

Gender Communication: Understanding and Improving Communication Between Men and Women (760 words)

Does It Matter Whether You're Male or Female? Is there a biological difference between men and women? Yes, of course there is. How much of a difference is there when it comes to physical strength? Is it 20%? Is it 50%? Actually, it is closer to about 8%. Men run about 8% faster, jump about 8% higher, can lift nearly 8% more weight than women. It's not much of a difference when it comes to strength, but it's a huge difference when it affects our decision making.

When it comes to decision making, we want to make sure that we don't consider whether the person is male or female, just whether or not they are qualified for the job. Let's say that I work in the Human Resources Department and I need to hire a new truck driver. There are two candidates for the position. One is a man who is 6 feet tall and weighs about 250 pounds with 10 years of truck driving experience. The second applicant is a woman who is 5 feet 5 inches tall and weighs about 150 pounds with 10 years of truck driving experience. If I see the world through the biological viewpoint, who would I hire? They are both just as qualified for driving the truck. But, when it comes to the issue of being male or female, it can have an effect our decision making.

Take a look around your organization and see if there are departments with considerably more men than women or considerably more women than men. Consider why that is. If you do this perception check, you may need to consider whether the most capable and confident people are in key positions, rather than if they are male or female.

Do Men and Women Speak a Different Language? Men and women do in fact speak a different language. At least they have a different vocabulary. For example, men use more swearing, expressions of hostility, and expletives. Women use five to seven times more intensifiers, hedges, fillers and qualifiers.

Women say things like, "kind of...sort of...maybe...or possibly..." Even phrases like, "I know you're awfully busy, but...I'm sorry to bother you, however...I hope you don't mind..." And then men will often reply by saying things like, "Well, I am busy...You are bothering me...Actually, I do mind."

Men and women sometimes do speak a different language, or at least a different dialect. So here is the bottom line: Men need to knock off the cussing and swearing and women need to drop the hedges and qualifiers to be more assertive and sound more confident. By making these minor adjustments you will be able to work more comfortably with others on your team and not be distracted from the value of their ideas.

Don't Men Get the Hint? One of the biggest differences in communication between men and women in conversation is that men make statements and women ask questions. When women ask questions, they are leaving the conversation open for the other person to talk about whatever they want. Women also ask questions in order to give hints to what they really want. Let's say a man and a woman walk outside. The man would start

off the conversation with, "This is a beautiful day." The woman would most likely start the conversation by saying, "What do you think of the weather?" This gives men a chance to shift or drift the conversation to any topic they want. The man could drift the conversation fishing, golf, or anything that is somewhat related to weather.

Here's another example. Let's say my wife and I are driving in the car. My wife asks me, "Are you thirsty?" As a man I would consider the question and respond, "Nope." She later asks me, "Are you hungry?" I would pat my belly and respond, "No, not really." I am clearly not getting it. What she is really saying is, "I'm thirsty" and "I'm hungry." This is called hinting. Men just don't get the hint.

Here are some suggestions. Men pay attention to the conversation so you don't miss the hints. And women, if you're not getting the right answers to your questions, I would suggest that you start making statements. Whether you are male or female, be clear about your intentions and you will be more effective in getting what you ask for, regardless who you are talking to.

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