

Women's Job Search Alert: 7 ways to watch how you talk!

Getting ahead in the job marketplace . . . or on the job . . . is a special challenge for women. It shouldn't have to be that way. But, until the rules change, women have to learn to go with the flow to get ahead.

The good news is that, if you can master some simple communication skills, you can put yourself way ahead of the male competition. But, according to career coach Molly Dickinson Shepard, you have to learn to talk more like the male dominated management you're confronted with.

Essentially this means learning how to speak more assertively, she recommends. But without crossing the line into aggressiveness. Here are some rules that can help you make management sit up and pay attention:

1. Your tone and level of voice can make all the difference.
2. Don't challenge your boss or group leader in public. Don't embarrass colleagues and don't make personal attacks.
3. Never show anger at work.
4. Confident speech is good. Cocky is bad.
5. When you're in charge and a decision is yours, don't solicit everyone's opinion.
6. Women like to make everyone feel included. But men see this as passive and unleaderlike.
7. Don't allow yourself to feel wounded by words of criticism at work.

Effective communication is a critical factor in getting along and getting ahead on the job. Practicing these simple rules can give you a real leg up.

The same is true if you are looking for a new job. Many times you will be meeting face-to-face with a male decision-maker who has expectations about how you should communicate yourself. Once again, assertiveness rules.

To be assertive you have to be very clear about what you have going for you that will attract the attention of the decision-maker. And then you have to be able to tell him with confidence. It's worth practicing for.

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