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# THE EDGE

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The American Society of  
Women Accountants

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# You Say Potāto

I've always been fascinated by words, both spoken and written, which may explain in a large part why I chose journalism for my career. Growing up, I could lose myself for hours in a good book, and still could as an adult as well if those nasty responsibilities of daily life didn't keep getting in the way.

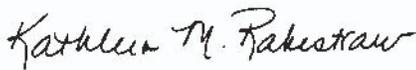
When I was in college at the University of Missouri, it was one of my first experiences in interacting regularly with people from a different part of the country. Granted, central Missouri isn't all that far away from northern Illinois, where I grew up, but when it comes to words sprinkled throughout conversations, it sometimes seemed a world away. And you haven't heard arguments until you've heard college students from St. Louis arguing with college students from Kansas City about soda vs. pop or Missouri-ee vs. Missouri-uh. (I must admit, I still get into semi-heated discussions with both my dad and my mother-in-law about that one, and I'm not even from Missouri. And let's not even talk about those people who insist on pronouncing the "s" on the end of Illinois.)

The more I learned about regional differences in the English language, the more intrigued I became. Grinder vs. hoagie vs. sub. Fixin' to vs. going to. BAR-ette vs. BUR-ette (yep, I'm still arguing that one too). On a trip to England in my early 30s, I spent a wholly enjoyable evening with some friends discussing pants vs. trousers. Undershirts vs. vests. Oh, and warm beer vs. icy cold beer too. (Not a communication difference so much as an imperative fact of life.)

And I have a cousin in Illinois who tells a fascinating story about the "Great Vowel Shift." While in college, one of her English professors asked all the women in the class to say a particular sentence out loud. He then lined them up in "geographical order," starting with the ones he believed grew up closest to Chicago working his way west, based solely on how they pronounced the vowels in that particular sentence. And darned if he didn't get them all exactly right.

With language differences like these, it's amazing that any of us can understand the true meaning and intention behind what another person says.

This issue of *The Edge* takes a look at a number of communication-related issues you'll confront on a daily basis, both at work and home: Body language, male vs. female communication styles, public speaking and female rainmakers. We hope you'll enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed putting it together. We can't promise that you'll know the difference between stuffing and dressing, bags and sacks or pocketbooks and purses when you're done, but we can promise that you'll learn something.



Kathleen M. Rakestraw

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Gale Crosley, CPA

# Rainmaking For Women CPAs

Over the past 20 years, the number of women entering the accounting profession has grown to 56 percent. Their entry into the partner and leadership ranks has not mirrored this progress, in part because their rainmaking skills have not evolved as fast. What's held them back, and how can they catch up?

I don't often share the story of how I came to appreciate rainmaking, but I think my experience and reactions will resonate with those of other women. It starts in college where I fell in love – with professional accounting. I was delighted to join a Big 8 firm as an auditor following graduation. I worked hard, and my work was well-received. I had a natural curiosity for the client's business. This led to questions and discussions with clients. However, if the (always male) senior felt I had too much interaction or communication with my clients, I would be gently reprimanded. I'd receive a figurative slap on the head and would be counseled to get my head back into the general ledger where it belonged.

GET OUT THE UMBRELLAS; WOMEN ARE MAKING RAIN. LEARN HOW YOU, TOO, CAN BECOME A TOP SELLER AND BOOK EVEN MORE BUSINESS.

But, curious young thing that I was, I found myself wanting to do what the partners were doing. I may not have known the term at the time, but they were making rain – and getting wet looked like fun to me.

Ironically, however, I was soon successfully lured away from the firm by some persuasive recruiters from IBM. “We think you can sell,” I was told. Failing to make the connection between what those Big 8 partners were doing and sales of computer systems, I indignantly replied, “*Moi...*a salesperson? I’m a professional.” Beyond what appeared to be an obvious drop in the social pecking order, I simply couldn’t imagine myself selling. My perception of a sales force was of a group of fast-talking, party-loving folk who spent their time convincing people they needed products and services they in fact did not need. I, on the other hand, was authentic – the nose-to-the-grindstone auditor and former straight-A student my sorority sisters were always trying to lure out of the library and into the bars.

To make a long story short, Big Blue took me under its protective training wing, and a year later I emerged, a *bona fide* salesperson. Perhaps more important than the skills I gained was the understanding and respect I cultivated for the art and science of selling. I learned that the sophisticated selling of professional services is all about identifying needs and creatively solving problems.

I was part of one of IBM’s first classes of women to sell computerized accounting systems. Before that, Big Blue believed women couldn’t, or shouldn’t, sell anything more complicated than a typewriter. Our task was to sell solutions to corporate America’s most demanding C-level clients. An internal culture shift paved the way. IBM expanded its expectations and, armed with training and a sense of our potential, we responded. They built it, and we came.

## Understanding the Environment

Despite breakthrough opportunities for me and other women, large-scale progress in accounting toward partnership and senior rainmaker status hasn’t been consistent with that of our male counterparts. The hurdles, including many that have faced women for decades, have not yet been cleared. A primary reason for the delay is that women have not been environmentally supported. Unlike my fortunate enclave at IBM, women haven’t been encouraged to perceive themselves as equally capable of rainmaking as men. The rub is that as women become managers and partners, they will be expected to make rain, plain and simple. But our skills and experience are not yet there.

Connecting this disconnect is critical to advancing more women to the partner ranks. Without the essential skills of rainmaking and leadership, women simply can’t obtain the top jobs.

