

# Attention ladies: 3 ways to get a seat at the executive table

by Kim Bassett, President and CEO, Steward Norwood Hospital, Massachusetts



Healthcare is an industry that prides itself on being inclusive of all races and sexes—an equal opportunity employer. And while this is true, there are still a surprisingly small number of women in the C-suite. [According to The Advisory Board Company](#), women make up 80% of healthcare workers, but only 40% of positions at the executive level. It should be noted that many of those executive positions are in the human resources or nursing areas.

If the statistics are stacked against you, how can you get to the table? Below are three ways to help pave your path:

- 1) **Be visible.** Put yourself out there and speak up. Get involved. Volunteer for special projects. Historically, the only way to get ahead was being part of the “good ole boys club.” This “club” was/is all about relationship building. You need to get in there and build these relationships. Play the game. It may take a while to adjust your thinking, but even the men have to “play” this game. This doesn’t mean that you suddenly have to take up golf or hide your femininity. It just means to you have to network and be visible. Attend the functions, the meet and greets, have coffee. This includes the informal “after work” social time. Sometimes more work and relationship building takes place over a drink in an informal, unscheduled setting.
- 2) **Get an influencer in your corner.** Man or woman, it doesn’t matter. Find someone you respect and trust, and already has a seat at the table. Build a relationship with them. Confide in them about your interest in professional growth. They’ve been where you are and can provide great career guidance and development. Ask them to assist you as you continue with your career path.
- 3) **Bring something to the table.** Arguably this is the most important. If you want a seat at the table, be sure you bring something of tangible value. What differentiates you from the others? Develop and highlight these talents. Become known for being an expert in these areas. This will make you an asset.

While it is true that the environment at the c-suite table still seems to favor men, this can be managed. The first step is to get that seat. Once seated, the culture naturally begins to shift. Often it’s not that women are not welcome at the table, it’s that “we” think we are not welcome. Be confident in your self and your abilities and take a seat!

---

*As an experienced healthcare executive, [Kim Bassett](#) is a strong believer in the "can-do" attitude, focusing on team-building, communication and creativity to find the “win-win” in every situation. She thrives on challenges, especially those that involve bringing teams and people together to provide exceptional healthcare. Her mission in life is to care for every patient as if they were family.*