COACH'S CORNER

GLADIEUX CONSULTING
~ EIGHT DAYS A WEEK ~

Dear Michelle,
I am the only male in my work area and I have a communication question for you:
Why do women talk so much?

Hello sir, and thanks for the question.

In some industries, governments, military teams, and pockets of academia, it's still unusual for a male to be in the minority. I'm happy for you that you're getting to experience being the one who's visibly different. Women and people of color are often outnumbered in work settings that I visit as a trainer and coach, especially at top management levels.

There's a lot of excellent research about human communication, but not enough (yet) to draw solid conclusions or generalize successfully about whether males or females are more verbose. It's clear that skillful (self-aware and other-aware) communication is required for success. We can try to remember that perhaps a more important variable in human interaction aside from gender is personality diversity, referring to human traits and skills as a result of DNA and life experiences. In addition to skills, abilities, and life experiences, gender is one diversity variable worth examining as you navigate life on a work team.

Some research shows that women generally speak more quickly and devote more brainpower to verbal communication. Women may possess higher levels of language protein in their brains. Beware, though, when you see the word "generally", as it refers to just 51% or more of any population. Until recently, we couldn't biologically explain why women's brains may be more active with speech and communication. *Journal of Neuroscience* findings show a protein called FOXP2 that produces speech is more present in females' brains. This protein is a key molecule for communication in mammals. With this link, scientists may be able to trace the evolutionary origin of human speech. Proving their sense of humor, the lead authors (a man and a woman) on the study concluded that perhaps they've also found the reason women tend to be better at small talk.

Ultimately, I think your question may also be about wanting to be heard and included.

Here are a few tips:

- Let others speak first when possible, then relay that you value their words via a brief summary. Others become more willing to listen and less anxious to get their point across when your behavior shows that you prioritize what they're saying.
- Try asking "Please tell me how you see it?" and receive information fully before preparing your response.
- When you have to interrupt, speak the other person's first name calmly until they pause to listen. (Three times is the charm. This even works on me, and I'm a determined talker.)
- If talk around you is limiting your productivity, schedule private time in a conference room or off-site if possible to complete tasks that require a silent background, or wear earplugs to block sound.
- Diplomatically ask co-workers for quiet time and ask what you could do differently to be a more helpful co-worker. Turnabout when giving feedback is fair play, and surely there's something they might appreciate from you in return.

Good luck to you, and please update me about how you're faring.



Are you dealing with a communication challenge?
If you've got a question, write to Michelle@GladieuxConsulting.com for consideration.
Questions remain confidential and anonymous when published.