

Communication – The Central Skill in Business and in Life

Part 2: Understanding and Bridging Gender Differences in Communication

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1st – A Review: Definitions and Core Skills Skills of Communication

Definition, Webster's: "A giving or exchanging of information"

One-way communication: Lecture, presentation, article, book, performance



Two-way communication: Conversation, meeting, interview, discussion



Contexts: Both in Life and in Business (10% verbal; 30% sound; 60% body language)

In life: Interacting with spouse, child, friend, neighbor

In business: Interacting with employer, employee, client, colleague/associate

4 Basic Types: Reading/writing; speaking/listening - Formal training in all but one

Communication in Life: Goal: *Balanced, open communication between 2 or more people*

Communication in Business: Goal: *Understanding, then meeting, the needs of the client/customer*

The Crowning Jewel of Communication, in Life and in Business: *Empathic Listening*

Skills for Empathic Listening: *Development occurs in stages or levels:* (Covey, 7 Habits, p. 248-249)

1. **Mimic content** (annoying, but at least gets you listening, out of your frame of reference)
2. **Rephrase the content** (more effective, but still limited to verbal communication)
3. **Reflect feeling** (not so much attending to what's said, as feeling behind it)
4. **Rephrase the content and reflect the feeling** (the highest level of empathic listening)

Becoming "Bilingual" in "GenderSpeak:" Why and How:

Men and Women Use Communication for Different Purposes

He uses it to: Share information
Solve problems
Demonstrate competence

She uses it to: Create emotional connection
Process problems/feelings
Develop understanding

Most Common Mistakes in Talking to the Other Gender

His Mistake: Jumping to the "expert", problem-solving role, rather than hearing her out

Her Mistake: Pushing him to "share his feelings" upfront; TMI/overbroad focus

These Differences Result from Hard-Wired Differences in Brain Structure

Her Brain: Wired for left/right brain networking; 3x corpus callosum; “gathering” style
His Brain: Wired for targeted focus/sequential action; compartmentalize; “hunting” style

“Brain Damage” : In a cynical perspective -

From a man’s point of view, every woman has “brain damage”.
(Because they “can’t stay focused on a topic;” “bounce all over the place;” “get too emotional.”)

From a woman’s point of view, every man has “brain damage”.
(Because they’re “so oblivious” to whatever they’re not focusing on; so “out of touch with feelings” (their own and other people’s – don’t read vocal tone, facial expression, etc.)

Talking Style:

His: Direct; to the point; unemotional; targeted to a specific focus (“hunting style.”)

Hers: Indirect; dropping clues; personal/emotional; noticing cues (“gathering style.”)

Beware “Psychological Bigotry” (“Your way is wrong - do it like me!”) Eg.:

“How do you feel about that?” (not “What do you think?”)
“That’s totally irrelevant to this conversation! Why are you always bringing up the past!”
“I know you’re upset – just admit it! You’ll feel a lot better after you tell me what you’re feeling.”
“Let’s stay rational here – all this emotion is just distracting from the real point.”

Do’s and Don’t for Men and Women in Conversation:

- **DO “become bilingual” in Genderspeak.** Learn to “just listen and support” rather than “solve” when that skill is needed. Also learn to give clear, concise information, and to conceptualize step-by-step solutions when that is needed. Tune in to the needs and preferences of the person you’re talking to – don’t just impose your own natural preferred style. *Remember – in Mexico, broken Spanish is better than polished English!* Your efforts to connect “in their language” will be appreciated, and will pay off in more effective conversations and relationships.
- **DON’T criticize the other person’s communication style.** Respect it as part of who they are – and part of what you’ll need to learn in order to communicate with them effectively. *Don’t see it as “manipulation” – it isn’t.* It’s a genuine part of who they are: biologically and psychologically.
- **DO remember to listen to understand – not to respond.** For both men and women, this core communication skill is the foundation of effective conversation.
- **DON’T overwhelm your listener.** Watch them as you speak, to make sure the content and emotion of your message are staying at a level that they can take in effectively. *Pace yourself!*
- **DO recognize, enjoy, and appreciate the differences.** Men and women are built different for a reason. When respected and given voice, these differences can give endless delight, contribute to powerful synergies at home and at work, and be entertaining and amusing to observe. *Vive la différence!*

