

# Crossing Thresholds Positioning for The Future

## Crossing Thresholds, cross-department course for civil service women 'Positioning for The Future' panel discussion, 17 July 2012 Ruth Lea, Economic Adviser, Arbutnot Banking Group

### Ruth's top tips:

**Firstly**, the thing that has driven me most during my career has been my own sheer hard work, reliability and commitment. There have been disappointments and bitter setbacks, which I simply had to cope with and work through. I doubt if many people even start to realise how hard you have to work if you are to have a high pressure, high profile career. But I don't work as hard now as I have done, as I'm getting on for 65!

**Secondly**, there will be set-backs in life unless you're very lucky. And they can be very hard. Put set-backs behind you and move on. The moral of the IoD debacle (when I was sacked without any warning and then badmouthed) for me was that you really do have to put disasters behind you – however badly you think you've been treated. No one is going to listen to your hard luck stories if you don't 'move on'. Moreover, if you don't move on you will wreck the rest of your life. And in any case, the best way to 'get back' at your detractors is to succeed. By the way, you can't prepare for some setbacks. They just happen and you have to deal with them.

**Thirdly**, 'to thine own self be true'. You know what you stand for and the principles by which you live your life. Don't pretend to be someone you are not. On the whole, it simply doesn't work – most people can smell phonies a mile off. And, surely, people you are dealing/working with want to feel they are dealing with a trustworthy, honest person.

**Fourthly**, do things you find satisfying and enjoyable – something you can feel committed to and passionate about. Otherwise you'll probably be miserable and resentful – and probably won't succeed. If people go in for dentistry or accountancy and hate the very idea of being a dentist or an accountant they'll not make a very good dentist or accountant. And if you enjoy your job (whether in the civil service or in the private sector) you're half way to doing it well.

**Fifthly**, be very adaptable and flexible – whether you're in the civil service or in the private sector. Situations change, people change and the technology changes. Different people need to be handled in different ways. You have to get on with many different people in many different situations. It's no good being locked into ways of doing things when the world has moved on and attitudes change. Past success doesn't guarantee future success. Don't rest on your laurels.