In my mind, the most persistent obstacle – the one Big Blue moved most of 30 years ago – is the cultural bias. It is a frame of reference that must be discarded and replaced by an inclusive approach. But the bias isn’t merely cultural. For many women, it is personal and involves their own notions about who does what in our society. This is further complicated by the hesitation some women feel in approaching men. They’re unsure how the male/female dynamic plays into the activity of selling to usually male buyers. Being the “aggressor” or “instigator” still isn’t a comfortable role for many women. I’m often

## CREATE YOUR CURRICULUM

Don’t be constrained by the fact that you didn’t learn rainmaking in school. No one else did either. Take the opportunity to develop your own learning plan, and follow these tips:

Pursue training classes such those offered by Troy Waugh’s Rainmaker Academy, Jeff Pawlow’s The Growth Partnership or Crosley+Company’s Relationship Building Skills.

Make a systematic study of rainmaking by assigning yourself books including: “Integrity Selling for the 21st Century” by Ron Willingham, “Rain Making” by Ford Harding, “Power up Your Prophets” by Troy Waugh and “I Hate Selling” by Allan Boress.

Apprentice yourself to a rainmaker you admire in your firm. Accompany him or her on calls, and learn about the strategy and the preparation involved. Ideally, select two rainmakers with different styles and approaches to learn from.

Find a partner who, like you, wants to learn rainmaking. Become each other’s advocate and conscience for accountability. Role play the sales calls, and thoughtfully critique one another.

asked, "If I call on a man, will he think I'm asking him out with a nonbusiness agenda?"

Another significant obstacle is the fact that accounting education doesn't teach people to sell. Whereas men may be more likely to acquire these skills on the job, women must pursue them more deliberately. Other women are held back by a concern that rainmaking means never coming in out of the rain. They worry that becoming a rainmaker means they will be away from their homes and families five nights a week.

## The Challenge of Change

How, then do we begin to sidestep and overcome these obstacles? We do so with an understanding that rainmakers are developed not born. It's true that some people are naturally equipped with useful skills, such as being good listeners or creative thinkers. But these skills and others required can be taught and learned. We also move forward with the comforting recognition that women have natural talents that make them exceptional rainmakers. Consider the following:

- Women are natural problem solvers, accustomed to being thrown into complex scenarios and playing multiple roles.
- Women commonly exhibit empathy and an ability to understand what others are experiencing, which is the core of successful selling.
- Women are expert communicators.

Let's address some practical solutions to these challenges. The breakthrough often involves changing one's self-perception and rebuffing cultural and personal constraints. For example, I advise women uneasy with taking the lead to crawl before they walk. Call a prospect and suggest visiting the office or perhaps having breakfast if dinner seems too uncomfortable. The more calls you makes, the greater the comfort level will become. If a male prospect misreads your intentions or invents his own, be prepared to firmly and diplomatically respond. Challenges like these sometimes come with the territory. But the world won't end. Deal with it, and press forward.

I also advise women new to the rainmaking game initially to avoid situations that involve spouses or partners. It's hard enough to handle one interaction; involving two additional people can be unnecessarily tricky for a novice. However, as your skills increase, including spouses in business-social settings is not only acceptable but valuable. Many of my best clients through the years became my husband's

business friends – a great advantage.

Another significant confidence-builder for women is focus. Take the time to develop a game plan within your firm regarding the book of business you wish to pursue. Become expert in it, then take it out on the road. If your goal is to attract high-net-worth individuals, join a country club. If you're targeting contractors, join the associations they join, and learn their issues. Don't hesitate to make initial meetings research rather than sales calls. Ask questions and learn about the environment these prospects inhabit before any selling occurs.

## Holding Onto Your Life

As for the concern of many women that becoming a rainmaker will wreak havoc on their home lives, think again. Work smarter, not longer. Find "big bang for the buck" opportunities such as focused, one-on-one breakfasts and lunches rather than spending time schmoozing at cocktail parties.

I have a husband, two teenagers, a cat, two birds and a fish, and I have made significant rain without ever devoting five nights a week to building business. But don't get me wrong. You'll rarely find me having lunch with a girlfriend; I use my daylight sales opportunities to the fullest.

Once I realized what a creative, satisfying endeavor selling can be and once I gained the training I needed, my comfort level soared, and success followed. Ultimately, I learned that being different, which is still the case for women rainmakers, is a powerful tool in the marketplace.

Today, I am still thrilled when I see a woman rainmaker operating at the top of her game. It means she's worked hard against cultural bias, personal constraints and other obstacles to get where she knew she belonged.

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Gale Crosley, CPA, is founder and principal of Crosley + Company and consults with CPA firms on practice growth issues and opportunities. Her background includes a unique mix of experience with two national CPA firms and nearly 30 years in business development and senior management. She has been responsible for developing high-performance rainmaking organizations, bringing more than 30 offerings to market and closing dozens of multimillion-dollar and smaller opportunities. For more information, visit [www.crosleycompany.com](http://www.crosleycompany.com) or contact her at [gcrosley@crosleycompany.com](mailto:gcrosley@crosleycompany.com). Copyright 2005 by Crosley + Company



WORK SMARTER,  
NOT LONGER.



# Communicating with Men at Work

Ellen was near tears when she called for help. She had recently landed her dream job at a large marketing firm. From day one, however, the friction between Ellen and her co-worker, Marty, was sapping all the joy out of her new position. Although they were supposed to collaborate on projects, Ellen told us this was nearly impossible because Marty was dismissive of her ideas and claimed credit for campaigns they developed collaboratively.

The breaking point came during their last big project, when Marty openly shot down Ellen's ideas and continually undermined her during team meetings.

