Mars and Venus in the Workplace

A Practical Guide for Improving Communication and Getting Results at Work

Introduction

Now that more and more women are invading the workplace, the battle of the sexes has become more complex and more challenging. Common misunderstanding and miscommunication between men and women are triggering strings of confusion, conflict and frustration in companies all over the world.

*Mars and Venus in the Workplace* aims to improve communication and relationship skills in the workplace. It invites you to explore the different ways men and women can approach challenges. By heeding the lessons given in the book, you can learn how to “blend” differences to achieve a common goal and increase respect, acceptance, trust and success.

Men are from Mars and women are from Venus. Aside from being from different planets, men and women also speak different languages. Although the words may sound the same, the meaning can be completely different. This is where misinterpretation and miscommunication starts.

### Task-Oriented Vs. Relationship-Oriented

Men use communication to solve problems and to get things done. Often, men are viewed to be more competent than women because they use the least number of words needed to make a point. Women use communication for a variety of reasons.

These reasons include:

- solve problems,
- minimise stress,
- create emotional bonds,
- strengthen relationships,
- stimulate creativity, and
- discover new ideas.

Understanding this difference can lessen miscommunication and eliminate unnecessary hurt feelings.

### Sharing is from Venus, Grumbling is from Mars

Men and women relate differently to stress in the workplace and this affects the way they communicate. When under stress, men tend to *focus* more and as a result, men grumble when they are required to change their focus. Women, on the other hand, tend to *expand* more and may need to share their feelings when they are overwhelmed. Talking about problems, frustrations and disappointment is a way of releasing stress and tension for women. Women view talking as a bonding experience.
How Women Should Respond to Grumbling

If you are a woman, you must learn how to respond to grumbling men to avoid friction. Here are four tips to help you:

1. A woman should not back down or take back her request. Instead, a woman should simply listen and be appreciative.
2. A woman should never defend her request as this will only create more resistance. Instead, she should make the request using the least number of words possible.
3. A woman should not describe her problem in great detail. The woman should simply remain silent and allow the man to grumble for a while.
4. A woman should not become demanding as it might make a man more defensive.

More Tips Women Can Use to Get Their Points Across

1. Avoid using emotions to complain.
2. Avoid rhetorical questions.
3. Avoid cross examination.

Speaking Different Languages

Everything men do is a reflection of the qualities (power, competency, efficiency, action, achievement and accomplishment) they value the most. In the workplace, men are interested in achieving results and are not overly concerned with other people and feelings.

Men enjoy doing things by themselves because it is a way of proving their competence. They experience fulfilment when they are able to complete a difficult task. It is important to remember that offering unsolicited advice to men may seem offensive. This action may be perceived as an insult since it may seem as though the person offering help is implying that the man can't do it on his own or is confused on what to do. If a man needs help, he will ask for it. This way of thinking causes men to assume that whenever a woman comes up to talk to them or share their problems, the woman wants advice. A man does not realize that a woman merely wants to share her feelings.

On the other hand, women also strive for efficiency and achievement but also value qualities such as support, trust and communication. Women find fulfilment by sharing, collaborating and cooperating. The quality of communication and a positive work relationship and environment are two factors that female members of the workforce hold dear. For women, it is a sign of caring and consideration to offer help and assistance to another without being asked. This explains why women tend to give advice freely.

Six Tips for Giving Unsolicited Advice to a Man

1. Direct request are generally more readily received than suggestions and advice.
1. When making a request, use “would you” rather than “could you.”
2. State the simple facts and use the least amount of words.
3. Don't presume to know something he doesn't.
4. Don't presume that he needs help.
5. Don't assume that he is asking for your opinion.

Men and women approach problems and stress differently. When a man is faced with a problem, his immediate reaction is to retreat to his “cave” and solve it on his own. Women, on the other hand, reach out and talk about their problems. Men tend to be more assertive while women are collaborative.

