



San Diego Business Journal's 2022 Business Women of the Year winners and JPMorgan Chase executives gathered at the bank's One Paseo office on Jan. 18 to share insights and ideas on how speaking up plays in advancing careers of women. Photo by Peter Kelly, courtesy JPMorgan Chase

Top Women in Business 'Speak Up' at Roundtable

EVENTS: SDBJ, JPMorgan Chase Host Leadership Discussion

■ By JEFF CLEMETSON

Speaking up and advocating for oneself is a skillset that leads to career advancement. Yet the journey to finding confidence to develop that voice is sometimes a difficult one, especially for women.

That was the theme of a recent roundtable discussion hosted by JPMorgan Chase & Co. and the San Diego Business Journal featuring San Diego Business Journal 2022 Business Women of the Year Awards winners.

The event was held Jan. 18 at JPMorgan's One Paseo office and featured San Diego's top women business leaders, joined by some of JPMorgan Chase's leading bankers from San Diego, sharing personal anecdotes on speaking up at work; observations on the importance of speaking up; and advice on when and how to speak up for yourself at work.

Here we sum up the conversation and their career advice.

Find Five Advocates To Fight For You

Juli Moran, Deloitte's San Diego Managing Director and Office Marketplace Leader and Business Women of the Year winner in the large private company category, said there is research showing many women are less likely to speak up for themselves. The underlying assumption behind this is that your hard work on its own should speak for itself and lead to recognition and reward.

Moran has learned that this is only half the battle. The other half is knowing how and when to speak up and advocate for yourself.

Early in her career, a mentor told Moran: "No one is out there who is going to manage your career for you. This is your job. You have to be proactive and promote and campaign for yourself."

"And that resonated," she said.

Her mentor also advised that everyone should have five advocates inside their company. These five can fight for you when it's time to campaign for a promotion.

Moran initially didn't follow this advice. When she threw her hat in the ring for a leadership position that she believed she was well qualified for, she didn't get the position. Moran followed her mentor's advice and contacted five leaders that she thought were influential in the decision. She made sure to call them and not email them to make her case.



Juli Moran
San Diego Managing Director &
Office Marketplace Leader
Deloitte

Two days later, she got a phone call that she had the job. It was really the first time she had stood up, spoke up for herself, and said, "I want this job."

Moran has shared that story with her mentees over the last 15 years.

Space to Reflect – Look for External Opportunities

Viridiana Diaz, Vice President of Student Affairs at Cal State University San Marcos and Business Women of the Year Rising Star award winner, shared how important it is to find "the space and the reflection" to speak up when one is ready to advance our career.

Diaz is a new arrival to San Diego, having recently taken her job at CSUSM after 27 years working at CSU Sacramento where she was continually promoted internally.

"I started as a student employee and left as an associate vice president," she said.

During the pandemic, Diaz said she found the time and space to reflect on what she wanted from her career, leading to her speaking up and sharing with others that she felt ready to pursue a vice president position.

"Once I was able to speak up and say it, the level of support that I received from across my institution and the community was huge," she said.

Because her promotions had all been internal, she realized she had never actually applied for a position before and so she reached out for mentorship and applied for a vice president position at CSUSM.

"I got lucky because CSU San Marcos was my first try," she said.

"Women, need to make time for reflection, even when they are busy with work and family," she added. "Think about where you're at and where you want to go."

'I Can Do More' – Don't Settle Being Overqualified in Your existing Role

Claudia Ibarra, Chief Operating Officer for DermTech and Business Women of the Year winner in the private medium company category, shared her story of how speaking up allowed her to advance past positions she was overqualified for.

Ibarra moved to San Diego from Argentina in 2001 just after September 11th. Her husband had already secured a work visa. Meanwhile her visa ended up being delayed five years because of new red tape for immigrants.

"I was desperate to work so when I got my working permit I said 'OK, I'll take whatever job.' Even with more than 10 years of experience in my country in science, I started a very entry level job as a technician," she said, adding that she wondered how to show her bosses what she was capable of. "It took me a while until I realized that the only way was just to go to my bosses and say, 'hey, I can do more.'"

