




5 Tips for Women to be Heard in a Meeting

(Surrounded by men)



"Your voice
is your value.
Let's make
it count."

Hey there. I'm Anneli Blundell.

I support professional women in male-dominated industries increase their visibility, confidence and personal power for greater professional impact.

I do this through my signature leadership program for women, focused on building presence, improving visibility and strategically managing the right professional impact in the workplace. This is so you can be seen and heard as a credible female leader, (without having to change your personality or become someone you're not).

My guide on how to be heard as a woman, in a meeting surrounded by men, (part of my signature program) has helped professional women find their

voice, share their value and expand their influence in a male dominated meeting environment.

It don't want you to suffer in silence as you wait patiently for your turn to speak, hoping to be heard when you do, and frustrated and fed up when people don't take you seriously. Or worse still, have your voice muted, and your value lost. Sigh.

I want you to use this guide so you'll know what to say, when to say it and how to say it, so that you will never be interrupted, ignored, overlooked, or undervalued again. Hooray!

Here's to your professional visibility and making a difference at work.

Xo
Anneli

Why you're not being heard in meetings



So you've been interrupted, ignored, or talked over in a meeting. You know what it's like to fight for air-time amongst quick, confident and constant communicators. You've sat in frustration, waiting patiently for a break in the conversation... that never came. You just can't get a word in edgeways, and you're exhausted.

Well you're not alone. Thousands of women I've coached and trained since 2006, report the same issues. Not being heard, not being seen and not making the right professional impact in work meetings. Not ideal!

Unfortunately, research tells us this is an all too common experience. Women's voices are stifled in mixed meeting settings, particularly if they are outnumbered by men. Here's the low down...



Air time is not equal



- Men dominate meeting conversations about 75% of the time (1)
- Men interrupt women 3 times more than they interrupt other men (2)
- When women are outnumbered, they speak for between a quarter and a third less time than the men (3)
- Women need to constitute a super majority of 70% of a room, in order to be seen as equally powerful and influential as men (4)

So there you go. Women's voices are not heard in mixed gender meetings and companies are missing out on the perspective of half the population. Ladies, there is much to be done.



Men are not the enemy



Side note: Now I don't want you to assume men are the enemy here. Most men aren't secretly plotting and scheming to silence women and sabotage their careers. Often it's simply a case of not realising the impact of being outnumbered, or being in the minority, due to one's gender (because they rarely are).

As a society we have conditioned men to communicate in a competitive manner and women to communicate in a cooperative manner.

Men are not bad, they are just blinkered. Bring them with you on this journey.



What's really going on here?



There is an issue for women in meetings outnumbered by men, and it's not just about being heard.

“The real issue is waiting to be heard.”

Waiting for an invitation. Waiting for permission. Waiting for the space to speak. We are hoping things will improve on their own and that people will notice we are not contributing to our full capacity and bring us in to the conversation.

But it rarely happens.

Not because other people don't value your perspective, but to be frank, people are busy, they are focused on their own issues, and they are not always versed in good communication etiquette.


You can't wait for others to create space for you. You need to carve out your own communication path.

And now you can.

5 Tips to be heard

Simply follow the five strategies below and start claiming your conversational space.

It's time to make the impact you know you can make. You've got this!

A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a dark grey sleeveless top, is shown from the chest up. She has her hands clasped in front of her chin and is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor space with large windows.

“We realise the importance of our voices only when we are silenced.”
- Malala Yousafzai



1. SPEAK EARLY, SPEAK OFTEN, SPEAK LAST

You know how when people join conference calls, they announce themselves into the system, and the computer then announces their arrival (and departure - awks if you're not supposed to leave early!). Bing, bing, bing. "Sally has joined the meeting." Beep, beep, beep. "Sam has left the meeting."

This lets people know who is in the room and who you can expect to hear from in the conversation. A face-to-face meeting is no different. You need to make yourself known to the others in the same way. You need to let them know you are here to contribute and you are supposed to be at this table.



So how do you do it? Speak early, speak often and speak last. I am here, I am contributing, I was involved. Speaking early might be a statement on how great it is that everyone was able to make time for the meeting. Speaking often might simply be encouraging other people's contributions, making supporting comments, and adding in your own ideas. Say something every 15 minutes or so. And speaking last might be summarising key insights or outlining next steps. Simple!

And no you don't have to say stuff that's already been said, or say something you think is irrelevant just to be heard. This isn't about speaking for the sake of it, it's about speaking for the value of it and value doesn't just have to come from new ideas.

2. SPEAK LIKE YOU MEAN IT



Remember when you were a kid and you were in trouble from your parents? Do you remember that tone? You know the one; The 'I mean business' tone. It was lower than usual, it was often slower than usual and you could just tell, they meant business. Well that tone can come in handy when you're trying to be heard in a meeting. Not the 'I'm your mum and you're getting into trouble bit', but the 'I'm here to provide value and I want to be heard', bit.

This means dumping the apologies, dropping the questioning tonality and backing your own ideas. You are in the meeting for a reason and you know what that reason is. When you mean business, you signal that intention through your tone, and eventually when you speak, people start to listen.

3. USE THE MAGIC WORDS



No, it's not please and thank you (though they're always nice). It's the kind of words that help you reclaim the conversation if you do get cut off.

They are simple, clear and strong. Words like, 'Let me finish.' 'I'm not done.' 'Please don't interrupt.'

They are a signal to the listener that you have more to say. They spotlight constant interrupters, but most importantly they send a clear message about the communication standard you expect in the room. Once you do this, others have permission to do the same, and perpetual interrupters will eventually get the hint.

4. ENLIST THE ECHO



Sometimes it doesn't matter what you say or how you say it. The only thing that will cut through and make your voice heard, is the strategic amplification of your message.

What do I mean by this? It's simple. Get a group of your supporters who you know will be in the room with you and get them to repeat what you've said.

The more people who repeat your message (and credit you), the harder you will be to ignore, overlook or discount.

So go ahead, pick your posse and away you go.

5. PERFECT THE PRE-MEETING



If all else fails and you're not having any luck in meetings, fear not, there is still another way! Before the meeting, grab some time with each person individually and start laying the foundation for your ideas.

Prime the participants to see the value in your idea to help that idea take hold in the meeting, even if it doesn't come from you. Sometimes people just want to hear certain messages or decisions from other people.

Don't fight it, follow it. Make sure you spend time with the most influential person or people and do your lobbying outside the meeting.

Where to from here?



Congratulations! You now have the strategies to make your mark in a meeting. You know when to speak, how to speak and what to say to carve out your space and make your value visible in the moment.

But, how about the rest of your career? What about all the meetings you're not invited to or the conversations you're not a part of?

To truly be seen as a leader, an authority and a credible professional, you need to build a reputation as an invaluable member of the organisation.

You need to get into the right meetings, be at the right tables, and be included in important conversations.

If you'd like to learn how to build presence, expand your impact and accelerate your career, I want to invite you to check out my in-depth masterclass where I deep dive into the three core elements of building your leadership brand - Confidence, Communication and Clout.

Together we unpack the strategies to fast track your success without becoming someone you're not.

[Click here for more info](#)