

Communication differences and strategies essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Communication skills are different among men and women in respect to, and because of, their various occupations and experiences. Women use terms that are more descriptive and take longer to get to the point, while men tend to start with the direct point and fill in as needed. There are also differences in how each gender interprets some phrases. This paper further discusses some of the differences, how these differences relate to miscommunication, and ways that these issues can be dealt with effectively.

The skills that are used by men for non-verbal communication relates to their impressions and ideas of importance. The more important a man thinks he is, the more his body language will speak out. He will stand up straighter, use a voice that is louder, and be more expansive with his hand gestures. Eye contact will be at a minimum when talking to a subordinate unless he is making or stressing a point. In relaxed social situations a man will spread out physically, taking up more space than necessary and using more expansive gestures with his entire body, while eye contact is almost non-existent no matter who he is conversing with. For a male dealing with another male of higher ranking, the body language is more subdued, with greater eye contact from the subordinate, to the superior. When a male is dealing with a female of higher rank, his body language will reflect his comfort level for the situation.

For non-verbal communication among women, the skills are more varied. Women tend to maintain eye contact more frequently, regardless of whom they are talking with. They also tend to use more hand gestures, head nods, and small vocal agreements to show that they are paying attention to the

speaker. Women use their overall body posture to show attentiveness, by leaning in toward the other person while talking. Women are more adept at using and understanding non-verbal body language, becoming very skilled at non-verbal communication, especially when using it to show interest in another person. “ Women typically initiate the process of seeing and being seen, by non-verbally signaling their interest in a man...research has determined that women give off more non-verbal cues and decipher the cues of others with more accuracy than men” (Ivy & Backlund, 2008, p. 197).

When it comes to verbal communications, men are often more direct without giving many details. Men use verbal communication to make a point, convey direct information, or to instigate some form of activity. Stereotypically, men are characterized as careless lumps because they seldom discuss feelings or relationship status. For men, general terms and abstract communication tend to fill the requirements for the exchange of information, without extraneous bits or intimacy getting in the way. For those men in leadership positions, verbal communication is another way for them to stress or enhance their importance. The more important a man thinks he is, the more likely he will be to use his perceived status to interrupt someone or to take control of a conversation. Men are more likely to use loud voices, harsh words, or even crude humor to make sure a subordinate realizes who is in charge.

Women use verbal communication for more diverse reasons. Verbal exchanges by women are used to enhance relationships and “ to emphasize

their connection to and affiliation with others” (Ivy & Backlund, 2008, p. 205). Women have to learn both languages- the language used by the general population and the language used by men in a professional settings. These skills have helped women in many career areas because they have learned how to adapt their listening, non-verbal, and verbal skills to any situation. Women are less likely to interrupt during a conversation, preferring to let others finish their thoughts before adding to the discussion.

Overall, verbal and non-verbal communication skills do vary between genders, due to the way these skills get implemented by each gender. The way men and women interpret non-verbal cues vary depending on situations and hierarchical positions. Men tend to have very broad definitions for all types of communications, while women are better at discerning the subtle nuances in verbal and non-verbal communications.

The main miscommunication between men and women result from the way information is interpreted. Because men are more direct in their relationships, they do not always understand the “ hints” or “ hedges” that women use. This male directness, coupled with the lack of non-verbal responses, is what causes women to believe and think that men are not listening when spoken to. The way young girls and boys learn to play helps to teach and reinforce the differences in how each gender views the world and their place within it. Women will use questions or suggestions to try to interest a man in an activity and end up frustrated because he does not want to participate. Men have been conditioned to understand, a direct approach-

working around an issue leaves them confused, not realizing that the female is trying to enhance the relationship with conversation.

Another area of miscommunication has to do with humor. Many areas of life are male-dominated, with women classified as inferior or second-class. Due to this kind of patriarchal hierarchy, many males still believe that there is nothing wrong with jokes that disparage females. For men, “ a joke is just a joke, and it doesn’t matter if some people find it funny, and some people don’t” (Sapiro, 2003, p. 350.). This kind of humor enhances negative views toward women, reinforcing the stereotypes of women as idiots or bimbos. The use of sexist humor may be classified as a form of sexual harassment, because of the sharp edge of the “ humorous” joke.

Because of the views men and women hold about the purpose of conversation, differences arise in the amounts of conversations between women and men. While a man may be comfortable just sitting and watching a show, enjoying the companionship and camaraderie that may develop, a woman feels that talking is needed to build or enhance those same feelings. Women constantly want to discuss feelings and relationship issues with their partner, especially when conflict has occurred. Once a man has told his side or view of the situation, he feels that the conflict and discussion are over, with nothing more to talk about. For women to show that a relationship is important and has meaning, they believe that all issues must be continuously examined and discussed, in an effort to reinforce and strengthen the relationship.

