

Before you read

Do you prefer people to speak directly (say exactly what they think) or indirectly (be very tactful and polite)? Do you think that your culture is more or less direct than other cultures?
Is there a difference between men's and women's communication styles in your country?

Reading

To find out about the culture of British women, read the article: What Women Really Want

What women really want

FT Correspondent

There aren't many women in high financial places [in Britain]. A survey shows that nearly half the top 100 companies have no women on their boards.

A meeting in London this month, organised by Busygirl Network, suggested that culture may be one of the obstacles holding British women back. Sue Gold, a British lawyer at UBS Warburg, said American women were better at promoting themselves. She said UK women tended to communicate requests in a roundabout way, saying, 'I suggest . . . ' or 'What do you think . . .?' Although this consultative style was valuable, it could also be seen as weak or lacking conviction.

Sharon Corr, a New Yorker who is a director at Lehman Brothers in London, said British colleagues

described her as refreshingly 'direct'. In Wall Street style, she advised women to work in revenue generating areas and to focus on revenues, not costs. But there were no short cuts to promotion. It could involve years of working long hours and cancelling holidays. 'But at the end it's worth it - you can make other people cancel their vacations!'

Is that what most women want? More women seem to value quality of life over success. In a recent survey, seventy-six per cent of women, but only 6 per cent of men, cited personal fulfilment as a crucial factor influencing their career choices. By contrast, 82 per cent of men and only 12 per cent of women cited salary. These women preferred fulfilling work in a pleasant culture to building empires, which is why many of them wanted to set up their own businesses.

A big obstacle for women is that they still do most of the child-rearing, and British men are embarrassed to help. Interviews found that both men and women valued flexibility in the workplace to deal with personal matters. However, only 12 per cent of British men said they would be comfortable requesting an hour off to deal with a family matter. 'I wouldn't admit to doing the school run or wanting to be at one of my kids' events,' said one male director. 'It might affect how my peer group perceive me.' But the eight American men in the sample were astonished at the British men's attitude. They see themselves as just as competitive as their UK peers, but more open about taking an hour off or being in late for family reasons.

From the *Financial Times*

Reading Comprehension

Mark these statements True or False according to the information in the article:

- 1 British women don't promote themselves as well as American women do
- 2 British women aren't as roundabout as American women.
- 3 Far more men than women see salary as a crucial factor in their career choice.
- 4 Nearly as many men as women value personal fulfilment.
- 5 Men and women value flexibility in the workplace.
- 6 UK men are more uncomfortable about missing work for family reasons than American men.
- 7 American men are less competitive than UK men.

Language

A. Comparative forms

Mark the expressions below with the appropriate sign:

<<< a lot less than

<< less than

< a little less than

= the same

> a little more than

>> more than

>>> a lot more than

A great deal less than

Not as many as

Almost as many as

Many more than

Nearly as many as

Not nearly as many as

Considerably fewer than

Significantly more than

A few more than

Far fewer than

As many as

A bit more than

B. Contrast

Look at how linking words are used to show contrast in these sentences from the article.

- 1 **Although** this consultative style was valuable, it could also be seen as weak or lacking conviction.
- 2 In a recent survey, seventy-six per cent of women, but only 6 per cent of men, cited personal fulfilment as a crucial factor influencing their career choices. **By contrast**, 82 per cent of men and only 12 per cent of women cited salary.
- 3 Interviews found that both men and women valued flexibility in the workplace to deal with personal matters. **However** only 12 per cent of British men said they would be comfortable requesting an hour off to deal with a family matter.
- 4 They see themselves as just as competitive as their UK peers, **but** more open about taking an hour off.

Re-write the sentences using the following linking words. Choose the one you think is most suitable to replace each word in bold.

yet

despite... ing

in spite of this

on the other hand

I N T E R M E D I A T E

U P P E R I N T E R M E D I A T E

UNIT 13 Cultures**UNIT 1** Communication**UNIT 5** Job Satisfaction

C. Vocabulary

Match the words from the text on the left with one that is closely related or has the same meaning on the right.

survey	view
obstacle	quote
roundabout	equal
conviction	critical
revenue	indirect
perceive	market research
peer	quick route
short cut	barrier
cite	income
crucial	certainty

Ideas for classroom discussion

- 1 British women appear to have different values than men. For example, women see personal fulfilment as critical, whereas men see salary as most important. Both value flexibility in the workplace, but the men don't feel comfortable asking for it.
- 2 What factors influence you in your career choices? Work with a partner and produce a list of 10 factors. Rank them, then compare your list with the other members of the group. Try to persuade them that your list is best!
- 3 How can women's representation at high levels in company's be improved?
- 4 This article sees American directness as a more effective communication style than British indirectness. Do you agree? How do you think communication styles can be modified to suit different situations, for example:
 - Interviewing a job candidate
 - Hosting a client
 - Running a job project meeting
 - Giving negative feedback
 - Asking for promotion
- 5 What misunderstandings can arise from different communication styles?

INTERMEDIATE

UPPER INTERMEDIATE

UNIT 13 Cultures

UNIT 1 Communication

UNIT 5 Job Satisfaction

KEY**Reading Comprehension**

- 1 T
- 2 F
- 3 T
- 4 F
- 5 T
- 6 T
- 7 F

Language A: Comparative forms

- <<< Not nearly as many as, Considerably fewer than, Far fewer than, A great deal less than
- << Not as many as
- < Nearly as many as, Almost as many as
- = As many as
- > A few more than, A bit more than
- >>
- >>> Many more than, Significantly more than

Language B: Contrast

Despite this consultative style **being** valuable, it could also be seen as weak or lacking conviction.

In a recent survey, seventy-six per cent of women, but only 6 per cent of men, cited personal fulfilment as a crucial factor influencing their career choices. **On the other hand**, 82 per cent of men and only 12 per cent of women cited salary.

Interviews found that both men and women valued flexibility in the workplace to deal with personal matters. **In spite of this** only 12 per cent of British men said they would be comfortable requesting an hour off to deal with a family matter.

They see themselves as just as competitive as their UK peers, **yet** more open about taking an hour off.

Vocabulary

survey	market research	perceive	view
obstacle	barrier	peer	equal
roundabout	indirect	short cut	quick route
conviction	certainty	cite	quote
revenue	income	crucial	critical