**Problem Solving in Mars**

Independent action often earns greater respect and acknowledgment in Mars. Men first assess a problem by thinking about how he can solve it alone. When he can solve a problem on his own, he feels confident and has the energy to get things done. He will only ask for help if he feels that he needs it. Collaboration is not in his comfort zone.

**Men Go to Their Caves and Women Talk**

**Problem Solving in Venus**

In Venus, problem solving is a chance to demonstrate sharing, collaboration and cooperation. Women demonstrate respect and admiration by being inclusive of others in the process. Even if she has a solution to the problem, she needs the respect of her colleagues and wants them to be included in solving the problem.

**Coping with Stress in a Group**

When a team composed of men and women get together to solve a problem, stress in the workplace increases. Men need to understand and accept that sometimes the best approach is to let everyone talk. He can score points among his women co-workers by listening and being patient when women are offering suggestions. Women, on the other hand, will earn the respect of their male colleagues by going directly to the point.

Feelings are conveyed not only in words but also in gestures, facial expressions and tones. When done correctly and properly, it can increase cooperation and confidence in all levels of the workplace. Feelings are expressed differently by men and women. Men share positive feelings to build trust and respect. Women, on the other hand, share both positive and negative feelings to build relationships.

**Personal vs. Impersonal Feelings**

Most males automatically separate their personal feelings and express the non-personal ones. Women, however, filter out the impersonal feelings and freely express the personal ones. Here lies the basis for miscommunication. A man perceives personal feelings as blaming statements while a woman views impersonal feelings as blaming statements.

**Giving and Receiving Support**
Expressing personal feelings is a woman’s way of looking for support and giving it. It is a sign of readiness to trust another. She will appreciate reassurance during stressful times. A man appreciates encouragement. He loves being appreciated and cheered on. When under stress, women can offer support by giving comments that shows encouragement.

**Positive vs. Negative Feelings**

People will have greater confidence in you when you show confidence. When you feel good about yourself and your job, people around you will feel the same way too. Positive feelings attract positive feelings and motivate others to work better. Men hold back negative feelings because they believe that it is a sign of weakness. A man thinks that it is a show of professionalism when someone can do a job regardless of what he is feeling. A woman, on the other hand, will not find it offensive to express negative feelings. In fact, women view it as a sign of healthy self-esteem.

**Feelings in the Workplace**

A constant complain that women have against men is that men don't listen. The way men communicate gives women the impression that men are not hearing or validating their needs - and this is something that a woman would tend to take personally. While a man's clarity, focus and straight-to-the-point responses seem impressive to other men, women finds it frustrating and even offensive.

**Listening Tips for Men**

1. Do not rush to the point.
2. Ask more questions.
3. Do not interrupt a discussion with your solutions.
4. Listen to objections without interrupting.
5. Remember the things said and ask related questions.
6. Relate to feelings and hear out negative emotions.
7. Do not offer a solution right away.
8. Listen patiently to problems and complaints.

Men tend to follow unspoken rules that affirm their need for a competitive and impersonal workplace. For men, these rules affirm that his decisions and motivations are never personal. However, this is in direct opposition to the qualities valued by women. Women tend to follow a set of manners and customs that are nurturing and relationship oriented. In the ever changing workplace, to be more competitive, it is necessary to have a balance of Martian and Venusian rules, manners and values.

**Martian and Venusian Views on Winning**

The rules on Mars are very much like the rules in competitive sports where winning is the main goal. Men have a do-your-best and may-the-best-man-win mentality. As long as rules are followed, everything is fair and no one takes things personally. Women play by different rules. They want the others to win too. Sacrifice and unconditional giving are highly valued. For example, for women it is sometimes necessary to refer a client to
someone who is more qualified for their needs. The client will then remember that she cared for them and as a result support her more. Thus, the old “I win, you lose” mentality can sometimes be replaced by the “win-win” attitude. “Win-win” is a synthesis of the Martian and the Venusian values.