"I was so upset that I went straight to Marty and asked to speak with him privately. I explained how I felt, but I also empathized with what he might be feeling. I took the time to try and show him the big picture of how things might feel different for both of us at work if we were able to cooperate more. I feel so angry at how he acts, and I'm worried that our boss can't see through his competitive behavior."

Any guesses about whether Ellen's conversation with Marty resolved or enflamed their conflict?

Yep, bigger problems ahead for Ellen if she continues to make these communication mistakes with Marty and her other male co-workers and supervisees. We've all heard about how different "Mars" and "Venus" are at home, and we face similar challenges at work in terms of successful and productive communication between the sexes.

But don't despair. With a little education and a few simple communication tools under your belt, you'll be ready to climb all the way to the top of that corporate ladder.

## General Rules

People are as different as fingerprints, and many of us are loathe to generalize. However, some generalizations are both appropriate and necessary. Here is a broad overview of communication styles of men vs. women:

- Men talk to give information or report. Women talk to collect information or gain rapport.
- Men talk about things (business, sports, food). Women talk about people.
- Men focus on facts, reason and logic. Women focus on feelings, senses and meaning.
- Men thrive on competing and achieving. Women thrive on harmony and relating.
- Men "know" by analyzing and figuring out. Women "know" by intuiting.
- Men are more assertive. Women are more cooperative.
- Men seek intellectual understanding. Women are able to empathize.
- Men are focused, specific, logical. Women are holistic, organic and "wide-angle."
- Men are comfortable with order, rules and structure, women with fluidity.
- Men want to think. Women want to feel.

Now, although many of these generalizations may not apply to you in particular, it's important to be aware of how differently most men and women communicate at work.

Certainly the same differences apply outside of

Victoria Simon, Ph.D.,  
and Holly Pedersen, Ph.D.



Learn how your communication style can bridge the gap with male co-workers and employees.

the office as well, but they are often more pronounced at work where women are asked to fit into what is often a male-dominated environment and where there is typically less tolerance for the female communication styles listed above.

### Communicating with Co-workers

Remember Ellen? After reading the list above of generalized male and female communication styles, is it easier to pick out her mistakes?

Here is a list of tips for communicating with your male co-workers since no one wants this kind of workplace drama.

**Don't communicate when you're upset.** When your heart is pounding, your palms are sweaty, you feel flushed and/or your ears are ringing, productive communication is nearly impossible. Take some deep breaths, slowly count to 10, close your eyes and visualize a peaceful scene to calm down before approaching your co-worker.

You may want to wait an hour, an afternoon or a day to ensure your communication with your male colleague is calm, clear and appropriate for your environment.

**Get to the point.** Too much extraneous detail won't make your male co-workers want to be on your team, and you are likely to lose their attention along the way.

**Facts not feelings.** Remember, men focus on facts and, especially at work, find feelings irrelevant to the conversation. Save the "I feel..." descriptions for your girlfriends.

**Be careful of gossip.** Not only are your male co-workers less likely to be interested in gossip

but it can be dangerous and inappropriate at the workplace regardless of gender. Trying to engage a male co-worker in the latest office rumor as a way to "connect" may unwittingly have the opposite effect.

**Instrumental vs. expressive.** Your male colleagues are likely to use communication to create solutions or to fix problems, rather than to express feelings or thoughts. Remember this when you see their eyes glaze over as you air your thoughts and feelings on a subject. Grab – and keep – their attention by focusing your communication on action, problem-solving and solutions.

**Hear with your intellect not your emotions.** Regardless of what is being said to you, it is crucial in a workplace setting to put aside your emotional responses and to respond from an objective and rational – rather than an emotional and reactionary – position.

**Don't engage in power struggles.** Remember the phrase "progress, not victory" when faced with a power struggle. Your goal is not to win but to move the discussion toward a resolution that benefits the company/department/team. By remaining solution-focused, you will likely be able to disengage your co-workers from their competitive corner.

### Communicating with Supervisees

Communicating with the men you supervise also requires you to be cognizant of the difference in male vs. female communication styles. Following are some tips to keep in mind.

**Forward communication:** In other words, focus the conversation on future actions and solutions rather than rehashing past mistakes.

**Instructions vs. suggestions:** It is important that women supervisors/managers clearly communicate when they are issuing an instruction. Avoid ambiguous language that could be interpreted as a "suggestion" by your supervisee.

**Precise communication:** Don't leave any room for confusion or misinterpretation. Be specific about the how, what, where and when.

**Action-oriented conversations:** Focus on actions rather than on feelings, people or extraneous details.

**Asking Questions:** Men are less likely to ask questions, which means it may be your job to encourage your male supervisee to ask any questions necessary. A simple, "Any questions about this?" will do.

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WITH A LITTLE  
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WITH A FEW SIMPLE TRICKS, SOME PRACTICE – AND A CAN-DO ATTITUDE – YOU, TOO, CAN LEARN TO OVERCOME YOUR FEAR OF PUBLIC SPEAKING.



# Speak Like a Pro

**A**re you one of the millions who fear public speaking more than death? Will you do anything to avoid speaking in public, even calling in sick or faking laryngitis? Okay, I'll come clean. Even though I am now a speech coach, I will admit to doing anything I could to avoid public speaking at one time in my life. I remember vividly an experience in second grade when I had to give an oral report. I couldn't convince my mother I was sick, so when I got to school, I gave the teacher a note that said I had lost my voice and could not give my report. I had a gullible teacher, and she accepted this excuse. I thought I was home free until my sister, three years my senior, got wind of this. She burst into my classroom and yelled accusingly, "You don't have laryngitis!"

