March 15, 2017

Empowering Language in the Workplace
We can’t win for losing.
Road map.

- Where are we?
- What can we do?
- Where do we go?

DISCLAIMER: This is a big topic, and we have 50 minutes...
Think about the powerful women we know.
And another...
Mythology surrounds us.

• The conversational styles of men and women are similar.
  – Research indicates men and women speak similar numbers of words each day.
    • If anything, men talk a little more.
  – Research indicates that men and women are equally “emotional” when communicating.
What we do know.

• Gender roles play a difference.
  – Masculine communicators use more dominant language.
  – Feminine speakers tend to be more submissive in style.
    • Hormone levels may have more to do with our communication styles than gender.
Words and phrases to avoid.

- “I’m sorry.”
  - Consider “thank you” instead.
- “I was wondering…”
  - Will that be…?
- “I think…”
- “I’m just…”
- “I actually…”
- “I’m not sure but…”
More words and phrases to avoid.

• (Overuse of) “Thanks.”
• (Overuse of) “Like.”
• (Overuse of) Emojis and exclamation points.
• Endless clauses.
  – Interrupting your own thoughts with digressions.
  – Instead, consider using simple, declarative sentences.
• “Right?” “Does that make sense?”
• “Like.”
And just one more…

• “Yes.”
  – Remember, saying “no” to something is saying “yes” to something else.

This may be the most important one.
How do we talk about each other?

Women are:
• “Helpful”
• “Kind”

Men are:
• “Confident”
• “Outspoken”

– Rice University
How we talk about each other.

Queen Bee Syndrome
It’s not just our words.

• Competence is decided in a fraction of a second.
  – 7% words
  – 38% presentation
  – 55% body language.
  • (Stanford, Institute for Gender Research)
The double bind of communication and perception.

- We want to be powerful in our organizations.
- We want to be approachable in our organizations.
The body language of power.

To be perceived as authoritative:

– Expand your body.
– Use complete sentences.
– Maintain eye contact.
– Don’t monitor the responses of others.
  • (Stanford, Institute for Gender Research)
• Don’t smile too much.
• Don’t substitute a statement with a question.
  – Or make your sentences sound like questions?
  – (Also known as “uptalk.”)
• Learn to be OK with silence.
To be perceived as approachable:

- Maintain a tight, close body.
- Speak cautiously.
- Avoid direct eye contact.
- Smile and nod in agreement.
  - (Stanford, Institute for Gender Research)
Use your instincts.

Match your body language to your message or intention.

https://www.google.com/search?q=women's+body+language+workplace+image&client...
Demonstrating expertise.

• Expertise power comes through knowing how to use information.
• Expertise is a kind of power that women have a difficult time gaining.
  – We have the expertise—we just aren’t sure how to demonstrate that we do.
What can women do?

- Talk frequently and knowledgably. This increases the likelihood of being seen as an expert.
  - Don’t hold back. Talk *early* in the meeting.
- Be trustworthy.
- Amplify each other.
  - *Bropropriating*: Taking a woman’s idea and taking credit for it.
Madeleine Albright says:

• Learn to interrupt.
  – Know what you’re talking about when you do.
    • Engage in active listening. We listen differently if we think we are going to interrupt.

• Have a buddy.
  – Try to get more women in the meeting.
Practice assertive body language.

- Sit at the table.
- Point to someone.
- Stand up.
- Walk to the front of the room.
- Place your hand on the table.
- Lean in. Really.
- Practice “high power” poses.
  - Sheryl Sandberg, 2015
Play to your strengths.

- Ability to read body language and pick up nonverbal cues.
- Good listening skills.
- Effective display of empathy.
Mentor each other.

Find one; be one.

https://www.google.com/search?q=image+of+mentors&tbm=isch&imgil=...
“At a certain stage, you realize that it doesn’t matter what they call you. You have to overcome your personal qualms.” (New York Mag, 2015)
And one last thought.

• Support businesses with women leaders.

https://www.google.com/search?q=images+women+helping+women&client=safar%...
Now you go.

- Thoughts.
- Comments
- Questions.