

Assertive Communication
For Women:
Finding Your Voice to Make
a Difference @home
@work



F R I D M A N

STRATEGIES

Goals

- Learn why assertive communication is key to your success
- Explore the mental, physical and verbal elements of effective communication
- Address the unique challenges of meeting virtually
- Answer your questions

Definition

as·ser·tive

/ə'sɜːrtɪv/

adjective

adjective: **assertive**

1. having or showing a confident and forceful personality.

Start with Why?

- In order to contribute, drive strategy and move up to leadership positions, you need to add value.
- To show your value, you need to communicate your knowledge and expertise effectively and assertively.

“In many organizations, our leadership readiness is measured in part by our willingness to speak up in meetings. How we speak can have a bigger impact on our career trajectory than our presentations or speeches, because every day we have an opportunity to make an impact.”

Allison Shapira, Harvard Business Review

Old Days



New Reality



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What Hasn't
Changed – And Has
Gotten Even Worse?



10 Tips to More Assertive Communication

1. Adopt the right mindset
2. Be visible
3. Be pro-active
4. Don't devalue your language
5. Take ownership for your work
6. Lower the intonation of your voice
7. Tell stories to connect
8. Keep it short
9. Play the long game
10. Get over your perfectionism

1. Adopt the right mindset

- Ditch the negative self-talk
- You must believe that you are competent, worthy and you have knowledge to share that is important
- Daily Mantra:
 - You are qualified
 - Your voice deserves to be heard
 - You are an important part of your work, team, organization and/or movement
- *Virtual tip: It's exhausting to be virtually on. Give yourself a pep talk before logging on. Push yourself to speak up at least once every meeting.*

2. Be Visible

- Communicate verbally and non-verbally
- Make sure your body language is confident and strong
- Stand up while speaking
- Increase your physical presence and own your personal space.
 - Take the superwoman pose by placing your feet shoulder width apart or leaning on one leg if that's more comfortable.
 - Put your hands in a 'neutral' position', i.e. a place for your hands when they're not gesturing. Ideally this 'neutral' position should be where your hands are waist height or above with the hands held or clasped loosely and comfortably.
- Open up your chest by while sitting at a table by placing one arm by your side and another on the table
- Plant your feet on the ground
- Straighten your back
- Breathe deeply
- *Virtual tip: Wear a statement piece especially on Zoom – necklace or scarf and sit up straight. Angle your camera from slightly above.*

Tips for better posture during work from home (and always)

- When standing, roll your shoulders back and hold your head up like you are being pulled towards the sky
- When you are sitting, sit back in the chair, feet firmly on the ground and keep shoulders back and open
- Raise your phone and computer to eye level
- Take frequent stretch breaks

3. Be pro-active

- Prepare notes on the agenda for the meeting you may want to speak about
- Don't wait to talk until asked or called on
- Politely interrupt
- Jump in
- Speak up
- Don't be afraid to go first
- *Virtual Tip: Raise your hand, unmute, use chat function and speak up and/or message the leader of the call.*

4. Don't devalue your language

- Do not use the words: “just”, “guess”, “basically”, “little/small” and “think”.
- “I **just** want to talk to you about...”
- “I **guess** what I’m saying is...”
- “What this **basically** means is...”
- “My contribution was just a **small** part”
- “Personally, I **think**. . .”
- Instead of saying “What I think is...”, replace it with phrases like “What I believe is...”, “What I know is that...”, or “I’m confident that...”.
- Your accomplishment isn’t just “a little thing”. It is a significant contribution to advancing the work.
- AND STOP APOLOGIZING FOR WHAT YOU SAID OR ARE ABOUT TO SAY!
- “**Sorry** for bothering you but can I...”
- Be direct, be clear and be sure of yourself
- *Virtual Tip: Write down your main points and look at them. Make sure you add value proudly.*

5. Take ownership for your work

- Women love to use collective language like “we” or “ours”
- When it was really a personal achievement, you “I” proudly
- Take ownership for your hard work to receive the recognition and credit you deserve
- Celebrate your success

6. Lower the intonation of your voice

- Stop placing a question mark at the end of sentences
- The high rising terminal (HRT), also known as upspeak, uptalk, rising inflection, upward inflection, or high rising intonation (HRI), is where declarative sentence clauses end with a rising-pitch intonation, until the end of the sentence where a falling-pitch is applied.
- Lowering the intonation of your voice at the end of a sentence broadcasts power
- When you want to sound super confident, you can even lower your intonation midsentence
- Check your breathing. Make sure you're breathing deeply into your belly and inhale and exhale through your nose rather than your mouth.
- *Virtual Tip: Keep your feet grounded and place your hand on your stomach as you breath in and out.*

7. Tell stories to connect

- Great leaders know how to connect on the human level
- One of the best ways to connect is by sharing stories
- Learn how to tell a good story with a beginning, middle and end that is short, authentic and memorable
- *Virtual Tip: Physically distant does not have to mean emotionally distant. Make a coffee, lunch or drink virtual date with a colleague.*

8. Keep it short

- Don't over talk your point
- Less is more
- Give high-level points and the main idea first and wait to be asked to share details when asked
- Talk slowly and succinctly

Virtual Tip: Keep your online remarks brief and offer anyone who wants more information the chance to connect offline by phone, private meeting or email.

