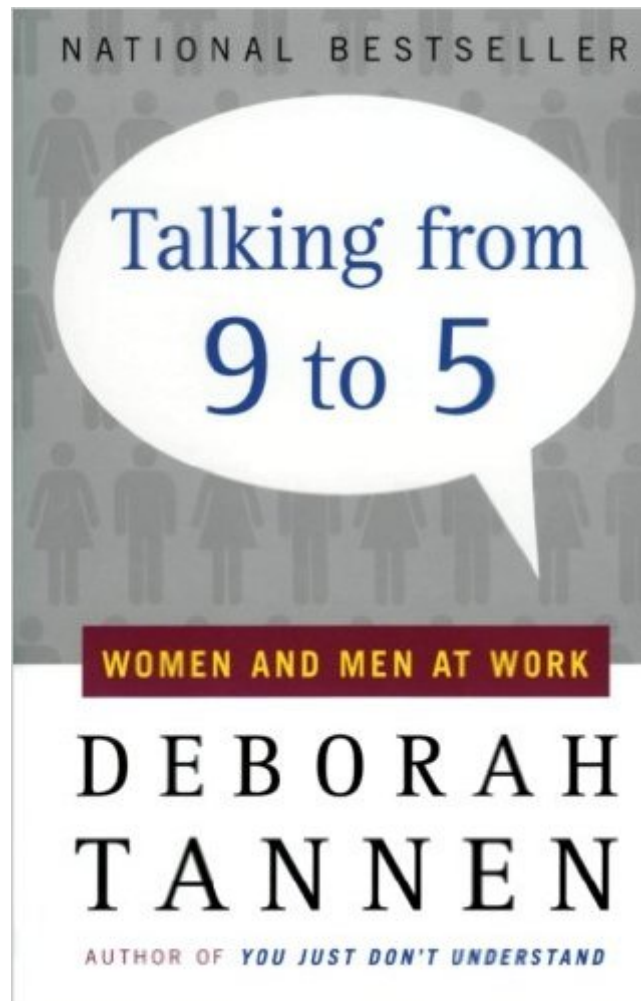


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# Talking From 9 To 5: Women And Men At Work



## Synopsis

Your project went off without a hitch--but somebody else got the credit...You averted a crisis brilliantly--but no one noticed...You came to the meeting with a sensational idea--but it was ignored until someone else said the same thing...HOW CAN YOU GET CREDIT & GET AHEAD?In her extraordinary international bestseller, *You Just Don't Understand*, Deborah Tannen transformed forever the way we look at intimate relationships between women and men. Now she turns her keen ear and observant eye toward the workplace--where the ways in which men and women communicate can determine who gets heard, who gets ahead, and what gets done.An instant classic, *Talking From 9 to 5* brilliantly explains women's and men's conversational rituals--and the language barriers we unintentionally erect in the business world. It is a unique and invaluable guide to recognizing the verbal power games and miscommunications that cause good work to be underappreciated or go unnoticed--an essential tool for promoting more positive and productive professional relationships among men and women.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

TALKING FROM 9 TO 5: WOMEN AND MEN AT WORK by Deborah Tannen is a book that everyone should read if he or she goes to work, anywhere. If you are a boss or have a boss, you should read this book (thank you Mom & Dad). If you work with other people, you should read this book. Now that I have stressed that, I will tell you more about the book's focus and the points Tannen makes very well. She is well known for her book, *YOU JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND*, which

