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Effective communication in the workplace between the sexes

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Desiree Simons recently published an article on Glasshammer.com titled "Say It Like You Mean It: How to Communicate Effectively at Work." In pointing out that communicating with male colleagues can seem like "trying to put a puzzle together without all of the pieces," the article discussed three skills that can help women more effectively communicate with their male counterparts. The article acknowledged that, although men and women have different communication styles, one is not better than the other. Furthermore, while "diverse gender skill sets" are beneficial to a workplace, knowing when and how to adapt and use a different approach is key and can be the "game changer."

1. Get to the Point

Women tend to give more of a backstory than men before getting to the point and should omit the narrative if it is unnecessary. Additionally, women often hedge and use qualifiers, such as "Do you think? What if we? Don't you think?" and "Have you considered?" These phrases, including saying, "I feel..." can make women appear less confident. Instead, Ms. Simons suggests speaking in a more assertive fashion by using phrases such as, "I'll need that by" "Let's plan for" and "We must." As a practical point, experts suggest that women create bullet points in their minds before going into a meeting and say what they think, not what they feel.

2. Stand Your Ground

Because women are socialized to be peacemakers, they are apt to seek a compromise when they should stand firm during a conflict. Rather than backing down, women should speak up in meetings, even at the risk of being wrong. And remember, don't take a disagreement personally. Keep looking forward and remember that results, not harmony, is the goal.

3. Play to Your Strengths

While, as stated above, one gender style is not superior to another, women's unique skills should not be ignored. Women tend to have a more collaborative approach to problem solving and to look more for the deeper impact of interactions, decisions, and discussions, as noted by Patricia Rossman, Chief Diversity Officer of BASF. These approaches are beneficial to the workplace and provide a diverse and valuable skill set. While it is important to recognize the differences between men's and women's communication styles, be flexible, know a variety of strategies, and choose the best one for the situation at hand.

By Bridget Warren - March 2, 2017

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