



Gender Styles in Communication

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Interpersonal Communication -

Organizations are made up of people from different backgrounds, cultures, gender, behavior, personalities and perceptions who have to work together to achieve a common organizational goal.

Inevitably these people have to communicate on a personal basis and share ideas, so as to move in the same direction.





What Do You Believe?

Men talk more than women.

True

- ▶ Despite the stereotype, whether in classrooms, offices, group discussion or in two-person conversations, men talk more than their fair share of the time. For example, in one experiment, male and female subjects were asked to verbally describe pictures and engravings. The women's average description was approximately three minutes. For a man, the average time was 13 minutes.



What Do You Believe?

Men are more likely to interrupt women than to interrupt other men.

TRUE

When women talk with other women, interruptions are evenly distributed. When men talk with other men, interruptions are evenly distributed. However when men and women talk with one another, almost all of the interruptions are by male speakers.



What Do You Believe?

During conversations, women spend more time looking at their partners than men do.

TRUE

Many studies have shown that women are more likely than men to look at their partner. One reason may be that men talk more and women listen more. Another possible reason may be the need for and expertise in decoding nonverbal cues. In a direct staring confrontation, women will be more likely to avert their eyes, especially when stared at by men.



What Do You Believe?

Men not only control the content of conversations, they also work harder in keeping conversations going.

FALSE

While men do exert power and authority in controlling the course of conversations, women exert more effort in maintaining communication.



What Do You Believe?

When people hear generic words, such as “mankind” and “he,” they respond inclusively.

FALSE

Terms such as mankind and he are supposed to be generic and are presumed to include both men and women. Research shows that people are more literal in their thinking.



What Do You Believe?

Women use less personal space than men.

TRUE

Women's space is far more likely to be intruded upon by others. Women are approached more closely than men by both women and men. When women and men approach each other on the street, women are more likely to walk around men or move out of their way. In homes, men are more likely to have an "untouchable" space.



What Do You Believe?

Women are more likely to answer questions that are not addressed to them.

FALSE

Men manage to capture more than their fair share of talk time. Sometimes, women actually help men gain this advantage because they are more likely to ask questions, while men are more likely to give answers.



What Do You Believe?

Female managers are seen by both male and female subordinates as better communicators than male managers.

TRUE

Female managers are seen as giving more attention to subordinates, as more open to new ideas, and as more supportive of worker effort than male managers.



What Do You Believe?

In general, men smile more often than women.

FALSE

Women are far more likely to smile than men. They do this in many different social situations even though they are not necessarily happy or amused. In one study, researchers smiled at approximately 150 males and 150 females in public. Women returned the smiles 93 percent of the time to men and 83 percent of the time to women. Males smiled back at women 67 percent of the time, and they returned smiles to men 58 percent of the time.



What Do You Believe?

Female speakers are more animated in their style than are males.

TRUE

Female speakers display more animated behavior, including amount and intensity of eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, and body movement. Further, they are more likely to use a wider range of pitch and tonal variations. However, men appear to be more dramatic verbally and more likely to tell anecdotes and jokes.

Why Interpersonal Communication Matters

- **A Measurable impact on psychological and physical health.** People with higher levels of interpersonal communication skills are better able to adapt to; stress, have greater satisfaction in relationships and more friends, and have less depression and anxiety.
- **Meeting Basic Needs:** Interpersonal communication meets our basic needs as humans for security in our social bonds, health, and careers.
- **Interpersonal communication is strategic:** We intentionally create messages to achieve certain goals that help us function in society and our relationships.
- **To achieve instrumental goals such as gaining compliance:** i.e “get things done” in their relationships and in different aspects.

The Payoff

- Relationship Building
- Customer Service
- **Management** - Imprecise and rash business communication frequently results in wasted time
- **Training**
- **Conflict Resolution** - Interpersonal communication is a key component of conflict management in organizations






SEX AND GENDER



Sex

-  biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women



Gender

-  socially constructed roles that a given society considers appropriate for men and women




GENDER

- Refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.
- **"Male" and "female" are sex categories, while "masculine" and "feminine" are gender categories.**

Male and Female Stereotypes



<i>Rapport</i>	<i>Report</i>
<i>Supportiveness</i>	<i>Dominance</i>
<i>Building Relationships</i>	<i>Individuality</i>
<i>Ask Questions</i>	<i>Avoid Questions</i>
<i>Cooperate</i>	<i>Assert</i>
<i>Holistic</i>	<i>Focused</i>
<i>Seek Consensus</i>	<i>Give Orders</i>
<i>Relate</i>	<i>Resolve</i>



Verbal Communication Differences based on Gender

MEN (Masculine)

- ▶ Avoid Personal stories
- ▶ Attempt to dominate the conversation
- ▶ Less likely to listen
- ▶ More aggressive, more prone to interrupt

WOMEN (Feminine)

- ▶ Share Personal stories
- ▶ Offer Personal stories
- ▶ Concerned with equalized input
- ▶ Form groups
- ▶ Listen Carefully / Attentively
- ▶ Allow themselves to be interrupted more

Non-Verbal Communication Differences based on Gender

Body language	Men	Women
Facial expression	Less	More
Eye contact	Avoid	Prefer
Posture	More relaxed	More tense
Bodily proximity	Less	Closer
Touching	Sexual interest	Warmth and friendship

Male-Female--Communication Characteristics

Approach with Caution! These are generalities. Your experience may be quite different.

