



Powerful Communication Tools for **WOMEN LEADERS**

BY DEVIN PARTIDA

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Women in leadership often have to do twice as much work to receive the same accolades as men.

Communication tools and strategies are proven ways to simplify their professional hardships and streamline their upward climb. Women are less inclined to take up space or express themselves in leadership positions because they are the minority. According to McKinsey & Company's "Women in the Workplace 2023" report, only 28% of C-suite executive roles were filled by women in 2023. Many believe they must alter their communication styles to align with men's to be heard.

Many women find themselves the only female leader in their workplace. They are surrounded by men, so they often have to fight for space. When they prioritize networking with their team, stakeholders, and peers, they increase their influence and make their communication impactful.

Women leaders will strengthen the communication channels they have built if they go one step further and leverage their role as a mentor. Employees will view known mentors as more approachable and will be less likely to associate their leadership style with negative characteristics or stereotypes. A female-led mentorship can also pave the way for other women to progress professionally. As Zachary Amos notes in his May 2020 piece for ReHack, "Technology and Gender Inequality," deep-rooted biases often deter women from pursuing professional goals, leading to inequality in the workplace. A direct, equitable communication channel demonstrates strength and authority, prompting them to strive for—and feel more comfortable in—management positions.

Notably, strengthening communication channels is incredibly beneficial. As the technology company Box wrote in an April 21, 2023 blog piece, "What Is Collaboration?," workplace collaboration improves employees' job satisfaction because it changes how they

view work. Women in management can lead their organizations to success if they strategize correctly.

COMMUNICATION TOOLS FOR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Dynamic communication tools are crucial for workplace engagement and collaboration. They include:

Instant messaging. An instant messaging platform is as advantageous as it is practical. It allows women leaders to have their finger on the pulse of the workplace. Even if they do not respond to every message immediately, they still gain insight—and are seen as approachable.

Social intranet. Organizations can leverage a social intranet to eliminate top-down communication, enabling employees to share their thoughts freely. It accelerates the development of team-wide connections, strengthening professional bonds. As a result, the deep-set belief that women leaders can be either competent or likable—not both—dissipates faster.

Videoconferencing. Videoconferencing enhances visibility. It lets women leaders view and respond to others' reactions, forcing staff to engage transparently and not misbehave behind their backs. This way, they can monitor subtle body language and facial expressions to tailor their communication style in real time.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Women leaders can use a range of communication strategies to succeed:

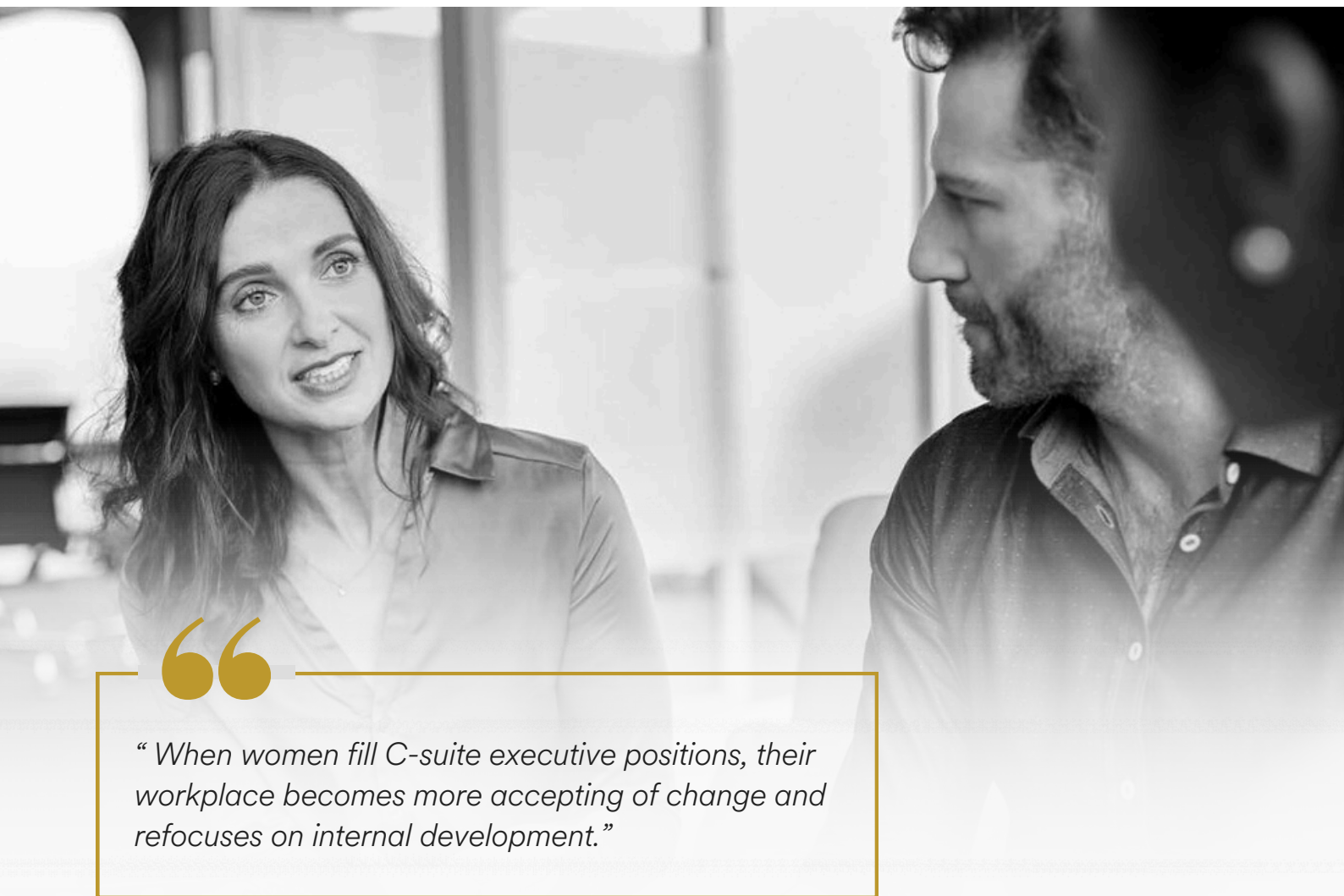
Abstract speaking. Abstract language is a common speaking tactic. According to Cheryl Wakslak and Priyanka Joshi in "Research: Men Speak More Abstractly Than Women," a December 2, 2022 article about their work in Harvard Business Review, people tend to

