

Controlled: Calm businesswomen can achieve more

Screaming banshees are out - calm leaders are in

We have a saying at the business woman's club I help to run, Angels Bring Business, that we are serious-minded business women who are not about wearing fluffy slippers nor being tougher than the toughest man at the top.

Instead, our mission statement is accomplished business women bringing connections and support. How exactly do we do that?

In the words of my trainees, when I was protesting how women sometimes get put upon by their more dominant male counterparts at work: "Well, what do you expect, women are pleasers."

She's right! I've come to realise that rather than fight against the grain, it's better to work with your natural characteristics and for the majority of women that is being "nice" - almost a swear word in the world of business.

'But the key is to remain likeable while remembering the end goal'

Except if you let rip and swear, all you do is "up the ante" and increase the stress levels, whereas if you adopt a conciliatory approach it helps you to break down the defensive walls people put up when they are confronted.

Women are better generally at this approach because we don't always see such exchanges as win-lose environments.

A good business deal is when there is value on both sides.

In the same way, if you complain in a positive way by asking the person you are speaking to for support, you buoy them up because you are encouraging them to think it is within their power to achieve a positive outcome, and you are more likely to come away with a favourable response.

If you rant, not only do you

First Person



Wendy Spalding-Siracusa, of Angels Bring Business

encourage confrontation, but you also embarrass yourself, put yourself in the wrong, and lose the chance of future business.

Mediation is the new buzz word in the law. Emma Lawler, a partner in the family department of Silks & Betteridge, said: "Mediation is an alternative to lengthy and expensive court proceedings. It diffuses the stress levels and is more likely to stop the parties going to court."

If you are "nice" then your influence increases. Some people see this as being weak, but the key is to remain likeable while remembering the end goal.

You want to stay firm but pleasant, focusing on the bigger picture and being the "bigger man".

Far from being a pushover that takes inner strength. Unfortunately for women if we adopt a hard-edged negotiation style we come across as the proverbial bitch, whereas a man will more often get a pat on the back for the same approach.

In that situation the hard-nosed business woman will find herself disliked by both sexes, ostracised by the women for acting like a man, and of course, never one of the boys in any case.

It may be somewhat machiavellian to collide with the system, but it's just being pragmatic.

So the next time you feel inclined to rant, instead of coming across as a screaming banshee, take a deep breathe, smile and remain nice. Ask yourself "Do I want to be right, or do I want to get what I want?"

by Ryan Butcher

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Young people and former prostitutes in Rwanda are pulling themselves out of poverty and setting up their own businesses, thanks to money raised by a county firm.

Throughout the year, Lincolnshire Co-operative staff have been fundraising on behalf of Plan UK, an international children's development charity.

The money has been used to help the poorest people in Rwandan communities to set up their own co-operatives, including a group of 29 ex-prostitutes who had saved up enough money to leave the sex trade and set up a cassava co-op. Cassava is a drought-tolerant crop which can provide food for many people.

Other co-operatives supporting efforts include a tailoring business, started by six young people, a handcrafted wedding goods businesses, made up of 50 women and girls of varying ages, and a beehive business used by communities to support their families.

Lincolnshire Co-operative bosses and the three top fundraisers - Scott Clarke, Karen Howseman and Ryan Gryniwicz - flew to Rwanda to

see first-hand the progress being made in the country.

It also included the group's charity of the year co-ordinator, Fiona Niblett, who described the trip as "heart-warming".

"The Rwandan people are just so positive and we could see the similarities between our co-op and theirs."

'What is striking about the Rwandan people is how they have found a way to move forward after their troubled past'

Ursula Lidbetter

"The money that people make from the co-operatives means they can support their families and get health insurance."

"The kids were delightful too. They all spoke a little English to us and shook our hands when we got out of the car - it really was the trip of a lifetime."

"A girl from a tailoring co-operative, Girmbereheza, told us how she'd got a loan of 8,000 from Rwandan Franks, 28, to start her own sideline business - selling second hand clothes - and she'd already made £3,200."

enough to pay and support her.

"When you start from just 'ing'."

Lincolnshire's executive, Ursula joined the group.

She said: "We about the Rwanda how they have move forward troubled past."

"There was positivity, hope."

"This is a chance the world's we to welcome proud to be share our with you."

"We felt there."

"The money ing, cycling funds the these new every new."

"But more that our vatives let our co-op, united with lective end tomorrow."

More that raised so the UK and the ity Pascal."

A final nounced weeks."



Helping themselves: Staff from Lincolnshire Co-operative, many pictured above, help people in Rwanda set up their own firms, helping them to escape poverty