Men focus on power / rank / status.	Women focus on relationships.
Men talk to give information or report.	Women talk to collect information or gain rapport.
Men talk about things (business, sports, food).	Women talk about people / relationships.
Men focus on facts, reason and logic.	Women focus on feelings, senses and meaning.
Men thrive on competing and achieving.	Women thrive on harmony and relating.
Men "know" by analyzing and figuring out.	Women "know" by intuiting.
Men are more assertive.	Women are more cooperative.
Men tend to be focused, specific, logical.	Women are holistic and organic.
Men are at ease with order, rules and structure.	Women with fluidity.
Men immediately want to get working on a project.	Women tend to ask lots of questions before beginning a project.
Men want to think.	Women want to feel



Balancing Your Approach to Effective Communication

- Understand the motivation behind the behavior
- Recognize your own communication style and bias
- Be respectful and open to the other person's communication style and values
- Work on compromise to bring out the strengths of the communication style



Masculine Reminder

- ▶ I need to remind myself that many women may not “do” power like men do.
- ▶ Women often feel oppressed by how men “do” power.
- ▶ If I interrupted less, there could be deeper communication.
- ▶ I need to ask my partner for input and wait for an answer, not assuming that she will interrupt.
- ▶ Listening can be a nice way of getting to know someone, rather than helping them problem solve.



Masculine Reminders

- Helpful to avoid sarcasm with women
- Helpful to offer supportive feedback frequently
- Helpful to be authentic and willing to occasionally share personal information



Feminine Reminders

- The masculine may see asking for input indirectly as submitting and wimpy thus showing a lack of confidence.
- You do not have to change what you are doing, just be aware of the assumptions he could be making.
- Remind masculine to listen rather than fix
- Helpful to remember that healthy assertion of authority is necessary with some people



Feminine Reminders

- Helpful to say to men, "Please don't interrupt me."
- Helpful to not let men interrupt you
- Helpful to jump in early and make suggestions when talking with men, if you want to be seen as an equal
- Helpful to remember that not sharing personal information is the norm for most men and not something personally directed toward you
- Likewise, many men don't understand why you are share so much personal information



Masculine and Feminine

- For either masculine or feminine: Ask *"Do you want me to listen or give you advice?"*
- For either masculine or feminine: When you disagree, check out the meaning of the word you are using to see if you mean the same thing.
- For either masculine or feminine: Ask *"Are you gathering input and making the final decision or are you seeking consensus?"*



When you have just had a miscommunication,
try this:

"I'm not sure I understood what you just said. Could you say that again using different words?"

OR

"What you just said hurt my feelings. I don't think that was your intention. Was it?"

OR

"I'm feeling really defensive right now. Let's take a minute because I don't like when I get so defensive."



Gender Communication Tips

- ▶ Do not assume you understand what your colleague means.
- ▶ You *need* to interpret what they are saying.
- ▶ You don't have to change *who you are*, only how you talk.
- ▶ When you feel insulted or slighted, your *first assumption* needs to be that there was a miscommunication. Ask them to repeat what they said, using different words than they used the first time. If you still feel insulted, ask them, "Are you saying.....?"
- ▶ You are not good at mind-reading. Ask them.

Bridging Gender Differences and Valuing Diverse Styles

- **Take these tips with a grain of salt.** Don't use this information to stereotype all men or all women. Of course not everyone fits these generalizations. These are cultural norms based on research that showed that a large majority of men and women display some of these characteristics. Some of these behaviors are based on acculturation and learning and some of them are based on how our brains work.
- **Stay aware.** Both men and women need to be aware of each others styles of communication both verbal and non-verbal in order to avoid miscommunication and work better together.
- **Be aware** of unconscious stereotypes and biases and be open to breaking past them in order to leverage each others strengths.
- **Recognize** that many different styles of leadership can be effective.
- **Men,** be aware of how much time and space in meetings or group interaction. Make room for the contributions of women. When asked for a decision by a women or for your opinion if you are an internal processor, let her know you are in process of thinking about it so she knows she is heard.
- **Women,** get comfortable asserting more space for yourself. When dealing with men in decision making, try to stop yourself from processing out loud. If you do process out loud, let the man know that this is a process you use for decision making and you are not asking him what to do.
- **Learn** about male and female styles of communication and be able to use both. You need both to deal with the complexity and diversity of situations in today's world both personally and professionally. Don't be afraid to recognize differences. Once you do that it will be easier to have open discussions in order to find similarities and use those differences to achieve greater goals together