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PROVIDING AN INDUSTRY ADVANTAGE FOR CPAS

**November 27, 2009**  
Volume 6, No. 11**ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT****Is Your Sales Team Creating Real Differentiation?**

To create a really successful sale, those responsible for closing the deal need to look at what is referred to as the customer life cycle. This includes the four steps of a customer's experience: shopping, buying, using and disposing. By looking at each of these areas from the customer's perspective, salespeople can identify opportunities to expand the product offering. In order to accomplish this, it is critical for the salesperson to create individualized customer value that competitors cannot match.

[Read More](#)**COMMUNICATIONS****The Introverted Leader: Thriving in the Extroverted Business World**

Introverted people have an uphill climb dealing in a marketplace crowded by extroverted people. Introversion is not a negative attribute; after all, leaders such as Bill Gates and Warren Buffet describe themselves as introverts along with a full 40 percent of other high-powered executives. Introversion is a key part of personality and includes being a deeper thinker. Still, in today's work environment, introverts must realign their approach in how they communicate ideas, manage projects and deal better with those who are more overbearing.

[Read More](#)**PRACTICAL MANAGEMENT****Three Benefits of Hiring Someone Overqualified**

Conventional wisdom in hiring practices is to never settle on a candidate who is overqualified. However, there are advantages when someone who holds a more senior position in prior employment comes in at a lower level: there is a

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shorter learning curve; new ideas and approaches can be recommended based on experience; and there is the opportunity to take on more responsibilities. While there are no guarantees in placing talent, hiring an overqualified candidate may yield just the type of dividends you were looking for all along.

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#### THE WORKPLACE

### Five Tips for Amazing Webinars and Web Meetings

Oh, the dreaded online meeting! Why do so many fear it and look for excuses to miss it? Because very few professionals know how to run effective and engaging online meetings. Those in attendance have either tuned out, or they are multi-tasking, including playing with their BlackBerries or surfing the Internet. Try innovative techniques that light up your charts and slide presentations; use the chat feature; and survey the attendees to get feedback for continuous improvement of meetings.

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#### COMMUNICATIONS

### He Said, She Said: Communicating Between Genders at Work

It's not a myth that men and women act differently, especially in the workplace. Approaches that men take and are comfortable with, women may find disturbing and offensive — and vice versa. The one way to overcome this vast difference in behavior and thought is to find the middle ground. The first step in achieving this is to avoid judging without having any understanding. Both sexes need to gain insight into one another before collaborating on finding that middle ground.

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November 27, 2009

*The Business Edge*[PRINT](#)**ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

## Is Your Sales Team Creating Real Differentiation?

By Tom Roth

To avoid the pitfalls of competing on price, salespeople are often told they need to “sell the value.” Another strategy is to “value-add,” by offering the customer extra services or product features without charge. While these strategies can be effective short-term, neither of these approaches produces a sustainable advantage. Selling the value implies that the salesperson either truly understands what the customer values, or that the value offered is perceived as significantly different from the competing offerings. All too often, neither one of these is true. At the same time, a value-add strategy has its own drawbacks. While it may sometimes win a sale, it produces customer expectations of “free-stuff.” It also erodes margins and may be easy for the competitor to match.

Salespeople rely on these strategies, ineffective as they often are, because they find it difficult to achieve genuine differentiation based on something the customer values, and which is hard for the competition to replicate. However, suppose a salesperson was able to create a highly differentiated offering that provides real value competitors can't copy because it is unique to the customer. The secret to accomplishing this lies in going beyond features and services that are easily commoditized, and developing what Ted Levitt called “the potential offering” in his book, [The Marketing Imagination](#). Salespeople can achieve this kind of differentiation by looking beyond their product to all aspects of the customer's *experience* across the whole process of buying and using a product or service.

The *customer life cycle (CLC)*, as it is sometimes called, provides a lens for understanding the experience at four critical phases: from identifying the solution, until disposing of the product at the end of its useful life. Each phase offers an opportunity for an innovative salesperson to find sources of differentiation.

1. *Shopping*. Identifying the right solution and vendor options, establishing buying criteria, and making initial screening decisions.
2. *Buying*. Bringing a product or service through the process of contracting, financing, and paying, and receiving supplies and equipment.
3. *Usage*. Installing and using the solution.
4. *Disposal*. Upgrading, recycling, discarding and replacing.