Speaking up led to a promotion, as well as every promotion that followed in her career.

"I always had to ask for that promotion, it never came to me saying, 'OK, because of your good job, I'm giving you a promotion,'" she said.

Ibarra added that as women move up in their careers, they will find their peer group to be more male dominated in "certain areas or certain companies."

"And they have to put in a woman just to look good, and that is not right," she said. "So, that's why I do it the hard way, and keep supporting and coaching the women that I have reporting to me."



Claudia Ibarra
Chief Operating Officer
DermTech



Viridiana Diaz
VP, Student Affairs
Cal State University San Marcos

Don't Accept the First Offer Given

Sarah Hassaine, Global Director of Diversity and Inclusion at ResMed and Business Women of the Year Award winner in the large public company category, reminded us that you should negotiate even when given a promotion.

"I had to fight for my last two promotions," she said, and shared how she had once pushed back on a position title and pay she was offered.

"I wrote an email I've never written before," she said, and described how she laid out her case for getting the pay she wanted by explaining her accomplishments and what her workload is. In 24 hours, the company replied and Hassaine got the pay she asked for.



Sarah Hassaine
Global Director of Diversity and
Inclusion
ResMed

“I was shocked,” she said. “This is what it means to ask for what you want. This is the stuff I advocate for. And it goes back to being in a space where I am wanting to empower communities, but also neglected myself along the way.”

‘Mentoring in a Female-Centric Manner’

Carrie Vilaplana, a Vice President and Banker at **J.P. Morgan Private Bank**, started her career in finance 21 years ago as an investment banker in New York where she enjoyed the “unique position” of being on an all-female banking team, which at the time was “unheard of,” she said.

Although she said the experience was “amazing,” it also “brought to light how small female representation is in.”

Vilaplana eventually transitioned into wealth management where she saw even fewer women in leadership or even peer positions.

“It was a real challenge,” she said, adding that although she had “no problem finding mentors, most of them were male.”

While finding for her own voice and figuring out who she wanted to be as an advisor, she watched her male counterparts and realized she “wanted to do it differently.”

“It took a long time,” she said, but over her 21 years in banking she eventually “saw progress in helping develop ways to give voice to women in the market” by mentoring younger women employees and communicating with each other in a “female-centric manner.”

“I felt real good helping them put this together,” she said. “This was an analyst-led initiative, but it allows us to meet the needs of people who are willing to raise their hands and say, ‘this is what I need.’”

Being Diverse, Being Your Authentic Self

Meybol Guerrero, Executive Director and Relationship Executive for middle market commercial banking at **JPMorgan Chase**, shared how being a Latina impacts the way she thinks about speaking up.

“Growing up, being Latina, Hispanic, we were pretty much ‘put your head down, work hard, you’ll get noticed’ – but that is not true, you will not get noticed,” she said. “You definitely need to be your own advocate in order to move forward in your career.”

Guerrero said she has noticed that with “more experience in the corporate world” she has noticed herself improve on speaking up.

“But at the same time, I have to be careful because being Latina I’m very opinionated and you’ll see it in my face when there’s something I don’t agree with,” she said, adding that over time, the company has enabled her to her “authentic self,” and she has embraced the ability to be more vocal at the workplace.

‘Wake Up’ – Know and Understand Your Value Outside Your Existing Company

Breda Blake, a Certified Financial Advisor and Portfolio Manager at **J.P. Morgan Private Bank**, said that over her career she was fortunate to have worked for different firms and in different countries.

“I always worked in the investment side of banking and didn’t have too many problems. I worked with good people, worked hard and got great opportunities,” she said.

That comfort almost led her to miss out on a career opportunity.

Blake had a woman mentor at a previous company who told her the following advice: “Get everything you can get from this firm that you need to make yourself the most skilled

person you can be. And if the firm rewards you, good on them. If they don’t, you’ll take what you learned and go somewhere else.”

