I will admit it, I haven't read Sheryl Sandberg's "Lean In." I'm not sure why other than the fact that I don't need another reminder that the world looks at me differently because I'm a woman. Frankly, I don't care. And therein lies what I believe to be the biggest issue: Too many women care about what the world thinks.

I know it's easier said than done. We all are inclined to be self-critical and compare ourselves to others, and I'm no exception. But, now, thanks to Sandberg and other high-profile women giving the rallying cry, the world is paying more attention to the male-female ratio among all industries and positions.

While I think this awareness is important, it's time for us as women to move on and focus not on pointing out the discrepancy, but instead on ourselves to look beyond the opinion of others. The world has taken note and thinks that women are valuable and should be included. So, now what?

Instead of women spending their energies pointing out the gap, I believe it's time to concentrate on what we do best. When women excel in their profession and are good at what they do, people are innately drawn to them and seek them out to contribute and bring added value.

Following the "Lean In" flurry of the past five years, there are many men who recognize the value of women, push to invite them to serve on boards and advocate to include them as
executives at the table. Case in point, I was recently sought out to join a state-level industry advisory board for defense-related economic development that has been traditionally dominated by men. A random meeting and short conversation led one of the members to invite me to learn more about the organization.

Did they pass the invitation to me because I "leaned in?" I really don't think so. I never approached the group and pointed out the lack of diversity. I never directly asked to be included. I believe they came to me because I was seen as an expert in my field (and I wasn't pushy about it). They had already acknowledged the gap in the makeup of their board, and identified me as a prospect after our brief conversation (I'm assuming they had already surveyed the field of women in the industry and therefore a quick assessment of what I might offer was easy).

Granted, the overall number of women in the defense business is still small compared to men so there was not a very deep list to choose from, but I don't think they would have asked me to join if they didn't think I could bring a valuable perspective to the table. Translated, if I sucked at my job, they would have looked elsewhere (even bringing in another man if there were no qualified women).

The point is that we know women are needed and are sought out as valuable contributors in elevated positions. We know that there is a very wide opening for women in traditional male-dominated career fields. Because of this, women all over the world are feeling more empowered to pursue their career goals and take on these long-standing challenges.

Carol Craig: Company founder uses success to inspire

Instead of "leaning in," women who focus on being the best at what they do and who are not swept up in public opinion will be more accessible and ultimately "pulled in." Let's get rid of the chip on our shoulders and accept the new landscape. In the words of Vince Lombardi, it's time to "act like you've been there before."

And maybe next week, I'll read "Lean In." But I doubt it.

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