



Why women don't promote themselves, and why don't women promote each other?

by Emily Pitts

Women climb has started work on sharing the love of climbing via the medium of Twitter, as you may already know. One of the ways I've personally tried to engage with people is to ask questions and find out things like 'what do you want from this website', and 'who are the top women climbers in the UK?'. The response to these two questions has been vastly different and is the subject of this article. The former elicited so many replies that I now have a to-do list as long as the Kyber Pass. The latter, in extraordinary contrast, elicited not a single direct response.

In the days after my post, which read "top ten British women climbers today... Compiling a list... who do you think should be in there?? I had very few replies and not a single reply that actually gave a name of a British woman climber. Does that surprise you? It surprised me, because UK

females are climbing really well on the world stage and at home, but no one seemed to want to talk about it.

In trying to unpick this strange situation I have come up with a few ideas about what might be happening. From hereon in I know you might dislike what I'm going to say. You may also feel very uncomfortable, because I'm probably going to use the F word. I'm definitely going to say some things that oppose what you hold as fundamentally dear and I am also going to ask you to take some action. If this sounds like too much, there are other posts on here that are less taxing and require no action at all.

So, why don't women climbers promote themselves and other women? **Women don't feel comfortable promoting themselves.**

This is not unique to climbing. It is not seen as a commendable trait for a woman to be a self-publicist. I find this a difficult fact to stomach, because, in my everyday life as well as in climbing I am surrounded by women who are truly amazing and who, if they were men, would probably be somewhere near to winning a noble prize or gaining a new year's honour from the queen. I have personal evidence of this, with women not

What I want to see is more women shouting about what they've achieved, so that other women, young and old, can hear and model their achievements. In fact, if you've got this far into the article, I ask you to go on Twitter or Facebook (go on.. right now) and tell me and our followers what you've done well in climbing in the past or recently. Let's have a big shout out about women's climbing achievements – get your friends in on it too – Text them now and tell them to tweet @WomenClimb.

Women don't want to upset other women. Rather than put ourselves on the line, challenging our stereotypical roles as nurturers and rather than risk upsetting people, we stay quiet. We don't want to upset other women or other climbers. This happens to the point that women would rather highlight a male climber than run the risk of upsetting the applecart by highlighting a female climber.

What I'm not saying is that I want an adversarial system, where female climbers are all gunning for each other and trying to constantly out-do each other. It is very important for women to unite, however, one must consider that the future existence of the human race requires us to develop, which means that competition isn't just a luxury, it's vital. If women want to gain an equal footing, we have to have some element of competition. I'm not talking about the victorious woman cutting off the head of the woman she's beaten, but I am saying that we should be able to celebrate climbing achievements and not feel guilt, shame or any other negative emotions for that. Women are very good at guilt and feelings of inadequacy.

Women are scared of losing sponsorship and support or, worse, being responsible for another woman losing her sponsorship. The life of a full-time climber and particularly women climbers is not easy in any way, especially where financing is concerned. Climbing is not a cheap sport to take part in and it's not a mass participation activity like football, for example. It doesn't attract the same attention as football in the mainstream media, so when you couple this with the eco/outdoors slant of our sports' participants you minimise the opportunities for us to be 'branded', with the result that sponsorship is not easy to find. When you put this together with women's natural tendencies to work together and add in the question of 'who is the best' you have a group of uncomfortable bed partners. No-one would want to be held responsible for a fellow woman losing her sponsorship because she's no longer considered to be the best would they? So what is the answer to this? Women need to be more visible, across the board in sport. Images of women in sport need to be valued as equally as images of men. Sportswomen need to be as respected as sportsmen.

Men and Women *really* don't like women who promote themselves. After researching this phenomenon I found an interesting study from 1998, which looked at self-promotion and stereotypes. What the study concluded is that women really don't like other women who promote themselves and will choose men instead over women self-publicists. Self-promotion is perceived to be an ugly and unfeminine thing to do. Check out this excerpt from another blog I found:

'...Women who brag violate gender stereotypes, and this is noticed by people around them. Women and men are equally negative toward women who brag. According to...research, women who brag and self-promote are less liked in the workplace, are seen as less warm, earn less money and are passed over for advancement or suitable positions. The backlash against bragging has real, tangible consequences for hundreds of confident women.'

This is where the F word comes in. Close your eyes now if you can't deal with it. This is a feminist issue, because, ultimately, women who brag are passed over for promotion and women who don't brag are passed over for promotion. What I think needs to happen is a change of the stereotype. To do this, let's take some action...

1. Do one brag a day – with confidence and humility.
2. Be positive about other people's positives. If you hear a woman bragging, brag about her too.
3. Get someone else to brag for you
4. Add an 'I' and own it! I Did It!!
5. Accept praise – 'thank you' is all you need to say.
6. Tell sponsors if you're buying their product because of their sponsorship of a women – it may just be enough for them to re-sponsor or even extend their sponsorship.
7. Enter a competition
- 8.

The Final action is this: who do you think are the best female climbers in the UK today and why? Post your answer below or email us @ hello@womenclimb.co.uk

Other sources of information:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ekaterina-walter/bragging_b_2001545.html

<http://www.mominmanagement.com/5051/thought-provoking-why-dont-women-self-promote/>

Rudman, L. A. (1998). Self-promotion as a risk factor for women: The costs and benefits of counterstereotypical impression management. *Journal of personality & social psychology*, 74(3), 629–645.

<http://colleensharen.wordpress.com/2012/11/05/are-women-the-limiting-factor-womens-leaders-hip-self-promotion/>