I have not read, but which is about how relationship problems come about due to differing communication styles between women and men ("Report" talk by men vs. "rapport" talk by women -- women talk "troubles talk" to build community, when men hear this, they are more than likely to feel that the problems need solving and will say what to do; this creates dissonance as the woman just wants to feel understood not "bossed" around, and the man can't understand why she's telling him problems if she doesn't want solutions). This book takes those issues to work and through many examples from her own research and others in sociolinguistics, anthropology and sociology, Tannen makes the point that different communication styles are problematic only when people don't understand them, that there is no "better" way to talk than another. Tannen made a fascinating point about communication styles and conversation rituals. She writes that people think they can tell when someone is lying to them, but research shows that really, people are not good at discerning this. In a similar way, we think we can tell if someone is confident and a good leader by the way they talk, but we can't. A woman, who raises the tone of her statements to sound like questions, who gives indirect orders and who seeks input before making decisions may often be assumed to be weaker than a man in a similar role, but her conversation rituals are not a true mark of who she is; they are the communication style that she was more likely than not socialized to use as a woman. Likewise, men are assumed to want the floor and command, when sometimes they would rather not take it. Tannen gives evidence on how difficult it is for women to be heard in meetings, and provides anthropological studies that show that as far back as age 3, boys listen to boys and girls listen to girls at play, but boys do not listen to girls, and may ignore and insult them when they pipe up to direct activities. This book is not a polemic against men or masculine styles. Tannen finds that most communication styles are appropriate in many instances. There is more than one way to get the job done, and sometimes, a masculine style is better than a feminine style, and sometimes the opposite is true, but she makes it very clear that a lack of that understanding can be detrimental to organizations because of erroneous assumptions made about people's abilities based on their conversational style. One of her overriding points, born out by her research, is that women tend to talk to build community and do not like to stand out for accomplishments or for failures in a group. They will engage in ritual talk that seeks inclusion so as to maintain good feeling among the group, not because they are insecure and need to feel that no one dislikes them. Men, on the other hand, tend to engage in one-up talk, are more sensitive to being one down, and will take the lead to avoid being bested. (When a woman who is trying to build community is "one-upped" by a man who takes her ritualistic talk and her willingness to put herself down to create harmony, she feels "betrayed" by his spurning of her communal talk to take the upper hand. Who is "right?" Neither, but their

reactions to the same conversation may be very different and in some cases, harmful to the organization.) This book really changed the way I think about organizational life, the assumptions that I draw, the way I have communicated with people who worked for me, and what I will strive to do in the future. Even if you don't read the whole thing, buy it and keep it around. The last chapter, "Who gets heard" is especially instructive, and the afterword is a great essay on the issue with justification for her methods and theories. I think this book would be perfect for anyone who reports to someone of the opposite gender or who is the boss of same. But because the standards for styles are not entirely gender based, I would, again, suggest this book to EVERYONE.

One of the most frequent criticisms I have heard of this work from my colleagues is, "So what do I do about it?", "How do I fix it?" Interesting enough to me, most of these comments were from men. Most of my female colleagues seemed more content to understand, appreciate and work within the differences. Deborah Tannen is careful not to show a preference for one style over another, and careful to respect both speaking modes. This approach can be very frustrating to anyone looking for a "How to" business book. This book is not about solutions any more than a book comparing the French and Spanish cultures is about solutions. It is about understanding linguistic/cultural differences. Those who understand will appreciate the "other's" language. Those who do not understand will keep on misunderstanding, wondering what is wrong and looking for a book that will tell them how to fix it. I regularly recommend this book to every business woman in one of my seminars. And, I recommend that they also buy copies for (a) their boss and (b) all of their subordinates . . . particularly if they are men.

Dr. Tannen has written several books detailing the effect of gender upon conversational style. This book, specifically, offers insights specific to the work place. The author cites research to substantiate her claims, but she does not bore the reader with scientific paradigms -- she speaks in a language we all can understand. The biggest problem with the book is that it does not seem to flow. Her theories need to be better articulated through the book, and she needs to spend more time making sure that everything does not run together. If you have not read "You just don't understand," and you have a choice between the two books, pick that one. It will give the same information in a more organized way.

I wish I would have read this book 20 years ago. It was an eye-opening experience. As a female executive working in a male-dominated profession, this book shed new light on interactions I've had

with male colleagues, bosses and employees where I felt something had been "lost in translation" but couldn't put my finger on why. Put another way, this book teaches you the other gender's "secret language." In a dream world, this would be mandatory reading for all men in the workplace. Males who are not aware of these communication differences are likely not hiring or promoting talented female employees because they misconstrue their politeness for passiveness, or their humble remarks (or even self-degrading remarks) for lack of confidence, etc. As a working woman, reading this book gave me an advantage. After reading it, I find myself using a different communication style now with males at work than I do with females at work. At least now I am aware of how the "female" communication style I naturally use is probably being heard by my male superiors. Likewise, as a boss I've put this book, along with "Who Moved My Cheese?", on the reading list for new hires. Substantively, I felt the book could have used some major editing starting about half-way through where it became a bit tedious. But it's worth the read for the important lessons learned. Lastly, others have criticized this book for not offering solutions to the problem. The solution is awareness. If both genders are aware of these communication differences, the problem is virtually eliminated.

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