

A VIEW FROM SUE UNERMAN

Three work hacks for changing your communication style

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"And now for our grand finish: Gloria Gaynor's I Will Survive in the manner of Bach."

It's a clever musical trick: adapting an existing tune or melody in the manner of another composer. The pre-dinner entertainment at the Marketing Society annual [gala](#) consisted of pianists Orit Wolf and Tal Zilber performing familiar tunes in unfamiliar versions, so a Mozart melody in the manner of Beethoven, Bach or Elton John.

There are of course some [performers](#) who change their own material to redefine the work. There are [others](#), many more, who stick to what is expected of them, where you know what you're going to hear and see at a gig, it's their repeated greatest hits and you'll love it.

One frequently asked question at [Glass Wall](#) book tour presentations is: "Are you telling me

that I need to act more like a man?” when we suggest that for instance women need to show off more or must find ways to be noticed in meetings. The answer is absolutely not. Please don’t act more like a man or indeed anyone else; instead find a way of trying out a different version of yourself.

This goes for anyone who has landed in a work environment where they find that their natural communication style isn’t cutting through. Keep the tune, change the execution, emulate Orit and Tal.

Here are three top quick fix things to try:

- **Mirroring**

This is a basic NLP or neuro-linguistic programming technique. Remember that studies show that more than half of communication face to face is from body language rather than from what you say. Mirroring is a way to show that you can be in tune with the person you’re talking to. It’s very simple. If the person you’re trying to communicate with crosses their legs, then cross yours, and in the same direction. If they lean forward, lean forward. If they sit back sit back. It might feel weird, but it can be very effective in getting people’s attention.

- **Dressing**

Think carefully about what you’re wearing. In The Glass Wall we analysed research conducted for us by Lightspeed GMI in the UK, US and Russia about communication style. We asked where people would place themselves on a scale of 1-10 where 1 is very feminine and 10 is very blokey.

The result has proved fascinating in discussions since publication with our readers. One woman pointed out to us that how she saw herself (at 7 on the scale) was very different to how her team member saw her (at 3). She came to understand that what she wore on a particular day made a big difference to how she came across. Of course you must wear what makes you feel awesome, but it is worth bearing in mind that smart or casual, dressed

in black or dressed in peach, makes a difference to how you're perceived. If you normally wear pastels, changing to black and white might be the style spin that can transform your cut through to a colleague or client.

- Flex

Flex your communication style. If you know that you're a talker, try deliberately to be silent. If you know that you like to press on with the work, create space to make small talk at the top of your agenda.

Don't be afraid to experiment with how you come across at work. Don't just survive, thrive.

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