

Jane Henderson

I think he just wants to see me fall over on the way up to the stage. The reason I'm doing this talk, perhaps one of the more inadequate people amongst us, is that I've experienced going into meetings with projects on building works and what have you. Of walking into that room as the only woman and just feeling a sinking feeling, "Oh no, how am I going to get them to pay attention to me? How am I going to get them to take me seriously?"



Expertise, gender, credibility

Jane Henderson Cardiff University

And I stopped dying my hair purple when I was about 20 and that was a major improvement. But there are some other steps that you can also take on board. And what I want to do really in this presentation is talk very, very briefly about some of the techniques that you can use to improve your influence in difficult situations, particularly in the light of women working with groups of men who don't necessarily take them very seriously. Particularly when you're trying to tell them technical stuff.

Now I know some people are great communicators and very charismatic and other people aren't. And I think it's for the other people that I'm really aiming this, because I know it's really easy to feel "oh well, so and so can do it but I can't", and it's really how, if you don't really tell the meeting or really tell the project, do you go back and look over what you did, review it and think, "how can I make changes in the future." So it's really a bit about a toolkit.

Now, the one thing I really hate in terms of influence is those aeroplane flight departure lounge books that say you know, "how to become successful in" – don't try and copy Richard Branson. It won't work for you. However, we can learn from other people's situations, as long as we don't simply copy.

Two very, very basic points I need to get out of the way in terms of disclaimers. The first is power. If you've got power, don't worry about any of the rest of my talk. Just go in, tell them what to do, go home. The other thing is that influence techniques are techniques but they're not guarantees. In the end of the day, we can't perform

miracles. So what I'm going to do is look at some theories and some theoretical models that people have developed, which I think are quite convincing and can explain some of the situations that we're looking at.

The first thing is really about influence – now a lot of early research into influence was about this sort of situation.



Vary any one element to change the encounter.

- **Source:** You the conservator
- **Message:** 'The cases must have less than one air change per day'
- **Receiver:** The exhibition design team

- **Context ...**

Expertise, gender and credibility

I stand here, I talk to you, one to many, you can't talk back unless you're very, very confident, and therefore it's a one-off encounter. But for most of us in meetings it's not like that. We have to communicate. We sit down with people, we talk, we have to meet them the next day, we have to work with them in the future and so in reality most real influence is a context, a situation where each element of the equation is interrelated. So if you think of the source as someone who's trying to say something, the message obviously that you're trying to communicate, and the receiver as your target audience, no one element is unconnected to the other. So if you want to manipulate a situation, you can change any one element, but it will change the encounter. So just to illustrate.

If your message in the design meeting is that the case must have less than one air change per day and you're trying to convince the exhibition design team, the context in which you deliver that message will impact on how well that message is taken across. So if you deliver it for example in a formal situation, it will be received differently than if you try to raise it over the third glass of wine in the evening.

And the point I'm making here is that it's the same message, the same source, the same audience, but a different impact because you changed the context.

So by using that transactional model, you can manipulate variables, and understand that every variable counts. Now unfortunately I haven't got time to go through every variation on every thing that you can do, so I'm mainly going to look at the project

meeting type scenario and look at particularly you as the source. Particularly women as the source and a little bit about message content.

Now the talk is meant to be on expertise, gender and credibility, so let's get on to credibility.



Main elements of credibility

- Competence
- Trustworthiness

Expertise, gender and credibility

And I think credibility and expertise are very much hand in hand. In terms of what you read in the books, two of the key elements that you hear about are competence and trustworthiness, as elements of credibility and I'm mainly going to take it on trust that you are a trustworthy bunch, that you're not lying to your colleagues in meetings, because that does undermine your credibility. Other things which you may or may not be able to manipulate which are also features of credibility are attractiveness.



Other features of credibility

- Attractiveness
- Charisma
- Dynamism
- Sociability

Expertise, gender and credibility

Obviously some of us have it but not all. And so on and so forth. Now, it is quite interesting that in different situations, different features of credibility will take on more importance, so on an emotional issue then things like sociability will be more importance.

