

International leadership skills for women

Als Ihr Personal Trainer gibt KEN TAYLOR Ihnen Expertentipps, wie Sie Ihre Kompetenzen im Geschäftsalltag verbessern können. Seine Gesprächspartnerin ist Vorsitzende einer Organisation, die Seminare speziell für Frauen anbietet, um sie für Führungspositionen zu stärken.

MEDIUM AUDIO



CONNIE R. MONTAGUE

is a communication skills trainer. She is experienced in leading intercultural and diversity management workshops, as well as seminars for international negotiating and presentation skills. She works for large and medium-sized international companies in Germany and abroad. She is also the chair of the BPW (Business and Professional Women) Europe task force for leadership and lifelong learning. There, she develops leadership training for women in business. BPW International works to support the professional, leadership and business potential of women on all levels.



KEN TAYLOR

is a communication consultant, personal coach and author of *50 Ways to Improve Your Business English* (Summertown).
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chair [tʃeə]

► Vorsitzende(r)

diversity

[dɪˈvɜːsəti]

► Vielfalt

medium-sized

[ˈmiːdiəm saɪzɪd]

► mittelgroß;
hier: mittelständisch

negotiating

[niˈɡəʊʃieɪtɪŋ]

► Verhandeln

Conny Montague: I recently helped BPW to organize and run a two-day personal empowerment programme (PEP) on Malta for a multinational group of businesswomen.

Ken Taylor: And what was the goal of this programme?

Montague: To empower women to take leadership roles by giving them the skills and tools they need to do that. I thought it might be interesting to discuss with you what skills women need to become good international leaders.

Taylor: There have been several surveys looking at women in leadership. I was reading an online article in *Forbes* magazine, which suggested some areas where women in business should improve. One key area was speaking up. The article suggested that many women do not speak up about their own achievements.

Montague: Right. On our personal empowerment programme, we practise presenting ourselves and our ideas. We practise planned and spontaneous presenting.

Taylor: In my experience, poor presentations are often caused by a lack of confidence. With a few simple tools and some practice, you can see immediate improvements.

Montague: I agree. For example, having a clear, simple structure for the presentation helps enormously.

Taylor: I teach a simple three-step structure for most presentations. Step 1: Have an excellent opening, where you grab your audience's attention. Motivate the audience to listen to you by answering the unspoken question, "What's in it for me?" You can also give an overview of what you are going to talk about. Step 2: Go through the main points of the presentation one by one. Have three to five key points that you want your audience to remember. And give plenty of examples from real life. Step 3: End the presentation with a clear summary and with your key message as your final sentence.

Montague: That's similar to what we teach. Another area we look at is negotiating. It's a myth that women are not good negotiators. Several surveys show

achievement

[əˈtʃiːvmənt]

► Leistung, Errungenschaft

audience [ˈɔːdiəns]

► Zuhörer(innen)

empowerment

[ɪmˈpaʊəmənt]

► etwā: Stärkung des Selbstvertrauens

goal [ɡəʊl]

► Ziel(setzung)

grab sb.'s attention

[ˌgræb əˈtenʃən] jfm.

► jmds. Aufmerksamkeit erregen

negotiating [niˈɡəʊʃieɪtɪŋ]

► Verhandeln

negotiator

[niˈɡəʊʃieɪtə]

► Verhandlungsführer(in)

opening [ˈəʊpənɪŋ]

► hier: Einleitung

speak up

[ˌspiːk ˈʌp]

► etwā: sich trauen, seine Meinung zu sagen

summary [ˈsʌməri]

► Zusammenfassung

survey [ˈsɜːveɪ]

► Umfrage

What's in it for me?

[wɒts ˌɪn ɪt fə ˈmiː]

► Was habe ich davon?

that women are very good at negotiating, especially on behalf of others. Where they can improve is when negotiating for their own interests. On the PEP seminar, we look especially at negotiating one's salary. **Taylor:** Interesting. This seems to show a lack of self-belief. Perhaps assertiveness training could help. You can certainly be trained to be more confident and self-assured without being aggressive.

Montague: It's partly to do with language. We assume that an international leader has good English language skills, but some situations might still cause linguistic problems — saying no, for example. **Taylor:** I have problems with that, too! My strategy now is to do two things. I try to avoid the word “no”. I use the phrase “I'm afraid...”, which means that it is not in my personal power to help at that moment. Then I try to offer a positive alternative.