Forgetting myself completely, I screamed back, "Yes, I do!"

As ridiculous as that sounds, many of us go through our professional careers dreading public speaking and dodging situations requiring us

to speak in front of groups. I finally came to the realization that if I put half the energy into learning public speaking that I put into avoiding public speaking, I would end up as a great speaker. So I did just that. I embarked on a mission to "speak like a pro," and that is what this article is going to help you do.

First, realize that public speaking is more than getting up in front of a large group of people and delivering a formal speech. Whenever you leave your home and open your mouth, you are speaking in public. Giving your opinion in a staff meeting, presenting information to a client, interviewing for a job and running a meeting are all examples of public speaking. The question is: how do you do these tasks with confidence and competence, and most importantly, how can you learn to really enjoy it?

Learning to be a great public speaker starts with your ability to communicate with one person at a time. If you start to think of public speaking as a series of one-on-one conversations strung

Carol Martin

together, it becomes much less daunting. Berran-thia Brown is a principal tax accountant for Coca Cola in its corporate tax department in Atlanta. Brown credits her ability to enjoy public speaking to her experiences in church as a teenager. She was given the job of greeter and personally welcomed each parishioner on Sunday mornings. Over time, she overcame her shyness and learned to really connect with each person. Years later, in her corporate job, she is able to communicate confidently by speaking to one person at a time, even when speaking to large groups.

### Three Keys

Thousands of books and articles have been written about public speaking. Many of these are excellent. The problem for most of us is we don't have time to read and digest all of the great material that is out there. To make it easy for you, I have condensed it down to the three keys you must do to speak like a pro.

**Be well-prepared:** Whether you are delivering an informal report at a staff meeting or giving a formal presentation at a conference, you must be well-prepared. You must understand your audience and be clear about your message.

Susan Tripepi is a recruiter for Robert Half Finance & Accounting in Akron, Ohio. As part of her job, she often needs to articulate applicants' abilities to potential employers. She must know exactly what the employer (her audience) is looking for, and she must be able to describe exactly how her applicant will meet the employer's needs (her message). Being able to communicate clearly to employers allows her to meet their needs and get job placements for her candidates.

For more formal presentations, it helps to follow a speech template. A speech template is like a blueprint that allows you to fit your content into a tried-and-true structure. One example of a speech template contains an opening, the introduction, the body and the closing.

The opening involves:

- Hook – A story, question or statistic that immediately engages your audience.
- Meaning – What the story, question or statistic means to you.
- Message – Why you are telling/asking the story, question or statistic.

The introduction includes:

- Set the Agenda – Provide a quick overview of what you are going to tell the audience
- Promise – The boldest statement you can

make about what the audience will get from your talk

- Gather Agreement – Ask the audience if what you have in mind would be helpful to them

The body includes up to three main ideas and supporting information for each idea.

The closing includes:

- Summary or review – Quickly remind the audience of your main points.
- Commitment to action – Something you would like the audience to do as a result of your speech.
- Final thought – An inspiring quote or story that ends your talk on a powerful note.

To download a graphical version of this speech template, visit [www.powerup-training.com](http://www.powerup-training.com).

Let go of perfection: Many people fear public speaking because they are afraid of making a mistake in front of others. All I can say to that is "Get over it." I am a professional speaker, and I have given some of my best speeches when I totally forgot what I was going to say in the middle of my speech. Why were these some of my best speeches? Because I didn't panic. I just laughed, and thus I became very real to my audience members. They were able to relate to me in a way they wouldn't have been able to relate to me if had been perfect.

Tonia Matheny is an accountant for the firm of Melvin, Bibb, Pinson & Segars in Huntsville,

## Resources To Support You

Becoming a great speaker takes practice and support. Here are some suggestions to get you started.

**Find a mentor:** Find someone who will help you and/or inspire you to become a great speaker. For Susan Tripepi, that person was Mary Feeney Bonawitz, Ph.D., CPA, an assistant professor at Penn State University and past president of ASWA. Bonawitz encouraged Tripepi to get involved in ASWA and has encouraged her to take on leadership roles. She took the time to answer Tripepi's questions and led by example.

**Take a leadership role in an organization:** Tonia Matheny has learned more about public speaking by becoming involved in a student organization while in college and in ASWA as a professional accountant. In both organizations, she ran meetings and spoke to large groups. These experiences all helped her develop her public speaking skills.

**Attend a Speaking Circle:** If you need help learning to connect with others while speaking to groups, Speaking Circles offer a safe and supportive environment to learn that skill. Learn more by visiting <http://speakingcircles.com>.

**Join Toastmasters:** Toastmasters is a worldwide organization whose purpose is to improve the speaking skills of its members. There are clubs all over the world and in most US cities. For more information, visit [www.toastmasters.org/](http://www.toastmasters.org/).

Ala. Matheny regularly speaks with clients, many of whom are multimillionaires. It would be easy to be intimidated by this audience, especially if you were attempting to be perfect. Instead of focusing on being perfect, Matheny has confidence in her abilities and focuses on accepting herself. As she says, “In order to be accepted, you must first accept yourself.” If you come from a place of self-confidence and self-acceptance, you and your audience will relax and enjoy yourselves.

**Connect with your audience:** One of the most important things you can do as a speaker is establish a connection with your audience. How do you do this? The first step is in your preparation. You must make sure you are speaking to your audience members from their point

of view. Use stories and examples that have meaning to them. Tailor your message to their industry, interests and concerns.

