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**A HAPPY AND  
PROSPEROUS 2003  
TO ALL EWC  
MEMBERS**

## MONTHLY COLUMN

### **The Power of Presence**

*Tips for creating the powerful presence  
necessary for professional success and  
advancement*

#### **Powerful Verbal Communication, Part 2**

Powerful verbal communication extends far beyond the deliberate words we speak when we converse, request something, or make a point. There is a group of verbal “gestures” that some women use on a regular basis----almost automatically----that undermines their presence as managers and leaders. Following are three verbal habits that may weaken the perception of women as competent professionals:

#### **Apologizing**

Women apologize more than men do and frequently when they have nothing to be sorry about. Deborah Tannen, author of *Talking from 9 to 5*, uses the term “ritual apologies” for this predominantly female habit. If you say “I’m sorry” excessively, or when you don’t really mean that you’re sorry, but that you’re concerned, you may inadvertently appear to be less confident than a non-apologizer.

If you have actually done something that requires an apology, by all means, offer an appropriate and professional one. But refrain from apologizing to

express concern (try “That is really unfortunate”) or when acknowledging other people’s shortcomings. You may end up looking like you deserve blame for things that are not your responsibility.

#### **Downplaying accomplishments**

Studies consistently show that women are more likely to downplay their accomplishments than men. In one revealing research project, hundreds of incoming college students were asked to predict their grades. Some were asked to make the predictions verbally; others were asked to write their predictions and seal them into an envelope. The results: more women than men predicted lower grades in the spoken prediction. The women’s written predictions were equivalent to the men. A desire to avoid appearing boastful may come across as lack of confidence.

If you are given positive feedback about your accomplishments, avoid self-imploding comments like, “It really wasn’t all that difficult.” A simple “Thank you” is a more powerful response. And if you express an idea in a meeting that a male colleague elaborates on for longer than you spoke, refer the idea back to yourself, and say “I want to add one final point to my proposal about.....” Take and enjoy credit for what you deserve. Blowing your own horn in moderation helps to create an aura of competence and power.



Asking Questions

This one is tricky but true. Women generally ask more questions than men (anyone want to dialogue about the Asking Directions issue), but unfairly or not, this can be perceived negatively. In a group, if only one person is asking questions, she risks being seen as the only person who doesn't understand. And sometimes, the person who answers the question appears to be lecturing the questioner, thereby diminishing her power. Tannen speculates that because men are more attuned to the fact that the questioner can end up in a one-down position, they may form a negative opinion of women who ask questions in situations where they would not.

In a meeting, be cautious about being the only questioner, especially if you are uncertain about the style of the responder. Seek the information another way if you can. If possible, avoid multiple questions because of possible incorrect perceptions about your knowledge and power.

**Next Month: Powerful Nonverbal Communication, Part 1.**

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**EWC member Maureen Murray is a professional speaker, trainer, and executive coach. Email suggestions for column topics to MMurrayHA@aol.com.**

**EVENT CALENDAR**

Save these dates so that you can attend these very interesting and informative EWC sessions:

**February 11** Lunch at the Rivers Club - Presentation by Ralph Bangs on his current research regarding the lack of diversity that exists among elected officials in the region. The press conference which was scheduled for 12 noon, has been cancelled – more to come on the public release.  
Time: 12:30 – 1:30 PM  
Cost: \$25.00

**February 26** After work meeting at the Jewish Healthcare Foundation (Centre City Tower) to learn more about the Working Hearts Initiative. They are hosting us, so please attend.  
Time: 5:30-6:30

**March 27** Susan B. Anthony Awards at the Sheraton Station Square. More to come.

**March 13** Pre-Spring Networking Breakfast - Speaker Maureen Murray will help us “Get Out of a Rut;” very appropriate for our personal “spring cleaning!” To be held at the Rivers Club



**April/May** Presentation by Pennsylvania Ambassadors and/or the Pittsburgh Regional Champions

**June** Annual EWC Woman of Achievement Award and Installation of new officers

**Watch your email for more information on each event!**

**SOCIAL SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT**

EWC member, Sue Gove, has been elected to the board of the Homeless Children’s Education Fund. This organization establishes Computer Learning Centers in area shelters offering after-school tutoring programs and supplying essential school supplies to children who otherwise would not have access to them. These and more HCEF services offer immediate support to the more than 3,000 children each year in Allegheny County who experience homelessness.

On March 3, 2003, HCEF will host its fourth annual “Champions for Children” benefit gala at the Rivers Club in Oxford Center. Funds raised through this event provide hope and stability at a time in a child’s life when there is little more than despair and disorder.

Sue is looking for:

- ◆ People who can donate a gift to be raffled at the auction to raise money

- ◆ People who will volunteer to help find sources of money, e.g., through auction gifts, sponsorships, donations, etc. All ideas are very welcome.
- ◆ Companies who will sponsor the event – available at different levels from \$10,000 to \$1,500 – each carrying successively greater degrees of invaluable community exposure.
- ◆ People who will come to the event on Monday, March 3 at the Rivers Club to support the auction.

To respond to this call for help, please contact Sue Gove at 412.431.5087 or [sgove@gove.org](mailto:sgove@gove.org).

**THANK YOU!**

**TWENTY THINGS THAT WON’T CHANGE IN THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS**

In the October, 2000 issue of Discover magazine, author Brad Lemley argues that looking 20 years into the future, the likelihood is that our daily home, work, and recreational pursuits will look a great deal like they do now – just as life today isn’t terribly different from what it was in 1980. Among the twenty facets of life that he says will remain relatively unchanged, include: houses, pencils, books, cash, passenger jets, driving, traffic congestion, noise, religion, baseball, sex, zippers, poverty, shopping, terrorism, paper clips, men’s suits, and death. *I don’t know whether to be relieved or disappointed!*