:** Stretch assignments and promotions, by their nature, require you to do something you haven't done before. But you bring your experience and qualifications; you work hard, learn, and train yourself so that you are fully competent. As Pam said, we're lawyers. We need to know what we know and what we don't know. We need to bring in the experts to fill in the gaps. We have to burnish our qualifications and skills so that we are confident in advising our clients.

The other piece is the imposter syndrome. We've all had situations where we've walked into a place and felt like an imposter. We all feel nervous when we haven't done something before. But when you walk into a room, you need to leave that imposter syndrome at the door. You need to feel confident if you're going to walk into a room and take your seat at the table.

Confidence comes from preparation. You prepare, you prepare, you prepare. You talk to people. You understand what you know. You try to understand what you don't know. You don't fake it if somebody asks you something and you need to get more information. These approaches are going to build trust. People will say, okay, I trust her; when she says something, I'm going to take it to the bank because I know that she's not going to say something definitive if she doesn't really know.

It's okay to feel insecure. What you do with those feelings is what matters. You should address what you think is missing, or have a mentor tell you what you should be doing or what you should be learning. Don't be afraid to get that information. That's the best mentor you can get: somebody who's going to not only pat you on the back and take you to a great lunch, but who's going to ask, what are you going to do next and what are you doing about it? Those are the right questions to ask so you can be the best you can be.

**Jordan Diamond:** Thank you for sharing your personal experiences and for your candor. This isn't an area where there are silver-bullet solutions, but I believe that we make progress by being open, by talking, and by being transparent about what has worked and what hasn't, and where we've seen progress and where we haven't.