

THE CAREER BUCKET LIST

1

FEEL OUT OF YOUR DEPTH

JAY HUNT, CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER, CHANNEL 4

My first job in TV, aged 22, was working the night shift on BBC *Breakfast News*. I was a lowly producer, tasked with the menial stuff. The big job I aspired to was being allowed to write and produce a two-and-a-half-minute news bulletin, but that felt like it was years off. Then one night, the editor said: 'Jay, you're doing the bulletin.' The way the shifts worked meant people passed like ships in the night; this particular editor had never set eyes on me before. I could hardly own up that I hadn't the first idea where to begin. I remember hiding in an edit suite and wondering if I could 'faint' to get out of it, but I didn't dare. So I just got on and did it, watching from the back of the news gallery as my piece went out. The fierce editor just nodded approval. It led to a 20-year career that would see me running BBC1 and becoming Chief Creative Officer at Channel 4. That quickly forgotten news bulletin taught me something important: there's nothing more empowering than someone believing you can do something, even if you don't believe you can do it.

GET BULLIED – AND COME BACK STRONGER

2

JUDE KELLY, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, SOUTHBANK CENTRE

It's bewildering to realise a colleague – in my case, a male colleague at the same level – is excluding you from meetings and turning others you work with against you. Still, it took me a while to realise it was bullying, as I was in a senior position and we tend to associate bullying with powerlessness. After the initial confusion, you think: 'What is it I've done?' There was a personality clash, and the fact that I was a woman at his level added to his anger. I confronted the situation in a calm way but was met with defensiveness. You can't underestimate the impact of bullying: its sole purpose is to isolate you. No matter how senior you are, sometimes you've got to seek guidance when things go wrong. I didn't, because I was so used to solving everything myself. On the plus side, I now know how to recognise and tackle bullying in the workplace. [@JUDEKELLYSBC](#)

It might feel terrible at the time, but, as these successful women explain, even bad career experiences can be good for your confidence. Tick these challenges off your list

[@VARDAG](#)

Lose the battle, but win the war

AYESHA VARDAG, TOP DIVORCE LAWYER

I was a lawyer at a big City firm and, although I was under huge pressure, it was going brilliantly. I made sacrifices to get where I was and spent my 'free' time entertaining clients with my husband, also a lawyer at the firm but a few years ahead of me and pitching for promotion. When he got it, I was expected to resign – his career came first. This was a different era and I was, apparently, the

first wife who wanted to keep her career. I felt as if I had lost everything I had worked for, but I couldn't challenge it because that would have jeopardised my husband's position. I got another job in a parallel field that I found soulless and dull. After a couple of years, the marriage broke down, which broke my heart because I adored my husband. But the destruction of everything I had

worked for was the most constructive thing that could have happened to my career. I knew, from then on, that I didn't want to compromise my own success again for a man, or to become dependent on one. I also knew that I never again wanted to work for anyone else. I would never have ventured out of my comfort zone if its walls hadn't come crashing down.

4

REALISE YOU DON'T LIKE THE VIEW FROM THE TOP – AND SWAP JOBS

HELEN GRANT, CONSERVATIVE MINISTER FOR SPORT, TOURISM AND EQUALITIES

I encountered racism and bullying in my childhood, but sport helped me cope and face my difficulties. It showed me the importance of having goals, so, early on,

I set myself five: I wanted to be a lawyer, start my own business, marry a good man, have a couple of children and enough money to choose how I spent my life. By the time I was in my late 30s, all five goals had been fulfilled and I started to

feel a bit lost, like I had nothing more to aim for. Targets had always worked for me – I liked them – so I took the decision to go into politics. As a lawyer, I'd made it my business to help people who didn't have the resources to help themselves, and politics seemed like a pretty close relative to that ideal. But I had no political experience to speak of, so I was stepping far out of my career comfort zone. Having been pretty near the top of my game in law, side-stepping into politics was like going back to school; everything was new. But I got there and I've never felt so alive.

[@HELENGRANTMP](#)

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[@HELENLEWIS](#)

Accept defeat

HELEN LEWIS, DEPUTY EDITOR, NEW STATESMAN

I had been working on a national newspaper for several years, and my job involved working 12-hour days under huge pressure. When a role came up at a political magazine, one that offered less responsibility (and less money), I made the move, but I felt like a huge failure, like I couldn't 'hack it'. Four years later, I no longer see it that way. I was approaching work as if there were some virtue in being stressed and unhappy. Now I can see that self-worth does not depend on how many hours you spend in the office, and as my happiness levels have soared, so has my career.

6

BE UTTERLY OVERWHELMED

MARTHA LANE FOX CBE, CO-FOUNDER, LASTMINUTE.COM

The year 2000 was terrible: I had co-founded [lastminute.com](#), and many people thought our soaring share price after flotation and then the sudden price drop was what brought about that year's UK stock market crash. This was worse for me than for my business partner Brent Hoberman, as I had been the public face of the company. We'd worked feverishly hard and been successful, but now I was being personally attacked – from reasonable challenges to us as a business, through to threats of rape and violence. It was an extraordinary fast-forward that definitely knocked my confidence. But the experience also gave me clarity and reinforced the things I thought were important: my determination to do the best for myself, my employees and my customers.

[@MARTHALANEFox](#)

Work with sexist men – then fight back

7

TAMARA MELLON, CO-FOUNDER OF JIMMY CHOO AND FOUNDER OF TAMARAMELLON.CO.UK

I've faced so much sexism in my career, but one occasion springs to mind specifically: the hostile takeover of Jimmy Choo in 2011. I felt undermined, frivolous and generally less than equal. It was awful, after having built the business, to be made to feel like a guest in my own home. When I disagreed with something – anything at all – I was being 'difficult', or a 'diva', or a 'bitch'. A man would never be given those awful labels, but this happens so often to women in high-level positions.

It made me second-guess myself: if a boardroom full of men think I'm being difficult, then I must be! But looking back, I know that I was not the 'diva' or a spendthrift glamour queen who contributed nothing. It forced me to speak up and fight back. Most successful women suffer from impostor syndrome, which is about not valuing ourselves enough, but also about not being valued. It is important for women to speak up. I learned to find my voice and not be afraid.

[@TAMARAMELLON](#)

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