Whereas in a situation of factual exchange then clearly competence will take on more importance. That's obviously why we go to different people for advice about our love lives and for advice about our air conditioning systems. But let's look mainly therefore at the serious ones to do with factual exchanges. Credibility and trustworthiness is, amazingly very, very interesting – how much they matter is entirely to do with the context. Everything about persuasion is situational – it always depends on the situation.

So this chap here you might see as extremely untrustworthy and uncredible on the subject of whether he should be employed as your housesitter. On the other hand, if you were a policeman trying to track down the market in stolen goods, he might be a very, very credible source indeed. Now, the point about this rather flippant remark is that credibility is not a fixed characteristic that is bound up with the source.



Credibility is:

- Not a fixed characteristic
- Depends on the topic
- Depends on an evaluation of you by the listener

Expertise, gender and credibility

You are not always a credible person on every subject. It's always to do with the situation that you're in. It depends on the topic, so it's issue-dependent. Probably the most important thing is that you don't have an absolute rating of credibility. Your credibility is in effect an evaluation of you by the listener on the subject compared to their considered expertise on that subject and so they talk about it as a self-source subject evaluation. And just to illustrate some of these points, you've got the topic of headaches, you want some advice. You ask a medical doctor.



Credibility: self:source:subject evaluation

Source: A medical doctor
Self: You
Subject: Curing headaches

Do you find them credible?

Expertise, gender and credibility

Do you find them credible? Well, I would say generally in that situation you would do. The same source, the same self but a completely different topic – do you think we should employ a descant or refrigerant humidifier in this situation?



Credibility: self:source:subject evaluation

Source: A medical doctor
Self: You
**Subject: Desiccant or refrigerant
dehumidifier**

Do you find them credible?

Expertise, gender and credibility

Well, probably you wouldn't take your doctor on trust on this one. My doctor's great on juggling, and he's been on Richard and Judy, but he doesn't know anything about humidifiers. So the point really in this situation is that again just one change in the situation will change how credible and therefore how influential you are in the situation.

So how do we transfer that into the conservation field? Change it round now. It's you trying to get your message across. I think that the difficulty that we have in these situations is deciding on what the self-source subject evaluation of ourselves is, and

that's something I think we should all try and do in a meeting. Look at the people you're trying to convince, and think what do they think of me on this topic? And that's very, very important. Now what you can do is, you can't work it out but you know you're not getting anywhere. You can assume that they're not evaluating you as an expert.

Now that doesn't mean that you have to give up, because you manipulate the variables. You can't change them, sadly sometimes, you've really got to stick to the question of humidifiers, so why don't you change the source? Let's use a real expert. I call this the BS5454 effect. When things get tough in a meeting you say well, it's not up to me, it's in BS5454. And this is where the whole business about credibility and trustworthiness comes in, because of course if you lie about that and they check, you really are in trouble.

Just to sort of stick on this very, very briefly, I wanted to talk about the difference between the impact of the message and the messenger. Because it does seem really annoying and trivial that it's the evaluation of the messenger that counts rather than the evaluation of the message. It is the case that the more people are thinking about the message, the more that they're engaged with the topic, the more likely they are to evaluate the message. But if you think about adverts for Pepsi, they don't say anything about Pepsi at all do they? They just say Beyonce drinks it or Beckham drinks it, and that's it. And in that situation, the point that you see is how much it's simply source evaluation that's coming into play.

Now, one of the problems for conservators is that in a meeting on their fascinating topic of descant or refrigerant dehumidifiers, we are so interesting, aren't we? We're so anal. And so we're really, really interested, and it is a bit tempting to project onto other people that they're as interested as you on the subject. So if you're thinking, "this is really important to everyone, they're bound to be evaluating the message." Do bear in mind what I call the Homer Simpson with the tweeting birds effect, you know, Marge is telling him off and all he's thinking about is little birds. Just because you're interested in something doesn't mean that they are. So there's a fair chance that they're not engaging in the topic and therefore there's a fair chance they're evaluating you, not what you're saying.