9. Play the long game

- You don't need to win all the battles to win the war
- Choose your battles carefully, and play the long game
- Be confident enough to compromise in order to negotiate a resolution to a situation
- *Virtual Tip: For every meeting and interaction you should ask yourself your objective before you attend. Do the same for every project you work on. Keep these bigger pictures in mind.*

10. Get over perfectionism

- Get over the need for everything to be buttoned down and perfect
- Perfect is the enemy of the good
- Know what you can't control
- Adopt the theory of perpetual beta
- *Virtual Tip: Working from home is unpredictable with technology, kids and digital etiquette varying. Embrace it.*

Assertive Communication

- Speak assertively in areas you are knowledgeable and credible in
- Internalize your value
- Own your space
- Don't wait for an invitation
- Practice using empowering language
- Be proud of your contributions
- Lower your voice
- Develop relationships through stories and sharing
- Be valuable to your colleagues, clients and team – keep it high level
- Think long-term and big-picture
- Do/say, learn, iterate – perfection isn't the goal



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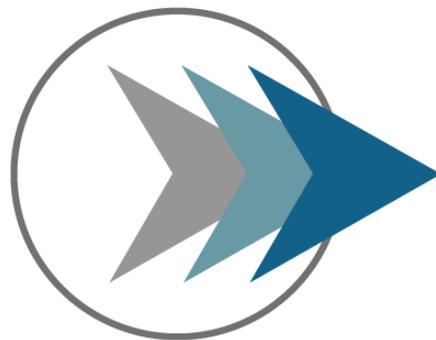
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Declarations

- What component of assertive communication is the hardest for you?
- Which do you commit to work on?

Don't mistake modesty for humility. Modesty is a giggly lie. An act. A mask. A fake game. We have no time for it. The word humility derives from the Latin word humilitas, which means "of the earth." To be humble is to be grounded in knowing who you are—to grow, to reach, to fully bloom as high and strong and grand as you were created to. It is not honorable for a tree to wilt and shrink and disappear. It's not honorable for a woman to, either.

GLENNON DOYLE | UNTAMED



F R I D M A N

STRATEGIES

Nanette Fridman

617-504-4234

Fridmanstrategies@gmail.com

www.FridmanStrategies.com

PLAN TO SUCCEED

HOLDING THE GAVEL

What **Nonprofit Board** Leaders
Need to Know



NANETTE R. FRIDMAN

*Author of On Board: What Current and Aspiring Board Members
Must Know About Nonprofits & Board Service*

“ Nanette Fridman has written the perfect book for board chairs. She provides a comprehensive outline of the role and succinctly and smartly describes exactly how to tackle what can feel like an overwhelming job. It is the indispensable guide for a difficult job.”

Allison Fine

National Chair, NARAL: Pro-Choice America
Foundation, co-author, *The Networked Nonprofit*

“ *Holding the Gavel* is yet another gift to the nonprofit sector from Nanette Fridman. It is a clear, easy to digest, and complete roadmap for board chairs to help ensure their success in tackling the complex challenges of the role. As a nonprofit professional, I am especially grateful for the way in which Nanette frames the partnership between board chairs and their professional leadership.”

Laura Fish

Executive Director, Douglas Institute Foundation

"If you've just been asked to join your first board or you're on ten boards, Nanette Fridman has written the book for you.
On Board tells you everything you need, from A to Z and then some—and it's so readable!"
Peter Edelman, Professor of Law, Georgetown University Law Center

ON BOARD

WHAT CURRENT AND ASPIRING
BOARD MEMBERS MUST KNOW ABOUT
NONPROFITS & BOARD SERVICE



NANETTE R. FRIDMAN

Foreword by Aaron Philip Dworkin
President, After-School All-Stars National Network

“ Too often the expectations of board members and the workings of nonprofits have been vague or mysterious. Whether you are a professional or board member, *On Board* demystifies how nonprofits work and lays out in detail how board members can be responsible, effective and fulfilled. ”

Dr. Marc N. Kramer
Executive Director, RAVSAK

“ Nanette Fridman insightfully shares her experience with nonprofit boards to help individuals be more intentional, engaged and clear about their roles. Every governance committee should give this book to their new and ongoing board members. ”

Nancy K. Kaufman,
Chief Executive Officer, NCJW