Early in her career, Berranthia Brown worked for the Georgia state lottery. Her job was to travel around the state and work with lottery ticket vendors. Imagine Brown, coming from Detroit, a major industrial city, all of a sudden being thrust into an environment where she was working with rural gas station owners. She had to adapt her communication style to fit the needs and interests of her audience. As an urban northerner she had to adjust her pronunciation and manner of speaking so her rural Southern clients would, first, understand her and, then, trust and have confidence in her.

## Public Speaking is a Risk Worth Taking

By Monika Miles

Standing up in front of a crowd, a small group or even a one-on-one interaction can be unnerving. With every interaction, speakers run the risk of being unprepared, looking foolish or forgetting their content. As with many things we do in life, however, you can view a speaking opportunity as a risk/reward situation. In other words, why would you put yourself out there for potential embarrassment if you didn't think there were some reward?

As a business owner, I seek out public speaking opportunities as often as possible to promote myself and my business. Mainly, I speak to professional groups about technical tax topics. The potential reward in this situation is that someone in my audience might find a useful item in my presentation and later want to pay me to do technical tax work for them.

I've always believed in being well-prepared and connecting with my audience when it comes to public speaking. One of the most eye-opening experiences for me recently was working with Carol Martin (see main article) as my coach to prepare for a speech at a kick-off meeting for the local American Cancer Society's "Making Strides Against Breast Cancer" event last year. I have been a major individual fundraiser over the past years, and the society asked me to give a five-minute presentation to other team leaders about how to motivate people to donate. When I agreed to do the speech, I viewed it as another great opportunity to get up and practice public speaking. But as the day neared, it hit home that I wasn't dealing with my usual audience and a technical tax presentation. These 300-plus audience members wanted to be inspired and motivated, and they needed to understand my passion for raising money for breast cancer research.

The week before the speech, I panicked. Although I'd never really had any speech coaching, I called Martin and asked her to work with me for a couple of hours on my delivery and content.

She did, and she video-taped me. Once I got over the shock of noticing some idiosyncrasies in my mannerisms, we talked about the basics, such as breathing, pausing, connecting with individuals in the audience, hand gestures. These were all things I'd heard about and practiced for years, but they took on a new meaning when confronted by the brutal honesty of seeing myself on video. Happily, the second "take" was much better. And the real-life version of the speech the next week was met with genuine applause, laughter where I had intended and the reward of having several people come up afterward to tell me I had touched them.

The incredible rush I felt after giving the speech got me thinking about what else I'd learned. First, don't be afraid to take the risk to speak about your passion. Second, in most cases, your audience will genuinely want you to succeed in your public speaking endeavors, so don't worry about making a mistake or two. Third, working out the kinks with a coach was really helpful and gave me with added confidence. And finally, if you can touch just one person and move her or him to action with your message, be it a state tax strategy or raising money for a charity, then the reward will have been worth the risk.

So despite the butterflies that accompany any speaking opportunity, I will continue to take the risk to become a better communicator and practice the craft. Because for me the reward has always been worth the risk.

Monika Miles is an ASWA national director, member of the Silicon Valley Chapter and the editor of *The Edge*. She is the president and co-founder of Labhart Miles Consulting Group, a firm specializing in multi-state tax solutions for businesses. She speaks whenever people will let her. She can be reached at [monika@labhartmiles.com](mailto:monika@labhartmiles.com).

The other thing you need to do to connect with your audience involves your delivery. To truly connect with your audience, you should speak directly to one individual at a time. Even if you are speaking to an audience of thousands, look at one person and speak directly to that individual. Really look at the person and talk to him or her. Finish a thought with that person and then move on to another person in another area of the audience. Continue to do that throughout your speech. If you do that, each person in the audience will feel that you are speaking directly to him or her.

You have gifts and talents to share with the world. Open yourself to the possibility that if you learn to speak like a pro you will be able to share those gifts with a wider audience.

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Carol Martin is all about empowerment. As a top corporate trainer and communications coach, Carol Martin teaches people to speak with power and authenticity. Her company, Power-Up Training & Consulting Inc., has been providing training and consulting services to Fortune 500 companies, nonprofits and individuals for the past 15 years. Her clients include Sun Microsystems, Movaris, Morgan Stanley and Choices for Children. Martin is a Premiere Coach for eWomenNetwork, a professional member of the National Speakers Association and a certified Speaking Circle® facilitator. She leads classes and workshops and reaches people all over the world via her online seminars. She may be reached via her Web site at [www.powerup-training.com](http://www.powerup-training.com).



*continued from p. 7*

**Cooperation vs. competition:** Because of men's competitive nature, it is important in your role as a supervisor to recognize, acknowledge and praise a job well done. However, it's also important for strong supervisors to encourage cooperation, even if their male subordinates are comfortable with collaboration. With the typical male focus on achievement, attention to success is critical.

**Resistance:** When confronted with the resistance of a male employee, it is important to gain an understanding of where it is coming from. Yes, it may be that he feels threatened, but it's also likely that as an analytical creature, he may need to look up the facts and check out the data. Rather than pushing him to agree on the spot, encourage him to do his own research so you can gain his support rather than his reluctant follow through. Remember, although resistance is natural and normal, as the boss you get to give the instructions at the end of the day.

### Learning How to Be Heard

So, does that mean women need to make all the effort to change in order for them to be heard and understood in the workplace? If both men and women share the same office space and contribute equally, do women always have to be the ones learning new communication tools? Not necessarily.

