

# Hidden Promotion Barriers Diagnostic Worksheet

*The "Invisible Ceiling" Analysis Tool*

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## Part 1: The Perception Reality Check

**Instructions:** For each statement, rate where you think you stand vs. where decision-makers likely see you.

**Scale:** 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)

Statement	My View	Their View (Honest Guess)	Gap
I am seen as strategic, not just operational	—	—	—
I am known for my business acumen	—	—	—
I am viewed as executive material	—	—	—
Leaders see me as indispensable at my level	—	—	—
I am considered a thought leader	—	—	—
My network includes key decision-makers	—	—	—
I communicate like an executive	—	—	—
I am seen as politically savvy	—	—	—

**Total Gap Score:** \_\_\_\_ (Add all gap numbers)

### Interpretation:

- **Gap of 8+:** Significant perception misalignment
  - **Gap of 4-7:** Moderate work needed
  - **Gap of 0-3:** Well-aligned, focus on opportunity
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## Part 2: The Hard Truth Questionnaire

**Answer honestly - no one else will see this:**

### 1. When did you last have a strategic conversation with someone 2+ levels above you?

- ☐ This week
- ☐ This month
- ☐ This quarter
- ☐ Can't remember

## 2. How often do you share your achievements beyond your immediate team?

- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Quarterly
- ☐ Annual review only

## 3. Your biggest work accomplishment last quarter - who knows about it?

- ☐ Just me
- ☐ My manager
- ☐ My department
- ☐ Senior leadership

## 4. When presenting to leadership, you typically focus on:

- ☐ Task completion details
- ☐ Project timelines
- ☐ Business impact/ROI
- ☐ Strategic implications

## 5. Your reaction when peers self-promote:

- ☐ "Show-off"
- ☐ "Playing politics"
- ☐ "Smart career move"
- ☐ "I should do that too"

## 6. If you left tomorrow, your role would:

- ☐ Collapse without me
- ☐ Struggle significantly
- ☐ Experience temporary disruption
- ☐ Continue smoothly

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## Part 3: The Uncomfortable Mirror Exercise

Circle all that apply to you:

### The Humble Hero Syndrome:

- "My work speaks for itself"
- "I don't like to brag"

- "Quality will be recognized"
- "Self-promotion feels wrong"
- "I'm too busy to network"

### **The Invisible Expert Trap:**

- "I'm the go-to problem solver"
- "Everyone knows I'm reliable"
- "I prefer working independently"
- "Meetings are a waste of time"
- "I'll network when I need to"

### **The Anti-Politics Stance:**

- "I refuse to play games"
- "Merit should be enough"
- "Politics are beneath me"
- "I won't suck up"
- "Relationships shouldn't matter"

### **The Competence Cage:**

- "No one else can do this"
- "They need me here"
- "I must train someone first"
- "The team would struggle"
- "I can't delegate this"

**Count your circles:** \_\_\_\_\_

- **10+ circles:** Major mindset shifts needed
- **5-9 circles:** Moderate barriers to address
- **0-4 circles:** Minor adjustments required

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## **Part 4: The "What Would Jason Do?" Analysis**

*Jason is the less-experienced colleague who got promoted over you.*

Behavior	What I Do	What Jason Probably Did
Frequency of exec interaction		
Self-promotion approach		
Networking time per week		
Strategic vs. tactical focus		
Visibility tactics		
Relationship building		
Risk-taking		
Speaking up in meetings		

Key differences identified:

1.
2.
3.

Part 5: The Sponsorship Inventory

List all senior leaders (2+ levels up) who could advocate for your promotion:

Name	Relationship Strength (1-5)	Last Meaningful Interaction	Could They Describe Your Value?
			Yes/No/Maybe
			Yes/No/Maybe
			Yes/No/Maybe
			Yes/No/Maybe

Sponsorship Score:

- 4+ sponsors who said "Yes": Excellent position
- 2-3 sponsors who said "Yes": Building momentum
- 0-1 sponsors who said "Yes": Critical gap

Part 6: The Time Audit Reality Check

Track one typical week:

Activity	Hours	Visibility Level (Low/Med/High)	Strategic Value (Low/Med/High)
Heads-down work			
Team meetings			
Executive interactions			
Networking/relationships			
Strategic planning			
Self-promotion activities			
Learning/development			

### Analysis Questions:

- What % of time is high visibility? \_\_\_\_%
- What % of time is high strategic value? \_\_\_\_%
- Where could you shift 2-3 hours for promotion activities?

## Part 7: The Brutal Feedback Collection Tool

Ask 5 people these exact questions:

1. "What's the first word that comes to mind when you think of my work?"
2. "Do you see me more as a manager or an executive?"
3. "What one thing holds me back from senior leadership?"
4. "If you were promoting someone, what concerns might you have about me?"

### Feedback Patterns:

- **Most common word used:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Manager vs. Executive ratio:** \_\_\_\_ vs \_\_\_\_
- **Top 3 concerns mentioned:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 8: The "Why Not Me?" Diagnostic

For each promotion you didn't get, analyze:

## Promotion Opportunity #1:

- Who got it instead: \_\_\_\_\_
- Their experience vs. mine: \_\_\_\_\_
- What they had that I didn't: \_\_\_\_\_
- The real reason I think I lost: \_\_\_\_\_

## Promotion Opportunity #2:

- Who got it instead: \_\_\_\_\_
- Their experience vs. mine: \_\_\_\_\_
- What they had that I didn't: \_\_\_\_\_
- The real reason I think I lost: \_\_\_\_\_

Common patterns: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Part 9: The Executive Presence Audit

Video record yourself in a meeting or presentation, then evaluate:

Element	Executive Level (1-5)	Notes
Voice tone/pace		
Body language		
Eye contact		
Strategic language		
Confidence level		
Gravitas		
Clarity of message		

### Appearance check:

- Do I look the part? Yes/No
  - What needs upgrading? \_\_\_\_\_
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## Part 10: The Politics Reality Map

Draw your organization's real power structure:

1. Official org chart relationships (solid lines)

2. **Actual influence relationships** (dotted lines)
3. **Your position in this web** (circle yourself)
4. **Key decision makers** (star them)
5. **Your connections** (highlight in color)

### Analysis:

- How many degrees from key decision-makers? \_\_\_\_
  - Influence brokers I need to know: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Political blindspots identified: \_\_\_\_\_
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## Your Promotion Barrier Summary

### Top 3 Hidden Barriers:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Most Uncomfortable Truth:

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### Biggest Mindset Shift Needed:

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### One Thing to Stop Doing:

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### One Thing to Start Doing:

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### My 30-Day Commitment:

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*Note: This worksheet is designed to be uncomfortable. Growth happens outside your comfort zone. The clearer you are about your barriers, the faster you can break through them.*