## The Customer Life Cycle

The four steps below are typical of the customer's experience with a product or solution.

By looking at each of these areas from the customer's perspective, salespeople can identify opportunities to expand the offering. This may involve providing additional services or add-ons as part of the solution, or offering options that add value and generate benefits the customer can't get elsewhere.

In the **shopping** phase, for example, there is great variability in how efficiently companies go about sourcing suppliers and alternative solutions, and how clearly and accurately they are able to define their search criteria. Suppliers can help by making their products and services easy to find and understand; providing tools and expertise to help the decision makers clarify technology and other requirements; and assisting with criteria to select a vendor.

The **buying** phase is usually overlooked by salespeople, who focus on their own company's policies around contracts and agreements rather than on the needs of the customer. By better understanding how the customer buys, a sales organization can help the customer solve problems — offering leasing and financing options, for example, or helping the customer with elements of the purchase, such as taking delivery of equipment or supplies.

**Example:** *A salesperson selling janitorial and sanitation products to a group of hospitals came up with the idea of using a system similar to the one used for reordering pharmaceuticals: to automatically reorder the janitorial products as they were being used up.*

Although **usage** and implementation are where most companies consciously add value to the offering, few look beyond initial installation and conventional service contracts. This is an area where innovation and in-depth understanding of the customer's priorities and business processes can produce creative ideas for offering benefits unique to the customer.

**Example:** *A salesperson working with a large distribution company helped it increase the efficiency of its warehouse operations by bringing in an expert from her own company to change the way products were being coded.*

By the time the customer reaches the **disposal** phase of the life cycle—depending on the product or service—the salesperson may be long gone. Today, there are many new opportunities for companies to differentiate themselves. Companies are beginning to emphasize recycling and

reusing as “green” becomes a corporate value and goal. Salespeople can look for ways to help companies that must discard equipment or byproducts, provide options for recycling, or reuse a part or all of the product/equipment.

**Example:** *A salesperson for a company that sells paper products developed an innovative way to help his company's customers recycle used office paper, helping to increase sales and customer loyalty. Another company provided a way for its customers to dispose of empty containers for one of its products that came in the form of an aerosol spray.*

In a world where it is very easy for competitors to quickly duplicate even the most unique product features, it is still possible for a supplier to create differentiation by offering individualized customer value competitors can't easily provide. To help ensure your salespeople are expanding the full potential value of your offering for each customer, ask yourself whether they are looking in the right places — across the full range of the customer's experience with your company, products, and services.

### Quiz

Is your company reaching “full potential” value for customers?

1. We make it easy for prospective customers to find us and understand our products and services.	Y	N
2. We have the capability to offer expertise, tools, and other assistance to help customers determine their criteria for a good solution, and which solutions best fit their situation.	Y	N
3. We offer various approaches for customers to acquire our products and services, such as different payment options, leasing, financing, etc.	Y	N
4. We can and do help customers with logistics and other issues related to receiving our products and services.	Y	N
5. We provide flexible options for support and assistance to customers in installing, implementing and using our products and services.	Y	N
6. We have a range of options available to help customers recycle, reuse and reduce waste; and upgrade and dispose of our products at the end of their useful life.	Y	N

If you answered **yes** to all six questions, congratulations on meeting the

criteria for creating a differentiated offering for your customers. You may, however, want to ask yourself whether all your salespeople are consciously applying a CLC strategy and are maximizing the potential for every customer.

If you answered **no** to all or most of the questions, you might want to raise your sales team's awareness of the possibilities offered by a CLC analysis and begin to ask team members to explore how to create better company differentiation by finding opportunities at each stage of the CLC.

If your answers were half and half, analyze the questions to which you answered **no**, and identify where you may be missing additional opportunities at some stages of the CLC. Explore possibilities with your team, and raise its awareness of the value of looking across all four phases for differentiation opportunities.