Equality in the Workplace

Even though equality of opportunity is readily available, there is no such thing as equality in the workplace. In a free economy, there are no free rides and each has to earn their way and place in the company. To gain respect in the work place, both men and women must earn it.

Why Men Don’t Listen... Or Do They?

How to Ask for Support and Get It

Women tend to ask for support in such a direct way that sometimes men fail to realise that their support is needed. Men, on the other hand, tend to be blunt and sound disrespectful. Women often think that they don’t have to ask directly for support because in their world, support is readily given. They mistakenly assume that men will also have the same woman’s intuition. By asking for support indirectly, women may lose support from men.

Below are 5 tips women can use to ask for support in a man's world:

1. Have appropriate timing. Be careful not to ask him to do something that he is obviously planning to do.
2. Have a non-demanding attitude. Men do not respond to a demand or an ultimatum.
3. Be brief. When asking for support, go directly to the point or problem.
4. Be direct.
5. Use correct words. Use “would” or “will” rather than “can” or “could.”

In a stressful situation, both men and women need a greater degree of emotional support. No matter how much a man tries to be supportive of a woman, she still needs female support. A man also feels more comfortable with other men.

Stress and Lost Productivity

Men and women react to stress differently. When a man does not get his emotional needs met, he will lose productivity by isolating himself. Increased aggressiveness and irritability are signs that a man is stressed out. When overly-stressed, a man has the tendency to blame others instead of being accountable for his mistakes and responsibilities.

Rules are from Mars, Manners are from Venus
Women become too open and feel increasingly overwhelmed when she is under stress. She loses productivity by feeling a greater need to talk about problems rather than solving them and tends to blame herself. This attitude increases her self-doubt and hinders her from assessing herself and her needs.

**Learning to Give Support**

There are essentially 12 emotional needs. Six of these needs are particularly appreciated by women under stress and men particularly appreciate the other six.

**Stress Busters for Women**

1. Caring
2. Understanding
3. Respect
4. Inclusion
5. Validation
6. Reassurance

**Stress Busters of Men**

1. Trust
2. Acceptance
3. Appreciation
4. Admiration
5. Acknowledgment
6. Encouragement

In work, you are rewarded based on the results you create. It is up to you to make sure that others are aware of your skills, talents and abilities. You must promote yourself whenever possible.

**The Perception of Power**

Competence is not enough, others must be aware of your skills, talent and competence. Both men and women must learn how to advertise their skills and competence effectively. Women should not hide the qualities and attributes that can generate respect from men. When a woman fails to actively promote herself, a man assumes that she doesn’t have anything to promote. She must learn to take credit for her work so that her competence will not be doubted by men. Men tend to build themselves too much and as a result are perceived to be arrogant and uncaring by women.
When taking credit for work done, stay humble and let the results speak for themselves. A wise and humble man (or woman) will build up the results and not himself. An example would be: “Yes, I did a great job. Mr. Parker was very happy with the results.”

Men and women score and measure their success in the workplace differently. A man measures his success in the workplace by his achievements. He scores big when he does something that demonstrates his competence and skill. A woman on the other hand, scores big by doing things that shows her caring, consideration, and dedication. Success is measured by consistency in gesture and not by how big it is.

There are many ways men can score points with women in the workplace. One way is to understand a woman’s need for reassurance. Men should talk and listen attentively to their female colleagues. Men should greet them personally when they arrive at the office. They should also notice when she is looking particularly good. Men should be aware of changes in her office and environment; and offer assistance and support. To score with men in the workplace, a woman must focus more on being productive.

**Standing Up and Standing Out.**

**Scoring Points in the Workplace**

**Author:** John Gray, Ph.D.

**Publisher:**

**Date of Publication:** 2001

**ISBN:**

**Number of Pages:** 320 pages

HarperCollins Publishers

0-06-019796-X