



Communicating Between Women and Men:
What's the Difference that Makes a Difference?

Dairy Girl Network Conference

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Mary's Story **A Tale of Two Cultures**

Mary, an attorney, is one of two Directors of labor relations at the corporate level for a midwestern multi-state Catholic healthcare and hospital organization. Much of Mary's work involves developing and implementing strategy at a corporate level in terms of negotiating labor contracts with unions, such as state-level nurses unions and the SEIU, the national service workers union. She negotiates some of the major contracts herself; her counterpart negotiates others, and they both manage external counsel who negotiate smaller contracts. She also gives work direction to an administrative assistant and two paralegals who work in the department. Mary is direct and straightforward in her manner; you always know where you stand with her, for better or for worse. Whether she is negotiating a contract or developing a strategy, she is totally focused on achieving the best possible outcome for the organization, and her work results are stellar.

Her manager, Jeffrey, also an attorney, is VP of the legal department for the organization; all key legal functions report to him – labor relations, as well as attorneys assigned to the hospitals' and clinics' needs, who spend much of their time reviewing contracts, dealing with malpractice issues, negotiating with insurance carriers, sorting out the legal implications of the Affordable Care Act, etc. In his college years, Jeffrey was the football quarterback, and so he values a well running team, with everyone knowing their role and with conflict kept to a minimum. Over half of the attorneys in this group are men, and most of them have worked in the healthcare industry for years. In his role Jeffrey faces incredible pressure to do more with less, to keep costs low, and to make sure that all of the legal issues that face the company are dealt with competently and in a manner that keeps the organization's reputation stellar in the communities it serves.

Spirituality is very important to both Jeffrey and Mary. For her, it has been a very real comfort and source of strength in her life. She has used it as a guidepost when facing serious issues, and come out stronger for it. In the past Mary has had a few occasions on which she got to know Jeffrey better. She found out about the fact that they are both faith based people, and felt that there was a kinship between them on these values that each of them hold dear.

Mary has been ethical and effective in her job in terms of the contracts she negotiated with the SEIU and the nurses' unions. She has saved the organization millions of dollars by how she got the contracts set up, and has averted more than one strike, which is invaluable in terms of public relations. Although she has been a labor lawyer for most of her career, when she started this job, she was not used to negotiating with a predominantly female union and felt a tremendous amount of anxiety in trying to understand their tactics and reach equitable outcomes. She got the contracts settled, but there were many tense moments that brought her to or nearly to tears; times that she felt overwhelmed and in totally new territory. At those times she sometimes called Jeffrey or her other colleagues to run her strategy for the next day by them, asking for their input, and feedback that she was on the right track.

Jeffrey is beginning to see Mary as a problem employee. He has had complaints from both her assistant and the paralegals that do work for her that she is harsh, abrasive, and demanding, and that she thinks her work is more important than any of the other attorneys' work. He has heard that she sets expectations that are too high, and deadlines that staff feels unable to meet, and then grills them when they don't meet them. Turnover is high among the assistants who have worked for her, and now paralegals are refusing to be placed on her cases. He has also heard similar complaints from an external labor lawyer that Jeffrey has known for years. In particular, from his attorney colleague, he hears that she was trying to tell him how to do his job. In terms of her relationship with him and her peers, he is starting to think that she asks them for advice on things that she should already know herself – isn't that what he hired her for? All in all, Mary is starting to develop a *reputation* in the department.

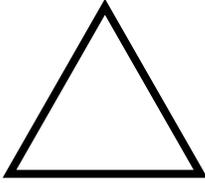
Mary feels totally bewildered by this turn of events and betrayed by her boss. How could her boss think of her in this way? Don't they share the same spirituality that values growth and forgiveness? Hasn't she worked her self to the bone getting results that she and the organization can be proud of?

- Mary is breaking rules in both the masculine and feminine cultures. What are they?
- How should Jeffrey manage/coach Mary through this situation?

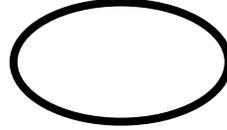
Masculine and Feminine Cultures, and More

Culture can be identified through the following:

- Artifacts and behaviors
- Espoused values and values in use
 - Assumptions



agentic



communal



	Model for group		
	Goal when interacting		
	Value when interacting		
	Roles in the group		
	What brings admiration		
	Play		
	Conflict		
	Safety		
	Power		
	Feedback		
	Risk taking		
	Leadership		
	Value when leading		