First, it largely depends on the industry you're in or the type of work you do. If you happen to work on the trading floor on Wall Street in New

York City, you will likely have to make 100 percent of the effort to fit into this world. Clearly talking about "feelings" and explaining that you bought 10,000 shares of stock for your client based on "intuition" without looking at the numbers or data won't earn you a promotion. However, it is far more likely that at a nonprofit organization or design house men will be more flexible about different styles of communication.

Second, because of women's natural tendency to empathize and cooperate, we're far more open to acknowledging these different styles and learning to build the bridge. If you work in an environment that allows for even some nontestosterone-driven conversation, then your new communication tools should open the doors for both sexes to learn these skills and increase their communication flexibility.

And finally, like it or not, women do have things to learn. Just as there are some unproductive male communication traits, women also have some communication traits that simply aren't appropriate or productive at work.

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Victoria Simon, Ph.D., and Holly Pedersen, Ph.D., are co-founders of Talk Works Inc. a communication training and conflict resolution company. A pioneer in the field of interpersonal relationships, Talk Works helps individuals fearlessly communicate their way to successful relationships at home, at work and in life. They can be reached via their Web site, [www.ourtalkworks.com](http://www.ourtalkworks.com), or at 468 N. Camden Drive, Suite 200, Beverly Hills, CA 90210, (310) 860-5191.



# Bodies Are Talking – Are You Listening?

Learning to read body language, both of your coworkers and friends, can help you better discover what people are really thinking.

Everywhere you look, people are communicating with you through their body language. Some of these messages are purposeful, and the people know the messages they are sending. Most of the time, however, body signals aren't a part of conscious thought. In fact, people's body talk may even conflict with what they are saying with their mouth. Which should you believe?

Body language is controlled by the right hemisphere of the human brain. We have less conscious control over it. It is more automatic, unfiltered and closer to the truth. The right hemisphere of the brain is always on. It is quite glib and will believe anything as long as the left hemisphere isn't functioning.

Words are primarily stored in the left hemisphere of the human brain. We have more conscious control over this hemisphere. The left side is only "on" when we engage it, and the left hemisphere shuts down when we are bored, tired, ill or when we exercise. The left hemisphere also gives us advice and acts as a guard dog to all information we encounter.

Because we have more control over the left hemisphere, people can be politically correct with their words. They can choose the appropriate phrase. The trouble comes when those words don't match the speaker's true feelings. The right hemisphere messages come out through a person's body language and can lead to conflicting messages. If a person's mouth is saying one thing and the body is saying something else, ask the person for more information to get a better understanding of the speaker's intention.

## Shades of Gray

Body language isn't an exact science. Postures and gestures can mean different things depending upon several things, especially change and speed. For instance, some people sit with their arms crossed in front of them most of the time. For them, this may be a comfortable posture, nothing more, nothing less. Other people may truly be willing to listen, yet their rigid posture seems judgmental. In order for body signals to be significant, look for speed and change.

Beverly Inman-Ebel

When people quickly change posture or rapidly make a gesture with their hands, this can mean they are excited, either negatively or positively. For instance, a person who slowly crosses her legs may simply need to relieve some pressure on her back. Conversely, however, a rapid cross may signify an increase in emotion.

Let's take a closer look at the various postures and gestures and see what they can mean if done rapidly.

**Sitting:** A person's sitting posture can give you an indication to the degree of relaxation that person is experiencing. When people sit back in a chair and take up maximum space by crossing their legs or casually placing their arm on the arm of the chair, they look comfortable. Comfortable people are more willing to listen; thus, people will tend to open up and talk more to people sitting in this position. When that same person shifts his posture by sitting straighter, he's sending a signal that may indicate he's tired of listening and ready to move on.

When people are definitely ready to end a conversation they look for escape by glancing at their watch, straightening up the papers in front of them, closing a file or even standing up. Don't make the mistake of talking faster. Know they are not listening and your talk is just an irritating background noise.

**Distance:** Most people require approximately three to five feet between themselves and the person they are conversing with. If that range of space is shortened, they may feel invaded or threatened. It may not be what you are saying, just that you are too close. If you are greater than five feet away, their responses will likely be shorter and more formal. When having a conversation, stay within the three-to-five-foot zone.

During a conversation, it is easy to tell when someone wants an opportunity to speak. She may take a deep breath because it takes more air to speak than just to listen. If she doesn't get the opportunity to talk, you may see her chest fall as she exhales. Perhaps the most common sign is when a person opens his mouth in preparation to speak. Sometimes you may see his index finger rise. This is a diluted mannerism from when they were young children and eagerly raised their hands to speak.

**Hand gestures:** Regardless of a person's normal amount of hand gestures used while talking, these gestures will increase as the person

becomes excited. Someone who says, "I don't care," while flailing her arms to her side probably cares very much.

When a person is feeling negative, habits increase, such as nail biting, hair twisting, twirling a pen, etc. Realize that negative people do not listen very well, so it would be helpful if you stopped talking at that time. Ask them a question to give them an opportunity to discuss their feelings or thoughts.

### A Dead Giveaway

Some people will strive to deceive you by their words because they think that is what you want to hear. However, their body signals can give them away. If your boss says, "That is fine with me" and at the same time she rapidly shifts her legs, it can mean that it isn't at all fine with her. If you notice this, ask another question such as, "You say it's fine, yet if there were any little discomfort, what might it be?"

**Head postures:** Head postures can indicate the degree of dominance. When a person is feeling receptive to an idea or just ready to listen, he will tend to sit with his head slightly tilted to one side. When that same person feels the need to exert dominance or authority, he may quickly straighten his head.

