

Women in Leadership Highlights October 22, 2010



“New Insights: What Women Don’t Get About Men and Vice Versa” – featuring Shaunti Feldhahn, a former Wall Street financial analyst, now best selling author, speaker, and nationally-syndicated newspaper columnist. Her most recent books have sold 1M+ copies, and have been translated into 18 languages. Included in her popular “Only” series are *For Women Only: What You Need to Know about the Inner Lives of Men* and *For Men Only: A Straightforward Guide to the Inner Lives of Women*. Her newest book is *The Male Factor*. Shaunti travels extensively speaking to various audiences and has appeared on Fox News, PBS, TNT, Soap Talk, and FamilyLife

Today. Her weekly opinion columns are printed in newspapers around the country. She and her husband (and sometimes co-author) live in Atlanta with their family and enjoy living “at warp speed.” Shaunti graduated from The College of William and Mary with a degree in government and economics and holds a masters degree in public policy from Harvard. Prior to becoming an author, Shaunti served as an expert to analyze the Japanese financial crisis for the highest decision makers of the Federal Reserve System.

Shaunti’s latest book: *The Male Factor* – Based on seven years of intense research, interviews and surveys with more than 3,000 men; reveals the unfiltered, private thoughts and expectations of men in the workplace that often affect women but that women may not know. Just as a woman doing business in a foreign culture would want to understand that culture to be most effective, women who work with men will want to know what men candidly think but rarely say. (www.MaleFactorBook.com)

Highlights:

Shaunti’s research helps women to better understand men’s perception of women in the workplace. Women do not necessarily have to change their behavior or communication style; however, they should at least try to understand how they are seen (and “heard”) by many of their male counterparts. It explains a lot.

Example: Men view work life with an “on and off switch.” Work is work, personal life is personal, and never the twain shall meet. They view things women do sometimes as inappropriate in the “work world” – and interpret it as less business savvy. It makes them uncomfortable.

Example: Emotions: Shaunti found that men, with rare exceptions, view almost any emotional display as a sign that the person can no longer think clearly (not just crying, but most any kind of emotion).

- But what most men don't get is that women can process a thought (rational thinking) and a feeling at the same time; and that we can even be getting defensive or hurt, and still be processing rational thoughts. To men, women can't problem solve if they're "emotional."
- Because men can't think as clearly when they're experiencing strong emotions, they assume women can't either. They presume that when someone gets emotional, by definition, logic ceases.
- Men also have problems with what they perceive as women "overreacting."

Example: Appearance: Men are visual.

- Shauti's research revealed that trendy clothes women often perceive as feminine are viewed entirely differently by men, and not in a good way. Men think in gender terms (sexual terms) when they see a woman in very tight or short clothes, or showing cleavage. Therefore, it makes it very difficult for them to think professional thoughts about the woman displaying this type of appearance, or to listen to what she's saying.
- A video demonstration shows the same woman presenting the same subject to a group of men. In the first case, she's dressed professionally, conservatively. In the second case, she shows some cleavage. The men didn't remember as much of what the woman said in the second case because they were distracted by her attire. In these situations, men who respect women the most struggle the most trying to keep their visual and mental perceptions in tact.

Example: Communication: If a woman sighs, a man may interpret this to mean that "this is going to be a challenge" or as a belittling or dismissive response.

- When women communicate with men at work or in private life, they can unknowingly hit a nerve by coming across as assertive. The problem is that some/many men interpret this as disrespecting them, making them feel inadequate. It's almost never WHAT a woman says, but rather HOW she says it.
- In a meeting, if a woman asks a man "Why did you price it that way? That statement may make him feel challenged in front of his peers. An alternative question might be: "Can you help me understand your pricing?"

Concluding points:

- The men who contributed to Shaunti's research were promised anonymity but also were men who typically support women and women's advancement. She said she saw much "good will" among these men as it regards women in the workplace. Most value women's strengths and appreciate the differences in background and experiences.
- The purpose of her book is not to suggest that women "think and act like a man" but rather that we become "fluent in male" – i.e., understand how men think, especially their perceptions of women's behavior and interactions in the workplace.