

GENDER COMMUNICATIONS: HE SAID...SHE SAID

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Women and men sometimes, and generally do, communicate differently. Although neither communication style is better, sometimes the results can be strained relationships, stress, lack of trust, poor job performance, and in some cases, even lawsuits. These differences are becoming more widely recognized and publicized. In the November 20, 1995 Wall Street Journal under the title of *They Just Don't Understand Gender Dynamics* two interesting quotes are:

"...Intergender workplace tensions often result from nonmalicious misunderstandings caused by differences in communications habits."

"...Training in a few interaction skills can eliminate the majority of miscommunications."

This workshop addresses this training need and will explore six gender communication style tendencies. The information provided will help you better understand your communication tendencies so you can acknowledge gender differences. As a result, you will gain a better understanding of others by identifying these differences. You will then be on your way to adapting your communication style to be better understood. Interested readers can find more information in the references.

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

I. Introductions

II. Program Design/Development - "How the workshop came to be"

- Part of Hewlett-Packard Atlanta Site's Diversity Curriculum
- Differences in gender communication styles were seen
- Co-designers male and female perspective

III. Workshop Objectives:

- Acknowledge differences between men and women's communication styles that can potentially cause conflict
- Understand the gender-specific motivations behind communication
- Adapt communication style when necessary to create successful communication and relationships

IV. What Research Says About Gender Communication Differences:

Communication Style Tendencies

Showing empathy versus solving the problem
Using questions
Compete details versus the "Big Picture"
Agreement versus confrontation
I'm Lost, Can You Help Me?
Building rapport

V. Summary

Cross-over effect

- To recognize these tendencies in yourself and to adapt to make communication more effective



Communication Style Tendencies

Showing empathy versus solving the problem.

Male Tendencies:

Male Adaptation:

Female Tendencies:

Female Adaptation:

Using questions.

Male Tendencies:

Male Adaptation:

Female Tendencies:

Female Adaptation:

Complete details versus the "Big Picture"

Male Tendencies:

Male Adaptation:

Female Tendencies:

Female Adaptation:

Agreement versus confrontation.

Male Tendencies:

Male Adaptation:

Female Tendencies:

Female Adaptation:

I'm Lost, Can You Help Me?

Male Tendencies:

Male Adaptation:

Female Tendencies:

Female Adaptation:

Building Rapport

Male Tendencies:

Male Adaptation:

Female Tendencies:

Female Adaptation:

Personal Action Plan

1. What are some insights you have gained as a result of this program?

About men?

About women?

About yourself?

2. What can you do to work smarter together with co-workers of the other gender?

3. What can you do in your personal life?

4. What will you do to begin the process?

At work?

In your personal life?



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1996 WEPAN National Conference

For those of you who were unable to attend the conference, here are some quick highlights of the workshop. Perhaps after reviewing this material, you might have sufficient interest to refer to the referenced material for more information.

Showing empathy versus solving the problem. Most women are good listeners and will hear out the other person, usually showing concern, interest and emotion as the speaker talks. They will ask questions to show interest and help the speaker describe the issue.

Men often feel that if someone comes to them to describe a problem, then they feel the speaker is coming to them for direction on how to resolve the issue. Men will readily offer a solution, many times before the speaker has even finished outlining the issue.

Using questions. As mentioned above, women usually use questions to show interest, to gain a better understanding of the topic of conversation. Through the use of questions, women build rapport with others.

Men tend more toward making statements and use questions sparingly. Many feel that asking questions is a sign of weakness. This can create confusion in the workplace where women are asking questions to truly understand the issue and men might misinterpret this questioning as a sign of weakness.

Compete details versus the "Big Picture". Men tend to look at the larger scheme of things and find looking into too fine a detail as irritating.

Most women look into the details to show concern and interest. Many times through exploring the details other issues that might have been overlooked are uncovered.

Agreement versus confrontation. Women will tend toward finding areas of agreement with others and avoiding hurting others feelings.

Men do not hesitate to show disagreement and will quickly point out those areas to others. The intent is not to injure the relationship but simply a desire to illustrate the difference of opinion.

I'm Lost, Can You Help Me? It would appear that women value time and will ask others for help to avoid wasting it.

Men also value time but find it difficult to ask others for help. Perhaps this is seen as a sign of weakness.

Building Rapport. Women tend to use a participative, indirect style of communication and strive to be liked which all lends itself to creating rapport with others.

Men tend to be more direct in their communication and strive to be recognized as the authority on the subject.

Resources

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