Eye movements are also interesting to notice. When people blink rapidly, they are likely in a state of shock. Notice the people on television who are interviewed on camera because they witnessed a crime or disaster. Their eyes are blinking like a Christmas tree. When people greatly reduce eye blinks and stare off into space, they are usually in deep thought. Although they may be thinking about what you just said, they aren't listening to what you are saying at that moment. It would be better to pause to gently bring them back to the present.

Where people look while speaking can indicate what they are referencing. If your coworker looks up 20 degrees and to his left, he may be referencing a visual memory. As he is talking, he is thinking about something he experienced in the past. If he looks up 20 degrees and to his right, he may be visually creating. If the question he is answering was, "How can we increase sales?" a look to the right may indicate he's thinking outside the box and creating new possibilities, while a glance to the left may mean he's thinking about past successes and using that as a reference. If the question he's answer-



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ing was, “What happened at 2 p.m. yesterday?” a look to the right may not be appropriate. If that happens, ask more questions to uncover the information you’re seeking.

**Mouth position:** Mouth and jaw postures can reveal true feelings. The natural position for the jaw is a closed position. When someone is caught off guard, the mouth can drop open. The jaw, or mandible, is hinged at the TM joint. This joint allows the jaw to move up and down and a slight rotation for chewing. When people throw their jaws to one side or another, this usually indicates great stress (and is unhealthy for the joint as well).

The natural position for lips is for them to be relaxed. When a person puts her lips between her teeth, it can be a subconscious method of not talking when she would really like to express her feelings. If you notice this, ask her a question and be prepared to not like her answer.

Smiles can hold multiple meanings. A genuine smile may erupt rapidly, yet it will fade slowly. The smile that is sincere lifts the facial muscles that put pressure on the tear ducts, causing the eyes to moisten. An artificial smile usually drops like a lead ball and does not involve

the eyes. A person who uses a smile insincerely is most likely hiding his true feelings. Ask questions to get those feelings out in the open.

Sometimes you may get a feeling that something is not quite right, yet you cannot find the logic in your thinking. Most likely, your right hemisphere has picked up on a body signal, but you don’t consciously realize it. My advice is to take heed of those “gut feelings.” If it doesn’t feel right, the right side of your brain is trying to tell you something. Before making the decision, sleep on it or go for a walk. When the left hemisphere temporarily shuts down, you’ll easily get the message from your right side.

Observe people whenever you are in public places. Airports and parks make wonderful laboratories. Watch yourself in a mirror or capture your movements on a video camera. See yourself the way others see you. Perhaps then you will be motivated to send the right body signals.

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## On the HORIZON

### Association for Accounting Marketing (AAM) Summit 2005

June 8–10, 2005  
Orlando, Fla.

Info: [www.accountingmarketing.org](http://www.accountingmarketing.org)

### ASWA Southeast Regional Conference

June 9–11, 2005  
Huntsville, Ala.

Info: Tonia Matheny, (256) 533-7040,  
[www.geocities.com/aswa\\_southeast](http://www.geocities.com/aswa_southeast)

### National Association of Black Accountants Inc. National Annual Convention 2005

June 14–18, 2005

Detroit Marriott Renaissance Center  
Detroit, Mich.

Info: [www.nabainc.org](http://www.nabainc.org)

### Institute of Management Accountants 2005 Annual Conference

June 18–22, 2005

The Marriott Copley Place – The Westin Copley  
Boston, Mass.

Info: [www.imanet.org](http://www.imanet.org)

### Association for Accounting Administration 2005 National Symposium

June 21–24, 2005

The Doubletree Paradise Valley Resort  
Scottsdale, Ariz.

Info: [www.cpaadmin.org](http://www.cpaadmin.org)

### The Accounting Firm Partner Compensation Forum

June 22–24, 2005

The Bellagio  
Las Vegas, Nev.

Info: [www.northstarconferences.com](http://www.northstarconferences.com)

### ASWA South Central Regional Conference

June 23–24, 2005

Holiday Inn – Riverwalk  
San Antonio, Texas

Info: Lynn Kupper, (210) 340-8351,  
[www.aswa-sa.org](http://www.aswa-sa.org)

### The Institute of Internal Auditors International Conference 2005

July 10–13, 2005

Hyatt Regency Chicago Hotel  
Chicago, Ill.

Info: [www.theiia.org](http://www.theiia.org)

### 2005 Association of Latino Professionals in Finance and Accounting Annual Convention

Aug. 6–10, 2005

Miami, Fla.

Info: [www.alpfa.org](http://www.alpfa.org)

### ASWA/AWSCPA Joint Inspired Solutions Conference – Life, Liberty & the Pursuit of Excellence

Sept. 28–Oct. 1, 2005

Loews Hotel  
Philadelphia, Pa.

Info: [www.aswa.org](http://www.aswa.org)

# Cementing Client Relationships

By Deborah Szul, CFP®

As a financial services professional, you are a valuable asset to your organization. You are an expert in your field. Besides having the book smarts to help your clients, some of the other qualities you should possess include being able to place yourself in your clients' shoes, being flexible in adapting to new situations, the ability to withstand detail work and the ability to communicate. Communication isn't simply a matter of knowing where to place a comma and the difference between lay and lie but much more. It involves good verbal and written skills, listening skills and nonverbal communication skills. By working on our communication skills, we can improve relationships with clients, make sure they hear what we're saying – and that we hear what they are really saying.

