Gender Communication and Leadership Style Differences 101:
Being Most Effective in Your Professional Life

Presented by Sally Glick
To thrive in today’s competitive marketplace, men and women need to communicate successfully with each other as professionals. (How we communicate reflects our leadership style.)

Our objectives for this presentation are to help you:

• Understand the differences in verbal and nonverbal communication styles

• Use the information gained to be more effective in the workplace and avoid pitfalls
• Recognize common communication differences
• Be prepared to adapt
• Be insightful and attuned when managing men and women
• Use communication to lead, inform, engage and inspire
Where did these differences come from?

Research tells us that communication patterns are set early in life. Even very young children (3 years old in some studies) demonstrate language usage that follow a distinctive gender pattern.

Note the difference in boys versus girls at play.
Early childhood differences evolve into adult patterns that greatly influence us in the work environment.

• The more aware we are, the more efficiently we can work together and build meaningful relationships

• We can stop judging and start celebrating differences in order to make the most impact
Recognizing Common Traits

Being a good communicator is one of the most critical characteristics of great leaders.

Yet, documented differences in gender communication can create significant misunderstandings:

- Men focus on power/ women focus on relationships
- Men focus on facts/ women focus on feelings
- Men thrive on competing/ women thrive on harmony
- Men are more assertive/ women are more cooperative
- Men are at ease with order/ women are at ease with fluidity
- Men talk to give information/ women talk to gather information
Linguists regard men’s speech as:
• Forceful
• Efficient
• Authoritative

Linguists regard women’s speech as:
• Super polite
• Hesitant
• Euphemistic
• Eye contact differs by gender
• Body position differs by gender: shoulder to shoulder to face to face
• Nodding signals different messages by gender
Top Communication Strengths for Women:
- Sensitivity to nonverbal body cues
- Good listeners
- Empathetic

Top Communication Weaknesses for Women:
- Overly emotional
- Not succinct
- Not authoritative
Top Communication Strengths for Men:
• Commanding physical presence
• Direct and to the point
• Body language signals power

Top Communication Weaknesses for Men:
• Overly blunt
• Insensitive to listeners’ reactions
• Too confident
In the workplace context, strengths can turn into weaknesses if taken to the extreme. For example:

Women seem to have an edge when collaborating/
Men succeed when using authority is critical

But as a result –

Women can seem indecisive/
Men can seem callous

Under certain circumstances, each is the appropriate style
When dealing with gender communication and leadership style differences, pay attention to each other. Be aware of your own goals:

• Are you giving or sharing information - are you reporting details or building a rapport?

• Are you making decisions by building consensus or giving unilateral orders?

• Are you listening so as to offer suggestions and solutions or to gain clarity of the situation?
Women can:

• Speak in a stronger, more assertive and confident voice
• Stop phrasing ideas as questions or offering disclaimers that diminish the value of the suggestion
• Be more concise and factual when sharing information
• Take credit for your efforts
• Play down feelings and emphasize facts

Men can:

• Refrain from interrupting
• Listen to, and acknowledge, the opinions of others
• Ask for feedback; be more interested in creating consensus
• Avoid an aggressive stance; be less blunt and dominating
• Eliminate verbal bantering that can be misinterpreted
Communication styles differ between the genders, with the potential for disruption and inefficiencies, as long as each gender tends to erroneously expect that the other communicates similarly to them.

Instead, we can strive for:

• Increased sensitivity to different styles that can lead to more fruitful outcomes in the workplace

• A willingness to be flexible, and even adopt some of each other’s communication characteristics, without feeling compromised
Please contact me with any questions!

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