

Gender Difference and Negotiations

By: Peggy S. Bud, Speaking Skillfully

Even though negotiations are an integral part of our everyday lives, women are reluctant to negotiate for themselves. They are comfortable bargaining with their kids. Eat three more bites, you can have dessert. If you clean your room, you can play Minecraft for 30 more minutes. They happily bargain with their spouses. Clean the garage; I'll drive the kids to soccer. They are even effective negotiators when they are promoting the needs of others. Yet when it comes to themselves, they often forego negotiating and accept what is proposed.

Men tend to be the active negotiators when haggling for a better price for a car, a house or a salary. Women tend to accept what is offered. Why? It goes to how women view the entire process of negotiations. Linda Babcock, author of *Women Don't Ask*, conducted a survey in one of her graduate classes at Carnegie Mellon. She asked men and women to use metaphors to explain the act of negotiating. Women used terms like "going to the dentist" and men described it as "winning the ballgame."

Research indicates women are less likely to negotiate their salary and on average they earn less than their male counterparts. They are also more reluctant to negotiate promotions, possibly leading to fewer women holding senior-level positions. "Believe in yourself and negotiate for yourself. Own your own success." Sheryl Sandberg encourages women to "lean in", speak-up, promote their own accomplishments, and ask for what they want.

Women have the fundamental characteristics and communication skills needed to be successful negotiators. They are great listeners and know how to build rapport and trust. They are willing and able to negotiate for those who work for them, but are reluctant to negotiate for themselves. *Why?* It isn't because they are less qualified, less capable, or less motivated. One explanation is women worry about the social cost of their negotiations. So, they tend to rationalize "I need this job more than the company needs me."

A core value women share is the belief that hard work will be rewarded. They will be given a raise or promotion just because of their work ethic. When this doesn't happen, women tend to just work harder. They underestimate the value of self-promotion. A woman's reluctance to blow her own horn isn't linked to her personality as much as it is linked to how she was raised. In our culture little girls are taught it isn't lady-like to brag or boast. Women are often viewed negatively when they sing their own praises because they've been taught to wait for others to provide the compliments and kudos.

One way to address this issue and help women self-promote is to use the "Look what I've done and how it has benefited the company" approach. This means they aren't bragging but rather sharing how they have helped the company. Using this tactic reduces social backlash, which often happens when women promote themselves. When linking an accomplishment to how it benefits the organization and others within that organization, women are viewed in a more positive light. Their behavior is less likely to be seen as aggressive. Rather, they will be looked at as a member of the team and someone who is working for the company's best interest.

Women often think their boss will reward them just because they have a great work ethic and are giving 150% to the company. The story goes a woman was being offered a major promotion so she asked for twice her current salary. She was pleasantly surprised when her boss immediately agreed. She learned the lesson of aim high when she heard a male counterpart was given a similar promotion, asked for three times his current salary, and got it.

Another difference between men and women is related to the underlying reason they communicate. Men communicate to gather information; women communicate to build relationships. Because women are looking to develop relationships, they both want and need to be liked. What they sometimes forget is being respected is also very important. A woman's need to be liked directly impacts how she negotiates. Jennifer Lawrence, star of the *Hunger Games*, recently told an interviewer her salary was significantly lower than her male co-star. "I failed at negotiations because I gave up early.... I would be lying if I didn't say there was an element of wanting to be liked that influenced my decision."

The problem is most women want to be liked even more than they want to be respected! That is one reason why women don't negotiate for themselves. Even a successful actress placed being liked ahead of the money. Let's take gender out of the equation. It's about the value you bring to the company or organization's bottom line. Practice negotiating for yourself. The best way to begin is to:

- First believe in yourself and your capabilities.
- Next effectively communicate to your bosses and colleagues *why* the business needs you.
- Then clearly explain to your bosses and colleagues *how* you will contribute to the organization's success.
- Finally, successful negotiating takes practice. Today is the best time to begin.

About Peggy

Peggy Bud, founder of Speaking Skillfully is a certified and licensed speech-language pathologist. She teaches clients how to effectively communicate when interacting with customers, clients and colleagues. Communication is a company's most powerful tool and will directly impact the company's bottom line. It's more than what you say; it's how you say it. Peggy can be reached at Peggy@PeggyBud.com or via telephone at 203.952.8534. Learn more at her web site: www.PeggyBud.com. Find her on Facebook or LinkedIn.