

WOMEN AND RESEARCH

MAY 2010

Mission statement: To foster an active and inclusive research environment in order to enhance high quality research output.

FROM THE PEN OF ANGELA

Dear Researchers,

Welcome to our second newsletter for 2010.

Our first Women and Research session was a success. Dr Foula Kopanidis presented on how men and women communicate and provided us with practical examples of how we, as female researchers, can improve our communication successes.

Dr Kopanidis generated a lot of discussion as we shared past experiences from industry and academia and we all took practical hints away with us.

See summary pages 1 and 2.

Our next Women and Research seminar will be on May 10, starting at 12.30pm and finishing officially at 1.30pm. I say officially, because I've booked the room until 2pm, so please feel free to stick around and network. A light lunch is provided.

Our May 10 seminar will be an informal presentation by Professor Gill Palmer, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Business) of RMIT University. Professor Palmer will be discussing recent changes in the access of females to careers.

All female staff members and researchers (including research higher degree students and research assistants) are invited to attend. The seminars are a good opportunity for us to get together for networking, team building, motivation and support.

Ms Shirley Robertson, Customer Operations Manager for the ConnectEast Group, will talk about senior management at the June 21 seminar.

Thank you to Marion, our feature conversation this month. Happy researching. Angela

DR FOULA KOPANIDIS PRESENTS ON COMMUNICATION

My interest in this field of research led me on a journey of wanting to know what actually was happening in the workplace and what prior studies had been done in the area of 'Women, Communication and Leadership'.

My initial investigation entailed interviewing three women, all in senior management positions to gain insight into their perception of their role and how their communication differed, if at all, for different communication situations they may have found themselves in.

The general consensus was that female leaders in work environments employed different styles of communication.

These styles were influenced by the context, those engaged in the communication process and the objective guiding the communication.

Secondary research supported the insight that women in their role as senior managers change communication styles depending on the situation. It appeared gendered notions of leaders and leadership and management styles impacted upon notions of acceptable

forms of gender communication in the workplace.

Furthermore, effective business communication did demand the implementation of different communication models depending on their goals in specific situations.

For the WaR seminar, I was able to introduce three communication models; a broadly "masculine" model of speech, a "feminine" model of speech and that of an 'adaptive' approach.

The broadly masculine model of speech uses talk for self-



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Thank you Dr Kopanidis for your insightful presentation on communication skills for women



Dr Foula Kopanidis

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DR FOULA KOPANIDIS: COMMUNICATION CONTINUED

assertion and to establish status and power. This is perceived as effective for short-term communication goals.

The feminine communication model uses talk to build and sustain rapport, to support others by being tentative and including others in the conversation. Female communication approaches are favoured in longer term situations.

The adaptive approach is where communicators deliberately localise and customise their messages to the target market.

Discussion generated by the participants of the seminar led to the conclusion that women have brought their own experience and views to bear on workplace communication strategy and that it is essential for women to keep the elements of a fe-

male style they consider valuable, such as developing rapport.

Overall, I have enjoyed this research and engaging with other researchers about this topic.

If anyone would like to talk further about this please email me on foula.kopanidis@rmit.edu.au.



Angela Dobe and Foula Kopanidis—
May Women and Research



CONVERSATION WITH DR MARION STEEL

Hi Marion, please tell us a bit about your career path?

I started in industry in 1979 and was the first female in the area of field testing and service in Industrial Products for BP. This started a life long interest in business to business relationships and industrial product development.

This was followed up by a decade in heavy transport in sales, service and marketing. The combined experience in these roles and in management really highlighted the importance of building and maintaining long term relationships for sustained business success.

What are your teaching philosophies?

My time in industry management roles also highlighted how critical it is to have graduates who have been exposed to industry, and the need to build strong links between industry and higher education. I have incorporated that thinking into my teaching to include real industry based cases for Business to Business Marketing. Currently I am developing some press release

material to highlight the outcomes of these industry based projects.

What projects are you currently working on?

Currently I am working on the commercial applications of the Customer Relationships Management (CRM) diagnostic model developed during my PhD. My PhD was completed under an ARC Industry Linkage grant and I am now working with the industry partner to use and improve the CRM diagnostic model.

The research cases have covered manufacturing, wholesale, service, retail and not for profit organizations. Analysis of the contextual effects of industry and customer types has already provided key insights into how to customise CRM projects to get better outcomes for organisations and their customers.

What do you see as the greatest single problem currently facing academics in Australia?

The expectations that academics will effectively contribute in the areas of research and publication, teaching and

university community are undermined by the expectation that these activities can be managed within an expanding teaching and research time table.

The reality is that all the academics I have observed in two universities in Australia are prioritising activities. Usually teaching and university community involvement are minimised in order to achieve research and publication targets.

Recognition of the increased teaching and publication loads needs to be incorporated into long term resource planning.

What advice would you give to other researchers?

Number one, write every week. One day per week should be spent on your research and your passions.

Number two, publicise your achievements even if it is only an email to your discipline leader.

Number three, weekends are to refresh the batteries, avoid taking work home on weekends.

Thank you Marion.



Marion Steel shows her metal—a machined valve made out of high grade stainless steel



“Write every week...and weekends are for refreshing the batteries.”

Dr Marion Steel