

Male and Female Leaders Are Not That Different

Surprising similarities were found in how men and women leaders use influence to gain others' support.

New York, NY -- April 5, 2010 -- [OnPoint Consulting](#) studied the [influence skills](#) of 223 leaders (116 men and 107 women) across organizations and industries to examine the extent to which there are gender differences. The research specifically looked at the use of four core tactics that are most effective in gaining the commitment of people who have competing priorities or conflicting goals: Rational Persuasion, Inspirational Appeals, Consultation, and Collaboration.

The study found that men and women use two of the core tactics to the same extent: Rational Persuasion (providing logical arguments and factual evidence to show that a request or proposal is feasible and relevant for important task objectives) and Collaboration (offering to provide relevant resources or assistance if the person will carry out a request or implement a proposed change).

These findings contradict the stereotype that women leaders have an interpersonal style and men a task-oriented style. If this were true, you would expect to find that men use Rational Persuasion (a logical, data oriented tactic) more frequently, and women use Collaboration (a relationship oriented tactic) more frequently to influence. However, we found no differences between men and women in the use of these tactics.

There are some interesting gender differences in their use of the other two tactics:

? Women use Inspirational Appeals (appealing to a person's values, ideals, or emotions or generating enthusiasm) more than men with colleagues and direct reports. With bosses, however, men and women use Inspirational Appeals to the same extent.

? Women use Consultation (asking a person to suggest improvements to a proposal or to help plan a proposed activity or change) more than men when influencing bosses and direct reports. With colleagues, however, men and women use Consultation equally.

Because female leaders are often characterized as having a more participative, inspirational management style than men, you might expect to find that women use Inspirational Appeals and Consultation more than men across the board. However, the study indicates that men and women both leverage Inspirational Appeals with bosses and Consultation with colleagues.