

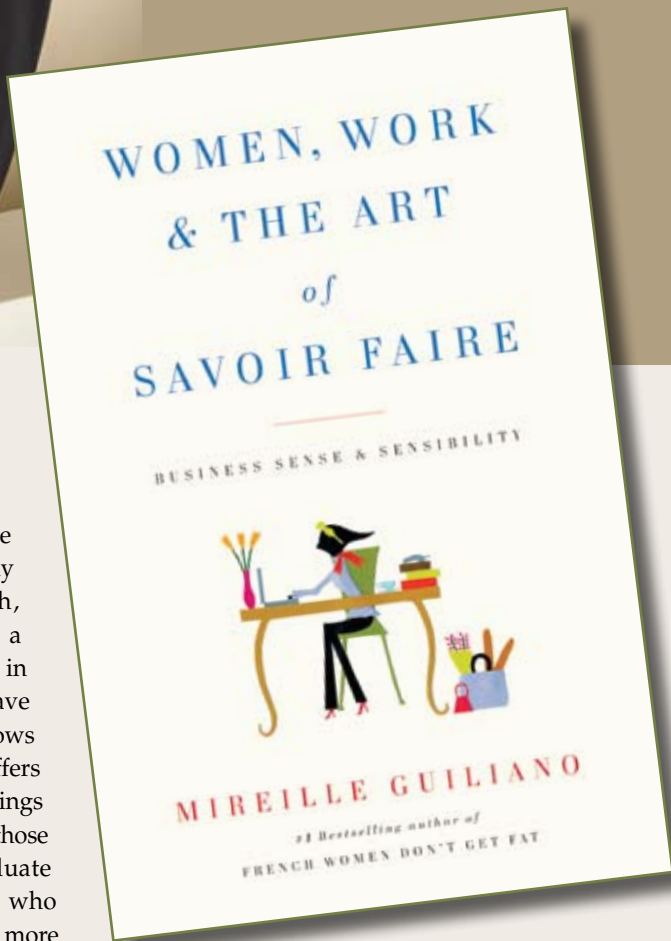


## Book Review

# Required Reading

*Mireille Guiliano's latest book is a thoughtful manual for working women.*

RICHARD L. ELIA



Mireille Guiliano, like Oprah, is one of the oracles these days, especially for women. And like Oprah, Mireille Guiliano has charm, along with a French accent that made all the difference in her success (as she admits). Her books have been sold in the millions, and the world knows *French Women Don't Get Fat*. She readily offers advice on work and *savoir faire* (getting things done) to young professional women and to those emerging from undergraduate and graduate programs. The advice is needed. As one who has been involved with undergraduates for more decades than I care to recall, and as one who has been part of the wining and dining scene for just as long, young women — and men, of course — need it. Many of them come from backgrounds where the basics of common sense and manners and societal maneuvering have been ignored. It is not an accident that colleges across the country are offering a plethora of seminars on etiquette and on wining and dining.

This book should be required reading.

Guiliano's latest book, *Women, Work, & the Art of Savoir Faire* (Atria Books, \$25) offers lots of common sense. The singular thing about common sense, however, is how uncommon it can be. The book is part guide, part narrative,

part anecdote, and part inspirational. She excels at all four, and she is never better than when she becomes declarative. Thus, she offers the following advice.

"Know thyself." This advice about self-awareness inscribed on the door of the oracle at Delphi is wise in the extreme. It's not a question of just who you are, but what you are: what are your values, what is your future, where are you going ... ?

The unexamined life is still not worth living. It's not easy but it has to be done. "Don't think failure." And while you're doing this, get yourself a "mentor, a coach, a *piston*" (someone with enough pull to open doors, give you contacts); everyone needs it. And don't be afraid to take sensible risks, to travel down that road least traveled; it may make all the difference.

What many young would-be professionals don't know, says Guiliano, is the importance of a thank you note. By hand and on a simple card, write (don't email, Twitter, or text) a thank you note to anyone who has helped or interviewed you. And while you're doing that, remember not to misspell anyone's name, and remember to remember peoples' names. At the interview, anticipate questions, rehearse your answers to these questions, look your interviewer in the eye, and give a good handshake and thanks on starting and ending. Show you're eager to "learn," to grow, "to work hard." Once you get a job, remember that hard work and good fortune often go hand in hand.

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Success finds you, not the other way around.

At interviews, know about the company (she prefers larger corporations that have more to offer) for which you're interested in working. Know and research the company, know the culture, the dress, (Guiliano is not a fan of casual Fridays). For that matter, know how to dress (she has a long list of do's and don'ts in Chapter 5): wear a collar (a manifestation of "confidence" and surety), no "super mini skirts, not too much cleavage ..."

Guiliano is even better when she insists on the importance of good communication skills. Whether you have a job or are looking for one, learn how to speak well (if you can't, start practicing — we all had to). First impressions are everything. You need to speak well, to write well, to have poise. If you think you lack these, discover them. You need to reinvent yourself at times, "refresh your image." One can't start too soon. She also insists on the importance of a simple smile, of having good conversational and narrative skills, of respecting your audience. Take some of this advice and you'll be *bien dans sa peau* (comfortable in your own skin). Her section on dining and entertaining is vital and worth the price of the book. When dining, remember to shut off your cell phone. If you must leave the table, remember your napkin goes on the chair, not on the table or your plate. Never be gauche, and never be noticed for the wrong things. You're rarely given a second chance, especially in the professional world. ☞

Women, Work & the Art of Savoir Faire is part guide, part narrative, part anecdote, and part inspirational. Mireille Guiliano excels at all four . . . .



"What I have tried to write is the sort of book I wish I had been given when starting out in the working world and had at hand along the way. This isn't another business book that tells you how to 'succeed' or 'get the corner office.' Yes, of course, you'll find advice on getting ahead and getting promoted ...but more than that, you'll find advice on being happy and living a good life, even while you are making the biggest contribution you can to the workplace. That's why I dare to talk about style and clothes and food and wine and entertaining and LIFE in a business book. We don't work in a vacuum. Our work is part of the rest of our lives."

— Mireille Guiliano