associate abstract speaking with authority and leadership qualities. Since women favor concrete speech, they come off as less assertive. Shifting their communication style increases their standing among employees.

Positive interruption. Men often interrupt women. Sometimes, it stems from a need for dominance. However, it usually is a result of thoughtlessness. Female leaders should politely but firmly speak over them to assert their presence in the boardroom. Most will recognize their social blunder and stay silent. Women leaders can mitigate potential social penalties by remaining positive while addressing the person who interrupted them. Acknowledging their contribution and telling them their input will have a bigger impact once they have the floor to themselves softens the blow.

Emotional intelligence. A study highlighted by CNN in December 2022 (“All Around the World, Women Are Better Empathizers Than Men”) shows women are consistently more cognitively empathetic than men. Women leaders can use this to their advantage to strategically communicate. Instead of entering a conversation to “win” and establish dominance, they should consider the other person’s thoughts and emotions. This way, the dialogue is more productive.

Eye contact. Women leaders have to walk a fine line when addressing their subordinates. If they are viewed as too overconfident or shy, they get stuck with stereotypical gender labels. Eye contact is a strategic middle ground—it is assertive without being too confrontational.



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TIPS ON SPEAKING AND ENGAGING AS WOMEN LEADERS

Women leaders looking to cultivate their unique voice to better engage with their subordinates, peers, and stakeholders should consider these proven approaches:

Lead by example. Women have impactful, unique voices. According to Corinne Post, Boris Lokshin, and Christophe Boone in an April 6, 2021 Harvard Business Review article (“Research: Adding Women to the C-Suite Changes How Companies Think”), when women fill C-suite executive positions, their workplace becomes more accepting of change and refocuses on internal development. As a result, upper management views innovation from their perspective.

Female leaders should use this phenomenon to their advantage. They can inspire others to follow if they demonstrate diversity, equity, and inclusion in their communication. Leading by example will engage their team and peers more effectively.

Use inclusive language. Professionals often use words like “ladylike” to describe female leaders and “manpower” to refer to their teams’ success. Women can better cultivate their unique voices by eliminating stereotypes, assumptions, and biases hidden in professional language.

Women often receive more praise for completing traditionally feminine tasks, which are considered less valuable to the workplace.

Eliminating these unconscious gender biases through inclusive language can enhance their collective engagement.

Communicate expectations. A study in the August 5, 2021 Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin (“My Fair Lady? Inferring Organizational Trust from the Mere Presence of Women in Leadership Roles”) found that when women enter a C-suite role, employees begin to anticipate fair treatment and subordinates are more likely to view them as trustworthy than men, regardless of their position in the organizational hierarchy. Since employees are more willing to trust a woman, they will likely be more accepting of company policies coming from female leaders. Women should take advantage of this and clearly define their expectations early on. Doing so can enhance long-term workplace engagement.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY FOR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Adopting effective communication tools and tactics to enhance workplace engagement and strengthen professional bonds is crucial for long-term success. Women leaders who strategically leverage them can improve their standing among peers and may have an easier time asserting their presence in male-dominated spaces. AQ

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