

## She Negotiates

Lisa Gates and Victoria Pynchon Teach Women to Ask for What They Want – and Get It

Tuesday, July 5, 2011

By [Thy Vo](#)

In a country where women hold only 2.5 percent of the top jobs at American firms and earn 30 percent less than their male counterparts, the answer to bridging the gender gap can seem startlingly simple – that is, to simply ask.

That's according to [She Negotiates](#), a Santa Barbara-based consulting and training firm that aims to close the wage gap and put more women in power by teaching executives, entrepreneurs, and young professionals to negotiate and initiate the changes they want to see in their workplace and lives.

Joined by author and former Planned Parenthood CEO Gloria Feldt, co-founders Lisa Gates and Victoria Pynchon hosted a one-day leadership retreat on June 30. The workshop included interactive training in 'win-win' negotiation skills and a keynote dinner program open to the public.

According to [womendontask.com](#), not only are women four times less likely to initiate a negotiation than men, but their expectations as to what they can gain are also pessimistic, causing many women to undervalue their own work. Gates, a trainer and coach, and Pynchon, a lawyer and negotiation consultant, got the idea for their course after noticing this mental roadblock in many of their clients.

"The women I was coaching – executives and artists, but mostly women entrepreneurs and business owners – were really struggling," Gates said. "They could make plans on what they wanted to do with their life. But they were so stuck on just having to ask, especially when it comes to a raise or a promotion."

Many women, especially young professionals new to the workplace, are so glad to have a job that they simply don't think to ask for more. "The problem is that if you don't negotiate your first salary, you stand to lose a million dollars over the course of your career," Pynchon said. "Every salary builds on the salary before it."

Through their online course, telephone correspondence and other methods that help them get to know their clients, Gates and Pynchon have coached women through promotions, salary

increases, relationship conflicts, and family obligations alike. Many of their clients, Pynchon says, have been able to double or even triple their fees.

“I did a training session for executive healthcare women and we were talking about fee setting. I asked one of them to tell me her fee, and she—” Pynchon hunches down in her chair, shoulders caved, and whispers, “‘Two hundred and fifty dollars.’ Well I said, okay, we’re going to go around the room, I want you to sit up straight, I want to put your feet on the floor, I want you to put your hands on the table, and I want you to tell me your fee. And if they didn’t do it...I would tell them to do it again. They thought it was hilarious, but you could feel the power in the room rise.”

One client sought help to negotiate her temp employer for full-time employment after divorcing her husband and going on welfare. “And she got \$60,000. However, she was worth about \$75,000. She did a lot of research – her market value was \$75,000, and they offered her \$39,000. That’s how huge it is,” Gates said.

Although they work with a lot of executives and older women, Gates and Pynchon hope to eventually expand what they do to train more young and working class women in negotiation and effective conflict resolution. Although power is often about who makes the most money, they think having more women in higher places will only help women’s opportunities overall. “Although we do not believe in trickle-down economics, we believe in trickle-down power,” Pynchon said. “When women bring their concerns onto the board, they will be more interested in making sure the company’s employees have healthcare, aren’t living below the poverty line – they have a different point of view.”

But for all the talk about inequality and income, Gates and Pynchon want to get one thing straight.

“We don’t start out with a big lecture about how ‘the world is bad for women.’ Frankly I’d rather be a woman in this society at this point in history than a man. We have emotional opportunities that the culture denies to them,” Pynchon said. “We don’t have anything against men. We like men. We love men. We just don’t think they should be solely in charge of the world.”

<http://independent.com/news/2011/jul/05/she-negotiates/>