That advice eventually led her to interviewing at J. P. Morgan for a position on Wall Street where she learned she could double her existing salary. However, she still had some loyalty to the firm and was hesitant about letting a new firm “swipe me up and take all this good stuff I learned,” she said, adding that she was “comfortable” and was in a “great spot” and nearly didn’t take the “great opportunity” in New York. But her boss advised her to take the offer.

Blake concluded: “So, speak up, but sometimes you also have to wake up. So, I did, and I moved, and I haven’t looked back.”

Dealing with Biases, Listen to Women

CIRE Equity COO Alexis Volen, winner of the Business Women of the Year Award in the large private company category, spoke about another aspect of women speaking up in the workplace.

“I was never afraid to speak up,” she said.

“My challenges have been around the biases that comes with speaking up as a woman. Over my career, it’s been a balancing act on scales of ‘how do I say this in a tactful way,’ how to bring more facts, less emotion.”

Throughout her career, Volen said she has experienced moments where male colleagues would speak up in similar fashion to how she does during meetings, but the reactions to each communication would differ. When her male colleagues would speak up, it was received positively as “strong communication,” and her speaking up would be seen as “needing improvement.”

“It’s the bias in the room – of both women and men – of how women should communicate,” she said. “And that is something that needs to consistently scale up so that when we are able to speak up, we’re heard.”

Senior Leaders Have the Responsibility to Speak Up on Behalf Junior Staff

Carolina Bravo-Karimi, Managing Partner at **Wilson Turner Kosmo** and Business Women of the Year Award winner in the medium private company category, has had a different experience in speaking up.

“What I have noticed is that as I’ve grown in leadership, I’ve become more comfortable in speaking up, but I wish I had the confidence to do this much earlier in my career,” she said.

Bravo-Karimi would rather see individuals – women and men – empowered with a voice the moment they begin their career journeys.

“The way we can do this is for our top leaders to cultivate a culture and environment in which that’s OK. I’ve often speak up on behalf of others – I feel way more comfortable doing that,” she said, adding that is has been “statistically proven” women feel more comfortable speaking up on behalf of others

In addition to speaking up for others, Bravo-Karimi said she also makes an effort to have candid conversations with

junior team members about times she spoke up and how everything worked out.

“With increased leadership and increased power comes increased responsibility and I want to try to show that dynamic so that younger people don’t have to wait until they take leadership position to speak up,” she said.

Be Confident to Brag About the Work You’re Doing

Diana Yakshimamedova, a Banker at **J. P. Morgan Private Bank**, shared that she is still learning about speaking and having “the confidence to ask for the promotion, ask for the raise.”

This year, a more senior level woman on her team told her to set up a meeting and talk about accomplishments.

“I never thought about that before because they see what I’m doing, there’s proof of what I’m doing,” she said. “Men are so much better at bragging about themselves talking about what they’ve done and reiterating it in different settings, and we don’t do that for ourselves.”

Yakshimamedova said she read a statistic that “men are more inclined to apply for a job they are underqualified for, versus women always apply for jobs they are overqualified for.”

“That’s part of the confidence part of it as well – being confident to apply for those jobs you’re underqualified for then speaking up for yourself when you have done a good job,” she said. “It’s something I’m trying to do more often.”

I Deserve To Be Here

Bench International founder and CEO **DeeDee DeMan**, winner of the Business Women of the Year Award in the small public company category, shared how advice from two men who later became clients helped her when she started her company back in the 1970s when there were no female leaders in the life sciences industry.

“They taught me a few things,” she said. “And one of them was that I needed to get in touch of – and complete control of – my inner bitch so that I would not be defensive, I would not be emotional; and that I had to be ready for attacks, whether they were overt or subliminal.”

DeMan said she later had an “aha moment” where that advice came in handy. She was at a meeting pitching to a pharma company and there were four other firms competing – all run by men. DeMan’s meeting time kept getting pushed back to accommodate the men and when she finally got her face-to-face, the first question they asked her was: “Why do you think you deserve to be here?”