#### **About the Author**

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November 27, 2009

*The Business Edge*[PRINT](#)**COMMUNICATIONS**

## The Introverted Leader: Thriving in the Extroverted Business World

By Jennifer B. Kahnweiler

In today's extroverted business world, introverts can feel ignored, overlooked and misunderstood. In fact, according to my research—a two-and-a-half year national study of introverted professionals—four out of five introverts say extroverts are more likely to get ahead in their workplace. What's more, over 40 percent say they would like to change their introverted tendencies, but don't know how or where to begin.

The *good* news? Introversion can be managed. There is no one-size-fits-all strategy, but with time and practice, introverted pros can learn to build on their quiet strength and succeed.

### What is Introversion, Anyway?

Introverts may be less noisy at work, but by all accounts they outnumber extroverts. Even many high-powered executives—a full 40 percent—describe themselves as introverts, including Microsoft's Bill Gates and uber-investor Warren Buffett. Odds are President Obama is also an introvert. *But what is introversion, anyway?*

Unlike *shyness*, a product of anxiety or fear in social settings, introversion is a key part of personality—a hardwired orientation—and may be best defined by several characteristic behaviors. Introverts process information internally, keep personal matters private, and avoid showing emotion. Other defining behaviors:

- **Seek solitude.** Introverts need and want to spend time alone. They often suffer from people exhaustion and must retreat to recharge their batteries. At work, they prefer quiet, private spaces and like to handle projects on their own or with a small group.
- **Think first, talk later.** Introverts think before they speak. Even in casual watercooler chats, they consider others' comments carefully, and pause and reflect before responding. They dislike interruptions, especially when they are thinking things through.
- **Focus on depth.** Introverts seek depth over breadth. They like to dig deep —delving into issues and ideas before moving on to new

ones. They are drawn to meaningful conversations—not superficial chit-chat—and know how to tune in and listen to others.

- **Let their fingers do the talking.** Introverts prefer writing to talking. On the job, they opt for e-mail over the telephone and stop by only when necessary. Averse to excessive conversation, many gravitate toward social networking Web sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.
- **Exhibit calmness.** Introverts are usually quiet, reserved and low-key. Unlike extroverts, they have no desire to be the center of attention; instead, they prefer to fly below the radar. Even in heated conversations or circumstances, they tend to stay calm—at least on the outside—and speak softly and slowly.

### The Hard Realities

“It’s not easy being green,” laments the Muppet, Kermit the Frog. Same goes for being introverted in an extroverted business culture. With their appetite for talk and attention, extroverts dominate the workplace. Meanwhile, introverts—with their quiet smarts and unsung successes—sit on the professional sidelines. Some hard realities faced by introverted pros:

- **People exhaustion.** Introverts can experience an assortment of ailments at work—headaches, backaches, stomach aches, and more—yet feel fine off the job. This mind-body response to stress can result from a wide range of factors. The chief culprit: people exhaustion.
- **Project overload.** Introverts tend to have difficulty saying no and find it equally hard to ask for help or direction. As a result, they frequently feel overloaded with projects and deadlines — hurting their on-the-job performance and work-life balance.
- **Underselling.** Introverts typically stay mum about their accomplishments —seeming to abide by the old Southern adage, “Don’t brag on yourself.” Yet today, careers are made or broken by what others know about a person’s skills and potential. Introverts, therefore, can miss out on promotions or plum assignments simply because they don’t sell themselves.
- **Unheard ideas.** Introverts often have great ideas that go unheard. In group settings, they may show up with smart solutions, yet can’t seem to find an opening in which to share them. Even in one-on-one conversations—especially with talkers—they have trouble interjecting their ideas and being heard.

- **Failure to “play the game.”** Introverts routinely retreat from office politics. Sure, politics can be nasty, but much of the game is natural and necessary, particularly for building relationships up and down an organization. Introverts, with their desire to be low-key, often fail to sniff out important politicking opportunities and wind up watching their extroverted colleagues get ahead.

## Onward and Upward

There is no magic bullet for managing your introversion. But in today's noisy business world and workplace, you can learn how to thrive. The goal is not changing your personality or natural work style, but embracing and expanding who you are. As an ongoing framework, follow the “4 P's”:

1. Preparation - devising game plans
2. Presence - focusing on the moment
3. Push - stretching and growing
4. Practice - rehearsing and refining new skills

Here are seven practical tips for getting started:

**1. Have a game plan.** Rather than wing it on the people part of your job, have a game plan. Prepare for high-stakes meetings and conversations — anticipating questions and rehearsing your responses. Fact is, just as you strategize for key projects and tasks, you need to plan ahead for connecting with people and take regular timeouts to refuel your energy.