We should be on a constant quest to improve our lives and the lives of our clients. Our attitude and personality are key to being able to position ourselves as the expert. Portraying a positive attitude and approach will help to make, enforce and strengthen the connection with the client. But just how do we do that?

There are steps you can take from the very first time you meet with a new or prospective client:

- With an initial client contact, smile, but don't overdo it. This helps portray confidence and happiness to that prospective client. Making and maintaining eye contact enforces that you aren't a threat and that you don't have anything to hide.
- Your voice plays a role in verbal communication. First, by its tone or timbre. A gentle, friendly quality in your voice aids in developing rapport. Next, speak clearly; don't mumble. Be informative and not condescending. Last of all, don't talk so much. When we are nervous, we tend to ramble. Ask your questions, then sit back and listen. Ask your clients if it is all right with them if you take notes during their conversation. This asks their permission and also reinforces the fact that what they are saying is important.

- The importance of a good, firm handshake can't be overstated. How many of us cringe when we are met with a cold, clammy or limp-like-a-dead-fish handshake? An open extended palm developed in the Middle Ages as a way to show that the kinsfolk weren't hiding any weapons. We, too, meet our clients in the same way, open to the possibility of a life-changing connection.

## A Positive Attitude

Maintaining a positive attitude or positive energy is sometimes easier said than done. It is a combination of many things, including maintaining a healthy lifestyle. It is also a product of sincerely wanting to make a difference in a client's life.

How do you view what you do for a living? Do you sell investments, or do you help your clients' dreams come true? Do you simply fill out tax forms, or do you help your clients put their money to its best use? Putting clients' needs first helps to bring perspective to your own self-image. It helps to build the trust that is necessary to make that connection with the client a workable one.

Nick Murray, a well-known financial services author and speaker, says, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." This simple statement speaks volumes as to the empathy and trust that must be present for a successful client relationship.

Get excited about helping people. On more than a few occasions, my clients have remarked to me that they wonder if I've ever had a bad day because I'm always in such a good mood when I speak with them. I have a basic love of people and a desire to help them make their lives better. I enjoy what I do, and it comes across to them. If you don't genuinely feel this way about what you are doing, your clients will know.

Some of the ideas in this article are things you can easily incorporate into your method of doing business. However, if you merely incorporate them as a way to increase sales or gather assets, your clients will see through the facade. Being genuinely interested in your clients and their needs should govern your actions and communication at all times.

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Deborah Szul, CFP, is a member and past president of the Orange County Chapter of ASWA. She is an inaugural member of the Financial Planning Association and a faculty member of the University of Phoenix at the Southern California Campus. Contact her at [thatwallstreetwoman@yahoo.com](mailto:thatwallstreetwoman@yahoo.com).

# Profile

## Linda Harris, CPA



Linda Harris and her husband celebrate her Woman of the Year Balance Award at last year's Joint Inspired Solutions Conference.

The recipient of ASWAEF's 2004 Woman of the Year Balance Award, Linda Harris has certainly made her mark on the accounting industry in Billings, Mont. – and across the country. A former Billings Chapter president, former ASWA regional director and current active member of many ASWA committees, Harris is well-respected by countless ASWA members for her drive, commitment and easy-going personality.

Harris graduated from Montana State University – Billings in 1993 with a degree in business administration, accounting and opened her CPA firm in September 1993; prior to that, she worked for a small CPA firm in Laurel, Mont., for 10 years.

In addition to her ASWA membership, Harris is also a member of the Montana Society of CPAs and currently serves as vice chair on its CPE committee. Additionally, she is board president for the Memorial Hospital Association in Red Lodge, Mont.; is on the Beartooth Health Management LLC board; the Absarokee Community Foundation board, serving as treasurer; the Absaroka Fine Arts board, serving as chair; and serves on numerous committees for her ASWA chapter. Harris was recently appointed to the board of ASWA's Educational Foundation.

### What was your first job ever?

At McDonald's.

### How did you get started in the accounting field?

I took accounting in high school, and then after my son started school I went to work as a secretary in a small accounting firm. While there I went back to school as a nontraditional student and earned my degree and CPA certificate.

### How has the accounting profession changed since you started your career, and what do you think are the biggest obstacles or challenges

### women in the accounting profession are facing today?

Technology is definitely the biggest change. I remember doing taxes by hand. I feel the biggest challenge continues to be trying to achieve balance between your professional and personal lives. I believe you can have it all, but you have to be creative in how you achieve it. Convincing an employer that the workday doesn't have to be between 8 and 5 with lunch at noon is the ongoing challenge. Working through lunch in order to take an hour off to attend a school play can be as productive as the traditional "day." I believe that if you help your employees achieve the balance in their lives, both sides are winners.

### If you could change anything about your career path, would you, and if so, what would you do differently?

I think if I would have made different choices, I would not be where I am today, and I am very comfortable with my life and who I am.

### If you could offer one bit of advice to other women in the accounting profession, what would it be?

Don't be afraid to ask. Make your needs known, both professionally and personally, and don't be afraid to think outside the box.

### What's your secret to delivering "bad" news to clients? Any tips to offer?

Honesty from the beginning. If your clients trust you, then when you have to deliver "bad" news they trust in what you are telling them.

### What or who inspires you?

Gandhi once said that you must be the change in the world that you wish to see. I believe we all have a responsibility to ourselves as well as others to be the best we can be, and we should lead by example.

### How do you maintain a work/life balance?

There are times I am not sure that I do, like tax season. But I love what I do professionally, and I try to find challenges in my personal life that are both challenging and different from what I do every day at work. When I start to feel out of balance, I try to take time just for me.