“My response was, ‘Interesting question. You tell me why you think I don’t deserve to be here.’ And they were appalled,” she said, adding they had expected she would give up. “And they had not one damn reason that they could tell me why I didn’t deserve to be there.”

After that, DeMan “de-escalated the tension” in the meeting before showing them her specific plan to deal with the company’s issues.

“And I walked out with the deal,” she said. “That was the first moment of understanding what my mentor was saying.”

If You Don’t Ask, You Don’t Receive – Ask All the Time

Tanya Duggan, Director of Communications and Government Relations for the **Rincon Tribe** and Business Women of the Year Awards winner for the nonprofits category, is “a firm believer in the worst thing they can say is ‘no,’” she said. “So I ask all the time.”

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Carrie Vilaplana
VP and Banker
J.P. Morgan Private Bank



Breda Blake
CFA & Portfolio Manager
J.P. Morgan Private Bank



Diana Yakshimamedova
Banker
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When Duggan was a fresh CSU San Marcos communications school graduate, she was offered an unpaid internship to work for an elected official. She initially declined but took the job after the office offered to pay her. Soon after, she asked to be given the job and title of communications director for the elected official, which she got.

"And I've been asking ever since," she said.

Her latest ask – and get – was at her current job at Rincon Tribe, where she was hired to be its director of communications.

"But my background is in government relations, so I asked our chairman **Bo Mazzetti**. I said, 'I've worked for elected officials my entire career. I'd love to work on government policy, introduce you to legislators, expand our relationships. Give me time, I love this,'" she said. "Now I'm the director of communications and government relations."



Tanya Duggan
Director of Communications &
Government Relations
Rincon Tribe

Speaking Up is About Supporting Others

Lisa Ordóñez, Dean of the UC San Diego Rady School of Management and winner of the Business Women of the Year Award in the medium public company category, shared a story about the first time she was "purposeful" in speaking up.

Ordóñez was a vice dean at the **University of Arizona** and co-chairing the school's strategic plan with her colleague who she described as "a gentleman who would let everyone in the room have a voice."

"But I also realized that when I was on stage, I wanted people to see us as co-equals, not see me as his assistant," she said. "So I made sure to speak up – not for me and not to be seen, per se, as I'm in charge, but more to make sure people saw me as co-equals."

The importance of being seen with respect also became apparent to Ordóñez in another instance. As a professor, she realized that students would call one of her male colleagues "doctor" and her by her first name, even after both requested being addressed informally. One day, three women students pointed it out to her, and that all three had kept calling her by "Dr. Ordóñez" to show her the equal respect they felt she deserved.

"Those instances put together, I realized speaking up is no longer about me, it is about making sure I'm supporting others," she said.

Ordóñez said she is now "training the next group of leaders" at Rady School of Management, where 60% of the grad students are women.

"In 1994, there were seven female business school deans out of the 500-plus accredited schools across the country," she added. "Now we're 30% and that's very close to the number of female business school professors – that's 35%. I'm working on both."

The Next Generation Is Not Afraid

"I've had an interesting trajectory as it comes to being in different workplaces," said **Kelly Feuillet**.

The U.S. Navy veteran is the current Controller and Senior Director of Financial Reporting for the **San Diego Foundation**, and was a recipient of the Business Women of the Year Award for nonprofits.

Feuillet's experience with speaking up has also had an interesting trajectory. While enlisted in the Navy, she said, a Lt. Commander once asked her what rank and position she wanted out of her time in service. She had

no problem speaking her mind.

"I said, 'one day I'm going to have your job,'" she said. While she did not stay in the Navy, she has continued her professional growth at San Diego Foundation.

"As I've grown and developed as a professional, I've been able to learn, find my voice and understand my colleagues," she said.

Feuillet also cited her roots growing up in a small town as having an impact on her and – like many – prone to feeling imposter syndrome at times in her early career life.

"I felt like a country mouse jumping into a big city," she said. Now that she is older, she is committed to helping others find their voices, including the many women she supervises in her current role.