So this means that you have to be on the ball – am I being an expert at the moment? – and this can be really quite interesting, because I said it was situation that's topical. So you could be having a blinder of a meeting.. You've really got them eating out of your hands on humidification and you've established your expertise. It's going fantastically. You move on to the next item on the agenda, which is case specification and in the room is a designer who's been specifying cases perhaps for the last 20 years.



Credibility: self:source:subject evaluation

Source: You
Self: The building services manager
Subject: Desiccant or refrigerant dehumidifier
Do they find *you* credible?

Expertise, gender and credibility

And one minute you're the expert, and the next minute they're thinking, "yeah. She may know about humidification but he knows about cases. And suddenly you've stopped being an expert in that same meeting and therefore you look less credible and therefore you're less influential. And so you have to bear in mind that whole variable situation, that you can move from expert to non-expert in the course of five minutes.

Now I really wanted to look a bit more about how this process is affected by gender and I want to use something called language expectancy theory, by a lovely chap called Burgan.

And what it's all about is that he argues that people project onto other people what they think they're going to communicate like, and he calls this normative communication.



Credibility: self:source:subject evaluation

Source: May Cassar / MLA / CIBSE

Self: The building services manager

Subject: Desiccant or refrigerant dehumidifier

Do they find the source (and therefore the message) credible?

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And then he says that what people do is, once they've decided what you're going to be like, they listen to you and they evaluate you on how you perform compared to what they expected. So your persuasiveness is how well you perform compared to their expectation.

Expected behaviour, enacted behaviour and persuasiveness.

Area of Positive Violations of Communication Norms



Bandwidth of Normative, expected communication behaviour



Area of Negative Violations of Communication Norms

Trouble is, you don't know what their expectation was. This is the equation to make it look like this really is something to do with science and so Dave doesn't kick me out of my job. And really what he argues is that if person a is expected to behave in the normal band and they perform better than expectation, they're positively influential. But person b, may have been initially evaluated as being negative. They behave better than that and they're influential. Poor old person c, however, behaved

worse than they were predicted. The point being, it's not a level playing field. It's not how well you perform in the meeting, it's how well you perform in relationship to their evaluation of you before you started.

So just to illustrate this, in terms of someone who positively violates expectations. Look, the classic example is Malcolm X. Many, many white American commentators constantly commented on how positive he was, because before they went to see him, they imagined a sort of foaming at the mouth black radical with a gun and when they actually went to hear Malcolm X, he was consistently rational, extremely well-spoken, extremely well presented, and so what he did was a positive violation of expectations and therefore was extremely influential.

So far so good. Here's the bad bit for the ladies. The research shows that the normative boundary and, in other words, what people expect is much narrower for women than it is for men. Which means that there is a more limited range of expected performance for women and therefore it's much easier for women to fail than it is for men. The interesting thing you've noticed I put after men is experts. If you're an expert you can be a man, so you can behave more strangely, but this does explain to a certain extent what I think. Why it's much easier for the eccentric man to rise in an organisation than it is for an eccentric woman to rise in an organisation. Because the normative behaviour, the width of tolerance is much greater for men than it is for women.



Now this research was done in 1985 and subsequent tests on college students have shown that they didn't have quite such stereotypical attitudes; however, students in 1966 might not have had stereotypical attitudes, but perhaps as they move to the workplace they gain them. What is worth saying is that I am convinced that in some situations that certainly does still operate, whereas in some organisations maybe it doesn't. And so it's useful for yourself to work out how you're being evaluated and you can, based on the situations that you find yourself. So for example when I go to a small, voluntarily-run museum,

I find it very easy to establish myself as an expert and use the full range of argument strategies available to experts. On the other hand, in this situation, I can expect to be evaluated differently. So the difficulty is how do you negatively violate expectations? Well one of the ways, if you're a woman, is to use negative argument strategies.