**2. Communicate early and often.** It's easy for introverts to be out of sight and out of mind. So take the initiative in sharing information — communicating early and often with higher-ups, team members, and project stakeholders. Don't wait to be asked for updates or news about your accomplishments. Find out what people need to feel confident in you and provide it to them ahead of time.

**3. Match the medium to the message.** Resist the temptation to hide behind e-mail. It may appear to be the easiest or safest channel, but it's not always the right one. For every exchange, match the medium to the message — determining if texting, e-mail, phone, or face-to-face is best. Texting and e-mail may be great for quick exchanges, but they miss the mark in critical high-touch areas, including developing relationships and delivering difficult news.

**4. Use social networking to set the stage.** Technology is a great tool for preparing to meet people. Use social networking Web

sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter to set the stage for connecting with others in person at meetings and events. You can introduce yourself, send “news you can use” items, and warm up cold leads, all in a low-key yet friendly way.

**5. Get your voice in the room.** Without delay, speak up in meetings and conference calls. Try to make your first comment no more than five minutes into the session. Even a quick question, remark, or paraphrase will do. You need to be seen as a contributor, but the longer you wait, the harder it becomes.

**6. Stand up to “talkers.”** Don’t be afraid to take on the talkers in group or one-on-one settings. There are several ways to stand up and get a word in edgewise. One simple, sure-fire strategy: hold up your hand, give the stop or timeout signal, and calmly announce, “I’d like to say something.”

**7. Value humor.** “A smile is the shortest distance between two people,” mused entertainer Victor Borge. As a reserved, inner-focused contributor, you can overcome perceptions of being standoffish or too serious by smiling, laughing, and having fun now and then. You need not “yuk it up”; just be good-humored.

Finally, *practice, practice, practice*. Learning new skills and behaviors may be uncomfortable at first, but with conscious repetition and refinement, you can manage your introversion and thrive in the extroverted business world.

### **About the Author**

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November 27, 2009

*The Business Edge*[PRINT](#)**PRACTICAL MANAGEMENT**

## Three Benefits of Hiring Someone Overqualified

By Dwain Celistan

In the marketplace—especially today—there is a wide range of candidates for open positions. As an executive recruiter and coach, I have witnessed candidates that are “overqualified” for a particular role. Often, these candidates are not included in the pool or seriously considered by companies. This is a missed opportunity.

Potential candidates may appear to be overqualified based on the position requirements. Being overqualified may relate to the amount of experience, education, credentials possessed, prior level of compensation, or holding a more senior role or title. For purposes of this discussion, we will consider the overqualified candidate as someone who has had a larger role/title.

Regardless of why someone would pursue a position, there are three key benefits of hiring someone who is overqualified:

- 1. Overqualified candidates usually have the technical capabilities to “do the job” immediately.** If they have had these responsibilities in a prior role, they can usually come into the role and quickly add value. Their learning curve is short and they have many ideas on how to do the job efficiently and effectively.
- 2. These candidates add value beyond the role.** These overqualified professionals tend to approach their jobs differently. They can think beyond the role and see other issues and possibilities. Their breadth of knowledge enables them to provide a broader perspective to the role and, therefore, its influence on other stakeholders.
- 3. They provide built-in bench strength to the organization.** Since overqualified employees previously had a larger role, they have an ability to expand their responsibilities. The risk is lower that they will be unable to make the adjustment required.

There are no absolutes in the process of sourcing and placing talent. It does appear that the benefits of hiring someone overqualified are prematurely minimized by phantom risks.

In one role, I hired Bruce as a director despite prior roles as a vice

president. Conventional wisdom would suggest that he be dismissed as a candidate. Nonetheless, he was the best candidate of the pool and he joined my team.

Bruce had a great attitude and was quickly able to handle the responsibilities. More important, he added value well beyond his required duties and was also a great resource for me as his supervisor. Finally, when I left my role, he proved qualified and prepared to advance to the more senior role.