She is also heartened watching her independent 11-year-old daughter already have her voice.

"It's incredible to me. When she came along, I knew she was not going to go through what I went through as a young woman starting my career," she said. "I'm excited for this generation because they know exactly what they want, and they are not afraid to speak up."

Speaking Up Is Not 'Intimidating'

Danielle Schwimer, Vice President of middle market banking at **JPMorgan Chase**, said her sports background growing up with "yelling coaches" helped prepare her for the corporate world – so well, in fact, that early in her career while working in New York, she once got feedback that she was "intimidating."

"It rubbed me the wrong way because I'm actually really nice," she said.

She asked her male colleagues why she had this reputation. Many of her colleagues said it was because she knew when to say 'no' whether it was pushing back on work assignments or even opportunities to socialize after work.

"I think a lot of men didn't like it – the older men who were used to the wild west, how it used to be in banking," she said. "For me to get the feedback that I'm intimidating because I'm standing up for myself was just not okay."

Schwimer's ability to stand up for herself also proved invaluable at a pivotal time in her career. She noted how she and her older boss would often fly out to meet government and corporate representatives from Central and South America to pitch large government bond transactions.

"Flying to a foreign country for business, sitting in board rooms, I was the only woman in a room full of men in their 50's and 60's. I was seen as this blond 26-year-old girl from New York City and was initially not taken seriously."

Schwimer said each time she entered a new room, the senior government officials only wanted to deal with her boss, but each time this dynamic and their attitudes quickly changed as she conducted the meetings in Spanish – something her boss couldn't do. She says won a lot of respect.

Empathy Is a Superpower

Danielle Carpenter, as both COO and CFO of **Xceptional**, "crafts policies with intention to ensure representation."

The Business Women of the Year Award winner in the small private company category said that learning to speak up for herself was about "gaining confidence."

"For a long time, even as I was rising up through the



Kelly Feuillet
Controller & Senior Director,
Financial Reporting
San Diego Foundation

ranks and performing at a high level, I was feeling apologetic for being in the room," she said. "It's only been in recent years that I realize I'm bringing a unique thing into the room that is not there in a room full of men. My superpower as a woman is my empathy that I bring, the problem solving that I bring. Understanding that I am a piece to the puzzle rather than an outsider has been a real progression for me and big part of my journey."

Male Representation

In addition to the women sharing their stories in the roundtable, **J. P. Morgan Private Bank** Market Leader for San Diego, **Bambos Charalambous** and San Diego Region Manager of Middle Market Banking at **JPMorgan Chase** **Aaron Ryan** both contributed to the conversation with their own stories and observations about women speaking up.

Charalambous said he became aware of how men and women are treated different early in life growing up in the United Kingdom with a British mother and a father from Cyprus. Both were nurses and his mother ran the nursing home business.

"At our home in England, she was in charge and then when we went to go to Cyprus a couple times a year, very different – all of a sudden very male-dominated," he said, adding that in Cyprus the men would sit while the women cleaned, cooked and looked after the children. "I hated it and hated how it would make my mom feel. It was a horrible change to see."

In the workplace, Charalambous said the big difference he sees is that men embrace a "fake it until you make" attitude, while women are less likely to take a new role without being prepared for it. He said he tries to be more encouraging for women to "take risks, make mistakes and have fun" in taking on new careers.

Ryan said that in his role as co-chair of JPMorgan's Market Leadership team, he takes "an intentional effort and focus on diversity equity and inclusion."

"It's important to me personally," he said, pointing out that his wife works full time and that he has a young daughter. "To see the energy and support around this effort gives me hope about the future and opportunities they will have."

Ryan also pointed out JPMorgan's Women on the Move program as part of its "broadening effort" on DEI, which includes opportunities for leadership positions on committees or programs.

"In organizations, whether it's a formal leadership job or it starts small as leadership in a committee, those experiences are important because it helps round out and recognize the contribution that everybody can make," he said. "And in particular, that women have those opportunities to find their voice and speak up." ■



Danielle Carpenter
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Bambos Charalambous
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