Language Expectancy Theory (Burgoon)

- Considers language and credibility.
- People have a view of what is 'normal' communication behaviour for others.
- A persuader can positively or negatively violate expectations.
- Negative expectation violation inhibits persuasiveness.

Expertise, gender and credibility

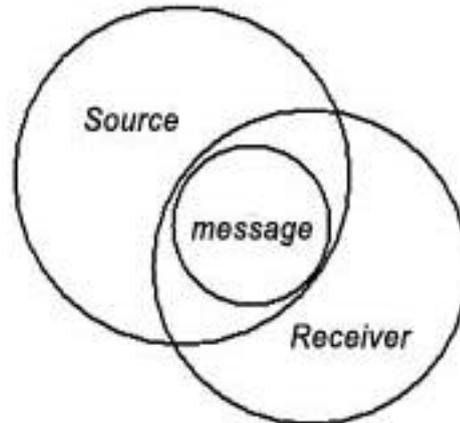
If you use negative argument strategies and you violate expectations, then you are likely to be counter-influential; in other words, whatever you say, they're going to do the opposite. And this is a bit of a problem, because negative argument strategies are things like, "if you do this, the humidity will get too high. If you put these doors there, the gallery will fluctuate. The doors were, do damage to the objects. Dust will do this." And all these are negative argument statements. Now, unfortunately in this situation, where the man or a male audience have traditional normative predictions of you, the woman, then they will actually be inclined to do the opposite. This is what the research shows.

There are more problems. There's another theory that I'd like to add by Boston. It's about height over benefit situations. It's a theory I think invented for conservators although he hadn't discovered it. He argues that the more you believe that what you've got to say is for the benefit of the person you're trying to convince, the more strongly you will put your argument. He also argued, you will therefore use more aggressive arguments and more negative arguments; the things I've just said you shouldn't use. And this is the problem. I think that conservators very often believe that what they're doing is for the benefit of the collections and therefore for the people around them, and so they do find themselves in these high benefit situations. And because of that they can ignore their own poor persuasive techniques. This is known as the 12th commando effect. The difficulty is, you get into a spiral. They don't do what you say, you argue, escalate the argument by being more aggressive, a few more red-hot poker or whatever, and they continue not to listen to you and sometimes even cut you out of their meetings.

So just to summarise those points.

Persuasive effectiveness

- For a female **source**
- **persuasive effectiveness** will be
- shaped by the **reactions** of the **receiver**



The persuasive effectiveness of you the source, particularly female sources, will be shaped much more by the reactions of the receiver than by your actions as such.

And you should bear that in mind. The other thing I want to say in summary on that point, is not to forget the important point that just because it matters to you, it doesn't matter to them. And therefore you know to continue to escalate on your higher the benefit type strategy won't work.

Research shows that there are

'no actual differences between men and women [s behaviour] that can account for differences in organisational experiences'

Miller, 1999:239

Rather depressingly, research has shown that there is no difference between what men and women do that accounts for their difference in organisational experience. This means that for the exact same behaviour from a woman and from a man in the same situation can lead to different outcomes. I think that could be considered to be quite depressing. I mean some people might argue with this. Certainly. Why not? Make it more interesting. But I think there's a lot of truth in that. So what do we do about this situation? Well, you may choose to do some of these things. It's up to you. You may choose to be more positive and try and use more rational arguments. You may try to be more conservative in your dress and language.

11 years ago Jim O'Greavy advised me that if I wanted to get on in conservation I'd have to buy a suit. Nine years of work, two years of a masters programme and I suddenly realised he was right.

You may also want to choose to copy some of the masculine influence techniques but I would play that with extreme caution. Just because the blokes all go off and play golf or drink whisky down the pub, it doesn't mean you have to do those things. But you should be aware of the impact of those things. Informal networks, particularly if you're excluded from them, can lead to you being a less influential person. People like people who are like themselves. And therefore they praise people who do the same things. You know if you find someone who's another Everton supporter, you praise them and that encourages each other.