While every situation may not be ideal, hiring authorities should strongly consider "overqualified" candidates. They may prove to be huge, unexpected assets to your organization.

### **About the Author**

*Dwain Celistan is the Career Acceleration Coach, executive recruiter, former corporate executive and author of "5 Simple Steps to Achieving Your Dreams" and "You're Hired." Interested readers may contact Dwain at [dwain@reinvent2achieve.com](mailto:dwain@reinvent2achieve.com).*

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November 27, 2009

*The Business Edge*[PRINT](#)**THE WORKPLACE**

## Five Tips for Amazing Webinars and Web Meetings

By Mike Song, Tim Burress, and Vicki Halsey

Companies everywhere are turning to virtual meetings to slash travel costs, go “green,” and get more done. The drivers behind this include the economic meltdown, rising environmental concerns, growing apprehension about global pandemics and traveling to high crime-rate countries — and not the least of it, is the ever-increasing need to boost productivity and save money.

The only problem is that most professionals have no idea how to run effective and engaging online meetings. According to a new survey conducted by [infoexcellence.com](http://infoexcellence.com), two-thirds of all workers say that virtual meetings are boring and plagued by technical difficulties. As a result, meeting productivity plummets as attendees tune out, surf the web, do e-mail, or play with their BlackBerries.

Many professionals are left wondering, *Why meet if no one's paying attention?*

### Five Tips for Amazing Virtual Meetings

Virtual meetings, when effectively run, can be a boon to productivity and your bottom line. Here are five cutting-edge ideas you can implement today to keep your attendees engaged:

**1. Turn on the Lights!** A teleconference is like meeting in the dark. No visuals = *boring!* Help participants see the light by upgrading dismal phone meetings to colorful web conferences. Use charts, slide presentations, and compelling photos to build interest and make your point.

**Quick Tip:** Look for ways to incorporate team photos into your virtual meetings in order to create a stronger bond with participants. For example, place a professional-looking headshot of yourself on the cover slide of your next virtual presentation.

**2. Champion the Chat Feature.** Invite participants to make frequent use of the public chat feature to provide insights, feedback, and even jokes. While you might think this would *distract* participants, it actually *rivets* them. Tech-savvy Generation Y colleagues love to leverage chat to communicate and probe for

important information. Chat also cuts meeting time because the speaker doesn't need to be interrupted every time someone wants to make a point. Use chat early in your next meeting to send the message: participants should focus and contribute because their opinion matters.

**Quick Tip:** Use the chat feature as a rapid polling tool and ideas generator. For example, ask participants to list the single biggest obstacle to getting more done on the job.

**3. Become a Screen Writer.** Your audience will be more engaged if the screen is alive with movement and color. Practice using web conferencing tools that allow you to draw or type on the web meeting screen to highlight key points.

**Quick Tip:** The next time you display a document reflecting a co-worker's great work, draw a smiley face or A+ on the screen.

**4. Survey the Crowd.** Web meeting surveys are easy to create, make meetings fun, and yield a ton of useful information. Impress and engage your colleagues with a few very thoughtful survey questions during your next virtual meeting. You can create multiple choice questions specific to the meeting's purpose or general questions like this:

What would make our meetings more effective?

- a) Start and end on time
- b) Better preparation
- c) Stay on course
- d) Complete all action items

**Quick Tip:** Create an open-ended ice-breaking question that you can use with early participants to test the survey tool and build your confidence. For example: Who will win the big game tonight?

**5. Avoid Tech Disasters.** Avoid technical glitches by being prepared. Create a "Tech Glitch Cheat Sheet" that lists key features, simple fixes, and support and account information for all virtual meeting technology. For example, include instructions on how to mute all phone lines. This is useful when a knuckle-headed participant puts you on hold, forcing everyone to listen to the extended version of Barry Manilow's *Copacabana!*

Have your cheat sheet by your side whenever you launch a virtual meeting and you'll be able to overcome technical glitches gracefully.

**Quick Tip:** You can download a free cheat sheet template at:  
<http://www.infoexcellence.com/icfreelessons.htm>.

Become a virtual meeting virtuoso, and your coworkers, colleagues, and clients will be happy—and even inspired—to participate at a higher and more meaningful level.

