Risky Business: Advance your career and enhance your life

Julie A. Freischlag, MD
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Dean of the School of Medicine
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“There is a time for playing it safe and a time for...”
Risky road to success

What people believe it looks like

What it actually looks like
Forge your own way

“The road to success is always under construction.”

Lily Tomlin
Path to leadership

“It is not a slide but it is a ladder

Association of Women Surgeons: Clinical Science

Julie Ann Freischlag, MD


“The process of becoming a leader in academic surgery is not a slide, but it should be a ladder (not a mountain) helping those in the field obtain success in the area of their choosing.”
Different ladder for everyone

**First Woman**

- Asst. Professor, UCLA (1989-1992)
- Professor, MCW (1996-1998)
- Vice Chair Vascular, MCW (1992-1998)
- Chief of Surgery, VA (1996-1998)
- Dept. of Surgery Chair, Surgeon-in-Chief, Johns Hopkins (2003-2014)
- VC for Human Health Sciences, Dean of SOM, UC Davis

**First Woman**

- Society for Vascular Surgery President (2013-2014)
- American College of Surgeons Chair, Board of Regents (2012-present)
Leverage your risks to help others

Women, Surgery, and Leadership: Where We Have Been, Where We Are, Where We Are Going

Amalia Cochran, MD
Julie Ann Freischlag, MD
Patricia Numann, MD

Be your own light

“The woman who follows the crowd will usually go no further than the crowd. The woman who walks alone is likely to find herself in places no one has ever been before.”

Albert Einstein
Evaluating risks in career opportunities

- Power of role
- Novelty of responsibilities
- Expertise beyond your core training
- Others’ failed attempts at similar opportunities
If not now, when?

- Timing of career adventures is key
- Timing is as crucial and determinative as opportunity itself

"Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all."

Helen Keller, The Open Door
Risking it all

- Does your vision match that of the leader who would be above you?
- Are there sufficient resources to assure your success?
- If it does not work out, will you still gain great experience?
Why take risks?

- Must be in charge to lead change
- Stand out, demonstrate vision and confidence
- Develop new skills, talents, abilities
- Make success happen vs. wait for it to happen

“Believe in something larger than yourself... get involved in the big ideas of your time.”

Barbara Bush
Benefits of taking risks

- Break free from average, safe way of thinking, living, doing
- Increase courage, momentum for seeking new opportunities
- Grow, stretch your capabilities
- Discover new ways to bring passion into your vocation
Adjust self-assessment

- Change conservative vision of what you believe you deserve
- Challenge restrictive ideas of what you think you can achieve
- Create a new outlook for your personal and professional potential
- Get out of your own way!
Improvement tactics

- Cultivate a team of mentors, sponsors, coaches, champions
- Update self-assessment as your personal life, career goals change
- Know what you don’t know then go out and get it!
  - Leadership skills, knowledge, experience, preparation

“Do one thing every day that scares you.”

Eleanor Roosevelt
Risks empower you to do more

“I always did something that I was a little not ready to do. I think that’s how you grow.

When there’s that moment of ‘Wow, I’m not really sure I can do this’... sometimes that’s a sign that something really good is about to happen.”

Marissa Mayer, CEO of Yahoo
How to choose risks

- Define personal, professional, organizational goals and vision
- Identify strategies, tactics
- Match opportunities to your intellectual curiosity, passion, entrepreneurial spirit
- Compare short-, medium-, long-term rewards of each risk
What are the risks in risky choices?

- Putting yourself on the line
- Won’t know until you try
- Nothing is guaranteed
- Calculations vs. instincts
- Impact on family, friends

"We've considered every potential risk, except the risks of avoiding all risks."
Make sure it’s right

- A road to nowhere
- Too good to be true
- Compromised values
- Reduced QOL
- Making your mark vs. being marked
What’s the worst that can happen?

TAKE RISKS:
If you win, you’ll be happy;
If you lose, you’ll be wise.

unknown author
“You can be amazing!”

Maybe there’s a way out of the cage where you live

Maybe one of these days you can let the light in

Show me how big your brave is!”

Sara Bareilles, lyrics from “Brave,”
The Blessed Unrest album, 2013
(Grammy nominations for album of the year, pop solo performance)
Personal satisfaction from taking risks

- Expand your horizons
- Change culture
- Inspire innovation
- Create excitement
- Energize engagement
- Initiate the first ripples
“Life is all about taking risks to get what you want.”

—Adam Lambert