

close the say gap

DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Gender Pay Gap has widespread awareness, but little attention has been paid to one of the underlying causes: *The Say Gap*. Women, especially women of color, are not visible enough as experts in business and public life. The public relations industry – as the gatekeepers and promoters of subject matter experts (SMEs) – can play a role in solving it.

Following is a discussion guide that aims to help your agency have a conversation about the problem and commit to ways you'll help solve it.

Consider setting room with copies of the day's newspapers. Ask a few participants to do a quick tally of women represented on the front page.

- What are the numbers?
- Are women of color represented?
- What are women being quoted on versus men?
- What adjectives are journalists using to describe women versus men?

The data is clear: women and particularly women of color are underrepresented in public discourse. Why do you think this is the reality?

Genderavenger offers a list of 12 excuses. They include:

- 1) "We know we have no women. We are always looking for ideas. Could you please send some names?"
- 2) "I tried, but a lot of women were just too busy/unavailable."
- 3) "I can't believe I didn't notice. How embarrassing."
- 4) "You know how good we usually are and how hard we try. Look at last year..."
- 5) "This is just the beginning. Stay tuned."
- 6) "23% is good, because women make up less than 30% of the workforce" or "Studies show that 30% makes a big difference."
- 7) "They weren't on the publicity list but there were a lot of women present."
- 8) "Our President is a woman and she opened and closed the event."
- 9) "Look how many of our moderators are women."
- 10) The excuse given comes from a woman who is responding for male organizer.
- 11) "There just weren't any women who met our criteria."
- 12) "Overall we have lots of special programming for women."

Are these valid? How can each be refuted?

Many professional men are taking a no manels pledge:

"At a public conference I won't serve on a panel of two people or more unless there is at least one woman on the panel, not including the Chair."

Is this a good idea? Do you see any problems with it?

As public relations professionals, what are the ways that we can help solve this problem?

The PR Council is asking Members to take part in several ways:

- Talk about the problem internally
- Create awareness of the problem by posting data on social channels
- Commit to providing free media training to women in our communities – especially women of color -- and promote their availability as spokespeople
- Consider a "no manels" pledge
- Offer counsel to clients on this issues/audit their rosters of SMEs

Should we set goals for our agency?

How might we check in with each other and ensure momentum?