### **About the Authors**

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November 27, 2009

*The Business Edge*[PRINT](#)**COMMUNICATIONS****He Said, She Said: Communicating Between Genders at Work**

By Beth Banks Cohn and Roz Usheroff

If you think it's difficult to discern what your spouse or significant other is really trying to say to you, consider how complicated communication between genders gets when you throw office politics, power struggles, and work challenges into the mix.

At work, men and women use strategies in communicating with each other that the opposite sex may view negatively. Often, misunderstandings can be avoided when coworkers look beyond personalities and consider the different ways men and women communicate.

Let's look at a few examples from both sides.

**Men's Behavior**

Consider the following behaviors by men, how women respond and how a common ground can be reached.

**Trash Talk.** Men use negative banter, joking, teasing, and playful putdowns as a way to subtly keep themselves at the top of the power hierarchy. Such "trash talking" is a common component of male relationships.

***What women think:*** Making others feel small is decidedly not a female trait. Women tend to see putdowns as arrogant or hostile.

***The middle ground:*** In general, trash talk is usually harmless, as long as both parties "play." When both parties engage in it, it can even be a way to bond around a problem, such as a trying work assignment or demanding sales quotas.

**Prideful Self-sufficiency.** You've heard the jokes about men not asking for directions? In work settings, males sometimes ask few questions, fearing that doing so will communicate to others that they don't know something. Males tend to equate knowledge with power and don't want to diminish their image by showing they lack the necessary know-how.

***What women think:*** Women see this behavior as childish, and even arrogant. They also look at it as a giant waste of time, figuring it is more efficient to ask a question, get the answer, and

move on.

***The middle ground:*** Some workplace cultures discourage questions, and indeed make people feel self-conscious about asking too many. In meetings or other settings where everyone needs to be on the same page in order to develop the best strategy, both genders need to find ways to give and get clarification.

**Not Giving Feedback.** Because men don't solicit feedback, good or bad, they also don't give feedback in return. Males don't want to be criticized, feel that compliments make someone less effective, and think women who seek feedback are "needy" and "high maintenance."

***What women think:*** Women think men don't value their contributions, and are overly critical. They may even feel that men withhold positive feedback in order to avoid giving women promotions or good projects.

***The middle ground:*** Constructive feedback should be built into the workplace culture. Both genders need to find a way to make it a tool for improving performance and productivity.

## **Women's Behavior**

Now view different behaviors by women, how men may respond and how a common ground can be reached.

**Equality-minded.** Women try to maintain an appearance of equality amongst everyone. They are concerned with the effect of the exchange on the other person, and want to make sure everyone feels like a worthy contributor.

***What men think:*** Men tend to see this as a sign that women lack confidence and competence as leaders. They feel it makes women look weak.

***The middle ground:*** Females can wield an enormous amount of power by orchestrating collaboration and enlisting the cooperation between many parties. Men can learn from this. Nevertheless, women in leadership positions need to maintain a clear boundary between their own authority and the authority of others.

**Outside-in Negotiating.** Females want to see the full picture and make sure everyone's on the same page with the same level of understanding before making a decision.

***What men think:*** Since this is the exact opposite of what men typically do, men think this tactic means women don't have a clear position or aren't decisive enough.

***The middle ground:*** In negotiations, it's imperative to know all

the factors involved before making a decision. On the other hand, trying to make everyone happy is not how leaders make good decisions. A balanced blend of female thoroughness and male decisiveness is ideal.

**Likely to Downplay Certainty.** Women don't want to appear pushy or uncaring of others' positions or ideas.

***What men think:*** Men think, therefore, that women aren't certain and need someone to take charge.

***The middle ground:*** Moderate self-deprecation and humility are good qualities in leaders. But always deferring to others' opinions and perspectives will be perceived as a sign of weakness. Find a middle ground.

When it comes to communicating between genders in the workplace, the cardinal rule is this: *Don't judge*. Instead, try to look carefully at your coworker's behavior, consider that some of it may be gender-based, and try to gain insight on how this behavior serves or does not serve his or her objectives. If you want to step in and give support, do it from a position of understanding.

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