

TIPS FOR RESOLVING SOCIAL BACKLASH

The negative perception of women was significantly reduced when they framed assertive statements with what the authors term a “behavior phrase,” a “value phrase,” or an “inoculation phrase”:

1. **Behavior Phrase:** “I’m going to express my opinion very directly; I’ll be as specific as possible.”
2. **Value Phrase:** “I see this as a matter of honesty and integrity, so it’s important for me to be clear about where I stand.”
3. **Inoculation Phrase:** “I know it’s a risk for a woman to speak this assertively, but I’m going to express my opinion very directly.”

ABOUT THE RESEARCH. The study was completed among more than 11,000 individuals in June 2015 by Joseph Grenny, David Maxfield, and Chase McMillan.

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According to research from *New York Times* bestselling authors Joseph Grenny and David Maxfield, women’s perceived competency drops by **35%** and their perceived deserved compensation by **\$15,088** when they are assertive or forceful. Assertive men are also punished, but at lesser rates.

In the study of more than 11,000 participants—details of which can be found in the authors’ [Gender Bias](#) e-book—Grenny and Maxfield offer reasons for this gender inequality in the workplace, and warnings about making snap judgments. They also reveal a simple skill that reduces the damage of workplace bias by 27 percent—enabling both women and men in the office to more consciously speak their minds to minimize backlash.

Grenny said that emotional inequality is real and it is unfair. And while it is unacceptable and needs to be addressed at a cultural, legal, organizational, and social level, individuals can take control.

The research also shows that using a brief, framing statement—that demonstrates deliberation, forethought, and control—reduces the social-backlash and emotion-inequality effects by 27 percent. (See sidebar “TIPS FOR RESOLVING SOCIAL BACKLASH”)

KEY RESULTS

\$15,088 Women’s perceived deserved compensation drops twice as much as men when they are equally aggressive in workplace communication.

27% Using a brief, framing statement that demonstrates deliberation, forethought, and control reduces the social-backlash and emotion-inequality effects by 27 percent.

“In short, **speaking forcefully creates a social backlash.**

Backlash is amplified for women and can adversely affect an individual’s career and prove costly to an organization’s effectiveness.”

—David Maxfield

“**Both women and men should be aware this bias is happening**—often unconsciously—

and they should do everything in their power to stop it. In addition, women and men should learn about and use the framing skills—a relatively easy way to mitigate the bias.”

—Joseph Grenny

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