Vocabulary in general is another area for miscommunication. Even though women and men use the same basic language and grammar skills, some words have different meanings based upon context. There are quite a few food and animal terms that people use, especially men, to describe people of the opposite sex. While these terms may be meant as innocent compliments, the way people respond to them depends on the listener's point of view, the social situation, and any relationship status. A person's choice of language, especially sexual language, " is affected by gender and.... one's attitudes toward members of the opposite sex, as well as sexual activity, are revealed...." (Ivy & Backlund, 2008, p. 161). Euphemisms and metaphors are misconstrued in the same way. Words that have simple harmless connotations end up twisted by situations or context, thereby ending up negative or derogatory. People should exercise special care when trying to avoid sexist terminology, so that they use the most appropriate form for whatever context they find themselves.

An example of miscommunication among genders is an occurrence from my childhood. My father was a mechanic in the Navy, and performed automotive work on the side. He would have tools, repair manuals, and various automotive parts scattered throughout the house. This particular occasion, things were so scattered that people would have to move various items to even sit in a chair. My mother finally reached her breaking point and told him to get his " stuff" cleaned up and put away. Even though she stated that it was the inside of the house that needed cleaning, he proceeded to go into the garage to put things away out there, leaving all the items in the house

right where they were. While this may have been a purposeful misunderstanding on his part, this miscommunication caused major conflict between them.

The ineffective communication tool in this example would be one of incomplete and emotional statements. Even though my mother did not hint or hedge her wishes, she was not completely clear that it was the items in the house that she wanted put away. There was also an argumentative blaming aspect in the situation, instead of calm and support. For effective communication in this instance, a sense of empathy and compromise would have worked better, and would have minimized the conflict potential. By remaining calm and getting directly to the point, my mother would have had more success in letting my father know what her expectations were. With clear and concise instructions and specific examples of problem areas, rather than attacking everything in general, she could have prevented the conflict that arose.

I find myself taking the same approach as my mother did with my fiancé as well. When I ask for something to be done sometimes I am not completely clear with what I am asking and just expect him to know what it is I am asking him to do. When it does not get done how I expected or what I asked I become upset and this is due to not being clear and using effective communication skills.

In personal and professional relationships, it is always a wise action to remain calm, cool, and collected. Emotions do not belong in a professional environment, although it is good practice to keep an open mind to changing circumstances. Both men and women should learn to “ embrace a personal, concrete style, which involves supportive listening, sensitivity to other’s needs and mutual sharing of emotions and personal knowledge....(useful) when response to change is needed, when coping with ambiguous situations, when problems require a long-range perspective, and when a variety of values need to be understood” (Sheridan, 2007, p. 329). By carefully choosing how they communicate, people can greatly influence others in their personal and professional relationships, by how they interact with others in any situation.

Conversation is the heart of every business, shaped by the needs and requirements of its people and structure. Because of the patriarchal hierarchy that companies still use, many speech patterns are geared towards men, making it harder for women to advance in the professional environment. Employers have to recognize that the differences in communication styles that women bring with them allows for more diverse ways of expressing one’s own opinion, creating a space conducive to the professional development and advancement of male and female employees. By enforcing equal treatment and punishing any form of discrimination, including any form of sexual harassment or sexist speech, organizations can enhance the overall performance of both genders. Starting at the top of an organization, communications among all departments should be encouraged

and strengthened by allowing every person a chance to contribute equally to discussions and decisions. Communication strategies should include acknowledgment of every person's worth and contributions, so that the feelings of appreciation help strengthen the diversity and co-operation among all groups.

One area of conflict that many people have to watch out for would be sexist language. Although much of the gender bashing from men focuses on women, women also have to be careful in their dealing with the opposite sex. Sexist language is demeaning to everyone, classed as sexual harassment on the part of the receiver, and limiting the intelligence of the speaker. Making an effort to use nonsexist language improves gender equal thinking, encouraging people to think of others in favorable terms. It is easier to think before speaking, so that time needs not to be wasted covering, or recovering from, a mistake in language. Employers and supervisors demonstrate effective leadership by the use of proper communication skills, to promote equality and prevent conflict among employees and co-workers.

The English language is constantly changing, in good and bad ways, to reflect the emerging requirements of people. Gender equality affects the changing of the language skills of individuals, by making people and organizations realize the diverse qualities women bring with them.

Acknowledging these differences will improve problem solving, enhance creativity and production, and allow individual diversity to benefit the entire organization. Women and men at all levels need to practice communication

strategies, both verbal and non-verbal, so that there can no longer be any question of gender differentiation or equality.

References

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