

Sexual Synergy

One challenge for today's modern manager is to effectively lead a team of both men and women, and with more women in the workforce every year, creating better relationships between the sexes is now more important than ever before.

Create team synergies to deliver better results

The benefits of a mixed gender work team are enormous. Pairing men and women together means you will get vastly different perspectives on many issues and challenges relating to your business. These different perspectives give you an insight into the minds of more of your customers or clients.

Consider a team of only men working in a service industry. While they may be excellent at delivering the actual service, they may overlook the small talk and relationship building so important to many of their female clients. On the other hand, a team of only women may lose their male clients by spending too much time building a relationship. In this instance, men are likely to feel their time is being wasted and that women are not up to the task of delivering the service.

The task orientation of men means that they will focus intensely on the bottom line and achieving the best result. Women are relationship oriented and will build the relationships and loyalty that will keep your clients coming back. When combined these two approaches are very powerful.

As well as men and women having different skills to offer to clients, when working together they can also enhance each other's problem solving abilities and productivity. If they work well together both will experience greater satisfaction,

which will ultimately translate into better bottom line results.

However, while there are many benefits of mixed gender work teams, they are not without their challenges.

Dealing with stress and conflict

The different ways that men and women cope with stress in business is a common source of conflict. When under stress, men tend to focus more and work alone to solve a problem. Women, on the other hand, expand more, talk more and include others in the process.

Men and women need to understand the ways that each other cope with stress to avoid it being a source of great frustration. Without this understanding, stressful situations are often made much worse by aggravating each other.

By helping team members improve their understanding of each other

- rather than making generalisations about men and women, which bring no solutions - they will work more happily together and therefore be more productive.

Men often complain that women ask too many questions and are always trying to change things. Women often complain that men don't listen and are always offering solutions straight away. By understanding what the opposite sex is looking for a team can work more efficiently together in the problem solving process, rather than irritating each other and aborting the process before coming

up with a range of solutions.

Stress often increases when a group of men and women get together to discuss a problem. As the women continue to explore the problem through sharing and listening, they are better able to cope with the stress. The men, however, need to feel as if something is being done or accomplished, otherwise they become impatient.

For women dealing with men, it is best to talk less about the problem and more about the solution. And men need to accept that sometimes the best solution is to let everyone talk for a while. If men and women understand each other better then this process of problem solving will produce much greater results and this will benefit any business.

A team of men and women who have a bond that goes beyond purely business conversations are bound to be a more cohesive and productive team. Expressing emotions in the workplace is fraught with minefields as the approaches of men and women differ but by creating an environment where both genders can create a personal relationship, your team will see the results. Men can create this bond by offering a woman reassurance when she is seeking it. A woman in turn can improve her relationship with a male team member by offering encouragement, not reassurance, as this can be interpreted as a lack of trust by a man.

A synthesis of male and female values in the workplace is the secret to creativity and progress, which is why men and women working together will achieve more.

Stay tuned for my next column where I will discuss techniques for selling to women and men.



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