Montague: So, if I ask you if we could meet on Friday and you want to say no, what would you say? **Taylor:** I'm afraid I'm tied up on Friday. Could we make it sometime next week instead?

Montague: That's good. We also build on a skill that many women have, which we call “cautious honesty”. This is telling the truth but in a diplomatic way. **Taylor:** That's not easy, especially in a foreign language. Can you give an example?

Montague: For example, when giving negative feedback. Women tend to aim more for dialogue and cooperation. Instead of “I have requested this meeting to talk about the quality of your service” they might say, “I was wondering if we could meet to talk about the service you provide us with.” **Taylor:** Some cultures don't mind very direct communication, but in other cultures, messages need to be presented

more diplomatically. Leaders need to be sensitive to the situation and the person.

Montague: Sensitivity to cultural differences is an important skill for international managers. One simple example is being aware of different dress codes for

women. If you dress inappropriately, you may not be taken seriously by your business partners. In some cultures, businesswomen should dress with feminine elegance. But the same clothes might have a negative effect in cultures that expect women to dress more simply or casually.

Taylor: And first impressions count. The clothes can distract your business partners and pre-

vent them from listening to what you have to say. How important is mentoring to working internationally?

Montague: Mentoring is a great way to get support. With Skype and similar online messaging services, international mentoring is not a problem.

Taylor: A report for the Commonwealth Secretariat says that one of the main things holding many women back is lack of time because of their “double burden”. Besides being in full-time employment, many women are still mainly responsible for the home. And this can lower women's ambition to advance in their organizations.

Montague: That's very true. Women are as ambitious as men at the start of their careers. But when home and family start taking up their time and energy, this ambition begins to fade. The ambition can also be blunted if they recognize gender bias in their male bosses, in their organizations or in their cultures.

Taylor: And yet, a *Harvard Business Review* survey of over 7,000 managers shows clearly that women bosses are generally better than men at many of the key skills associated with leadership!

“You can be trained to be more confident without being aggressive”

Montague: Women are usually very competent when it comes to skills like taking the initiative, motivating people, developing others, building teams and relationships, as well as at managing change.

Taylor: So, what is holding women back?

Montague: Many lack self-confidence and the ability to promote themselves. But this can be improved through training programmes and mentoring. What's harder to deal with is gender bias and the “double burden”. These areas depend on changes of attitudes in society in general.

Taylor: In many countries and organizations, these changes are now happening.

Montague: Yes, many now realize that having a good gender balance delivers better and more sustainable performance.

Taylor: That sounds like a good, positive note to end on!



What's your challenge?

Would you like to have a conversation with Ken Taylor about your current work challenges? If so, send an email with your name, company and the subject you would like to discuss to business.trainer@spotlight-verlag.de. In each issue, we will choose one reader who will talk to Ken, and the dialogue will be published in *Business Spotlight*.

advance in sth.

[əd'vɑ:ns]
• in etw. vorankommen

assertiveness

[ə'sɜ:tvɪnəs]
• Selbstsicherheit, Durchsetzungsvermögen

blunted

['blʌntɪd]
• abgestumpft; hier: vermindert

casually

['kæʒuəli]
• leger

distract sb.

[dɪ'strækt]
• jmdn. ablenken

double burden

[ˌdʌbəl 'bɜ:dn]
• Doppelbelastung

fade

[feɪd]
• verblassen; hier: schwinden

gender bias

['dʒendə 'bi:əs]
• geschlechtsspezifische Vorurteile

inappropriately

[ˌɪnə'prəʊpɪətli]
• unangemessen

note

[nəʊt]
• hier: Schlussbemerkung

on behalf of

[ɪn bi'ha:f əv]
• im Interesse von, für

self-assured

[ˌself ə'ʃɜ:d]
• selbstsicher

sensitive: be ~ to sth.

['sensətɪv] • feinfühlig mit etw. umgehen

sensitivity

[ˌsensə'tɪvətɪ]
• Feingefühl

sustainable

[sə'steɪnəbəl]
• nachhaltig; tragfähig

take sth. up

[ˌteɪk 'ʌp]
• etw. beanspruchen

tied up: be ~

[ˌtaɪd 'ʌp]
• verhindert sein