Informal networks have the positives, benefits of the association of food and alcohol – people feel happier around those things and there's a sort of warm glow that passes to all the other people that you've shared a lovely meal with.

The other thing that's interesting is that mutual and successful cooperation will make you more influential, so if you have one building project that goes well, people will like you more. The impact of the positive mutual and successful cooperation will make you more influential in the future.

So, persuasion is situational. You may not want to change anything, but the point is if you understand that you can break a situation down, you can change some of those things. You can analyse puzzling responses and try and change things about yourself. You don't always win. But in the first instance, if you feel you've been banging your head against a brick wall, there are some things you can stop doing. There are some things you can do.

The first thing is if you've found yourself in a negative spiral of threats I would advise drop the thumbscrews. Don't give up. Try and manipulate some of those variables. Can you change the source? Can you either make yourself more credible by buying a briefcase and wearing a suit? Can you say, I didn't think it but the funding body said you have to do it? Clare Smith at English Heritage has a computer that tells people what to do, it's even better. I don't think you should do this, the computer says you have to do it, and it works fantastically. Can you change your messages? Are you being too negative?

Can you be more positive? Or can you even change the topic? You've been discussing air conditioning till you're blue in the face and getting nowhere. They

think they're the techie and you're not – maybe you're never going to convince them on that subject. Why don't you change it to sustainability and green issues, you know, this is a more environmental solution? Maybe at that point they'll let go of their expertise and actually listen to you. So, obviously try and change things but at the end of the day, it doesn't always work and don't blame yourself. Just go and get another job.

Simon Cane

Thank you very much, Jane. We do have time for a couple of questions from the floor.

Simon Cane

Questions from the floor? Thank you, Chris.

Chris Woods?

Shall I wait for the mike or can you hear me? It's me again. You've talked a lot about the source, us as a source – can you say anything about the receiver, us as receivers? Have you looked into that?

Jane Henderson

Us as receivers. ... This, oh gosh, I can't summarise it. I think in any situation what I would say is that one of the things that people have been saying today about architects is how frustrating it is that they don't understand us. I would suggest that to be influential it's more important to understand them in any situation than to focus on them understanding us. So if you turn it around, even when you're trying to be the source, try and be a receiver as well. Try and actually listen to what people are saying and work out where they're coming from. I think in any situation that is the way forward. I know that didn't answer your question, but –

Brigitte Speake

Brigitte Speake, Flinders Petrie Museum in Oxford. But it's not only what the architects are saying. It's also the other group, like the mechanical engineer, and suddenly you're plunged into a meeting and you don't really know how that meeting is conducted and luckily somebody said oh, I think we just go round and see, say who you are and somehow you were introduced to it, but it would have been very nice if one had a few guidelines and sort of just, although you should be able to read a meeting and understand it, but you, it, I find it quite difficult, and I like your idea of changing things so that you know, if you've got, with the whole thing of humidity and the environment, and you can suddenly say, oh, have you any idea of how hot the pavement is outside? Oh, no, how do you know, and I say oh I've got the monitoring on that from the city surveyor or something, and by the way the grass in the park is at that level, and you then change the subject and get back to what the you know, original conservation that's getting so boring that you could really weep, that you're presenting it, so that bit sort of adds a different flavour to it.

Simon Cane

Thank you.

Jane Henderson

I'm a big fan of stock phrases for meetings, you know, if you get your value into the first five minutes of conversation, that always helps with architects.

Simon Cane

One more. Yes?

Woman

Sometimes I find if you've actually paid for the same advice from an external source it actually holds a lot more sway than if it comes from yourself within an organisation.

Jane Henderson

Yes. nothing like paying £500 to make you an expert, is there?

Simon Cane

Okay, we're going to have, wind the session up there, thank you very much Jane, that was very stimulating.



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