

FEM CON

Empowering
Women in
Construction



Module 3

Assertive and Workplace Communication



www.femalesinconstruction.eu



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01

Introduction

In a male-dominated industry stereotypes and harassment exist, and it is crucial for women to gain confidence and effectively communicate to succeed in their careers.



A woman with brown hair, wearing a plaid shirt, safety glasses, and large black earplugs, is focused on working with wood in a workshop. She is using a tool to shape a piece of wood. The background is a blurred workshop with various tools and equipment. The image has a warm, orange-toned overlay.

“

Women in the industry can lay a solid foundation for those interested in pursuing a career in construction.

01



Common Stereotypes and Challenges faced by Women in Construction Industry

Common Stereotypes and Challenges Faced by Women in Construction Industry

1. Women are physically incapable of handling the job.

They will be exposed to harsh labour conditions, strenuous tasks, and exposure to hazards.

Therefore, the majority of the women working in the industry undertake administrative, technical, and professional work (Clarke et al. 2005)

2. Social acceptance of women in employment.

Study shows that it is not the technical and physical skills that need to be proven but the need to fit in a socially accepted male behavior to meet the demands of the workplace thus compromising their 'female identity' (Olofsson,2004)

Common Stereotypes and Challenges Faced by Women in Construction Industry

3. Women have a greater risk to have work-related musculoskeletal disorder (MSD)

This happens when women work over the safe limit of their bodies to avoid being stereotyped by male colleagues. The injury is often the reason that leads women to leave the construction industry (Wangle, 2009).

4. The construction workplace was not built to accommodate female workers

A study by OSHA (1990) revealed that most of the tools, equipment, and clothing are not designed for a women's physique. Another example would be unclean facilities and temporary sanitary facilities without privacy.

Common Stereotypes and Challenges Faced by Women in Construction Industry

5. Women face discriminatory behaviour and gender Harassment in the workplace

Bullying, verbal and gender harassment are happening to women in the construction sites but are not being reported due to fear of rejection by male colleagues. (Söderberg, 2009)


6. Women are seen as threats to the limited job promotion and staff mobility in the workplace

Due to the limited career advancement opportunities within the construction industry, women are often hindered from accessing open positions. Additionally, it is worth noting that certain employers exhibit a preference for hiring male workers. (Dainty et al., 2000)



A woman's place is wherever she wants it to be, even in the cab in a 40-ton bulldozer

– National Centre for
Construction Education and
Research –

A woman wearing a black hijab and a dark green work jacket stands on a construction site. She is looking down at something in her hands. In the background, there are wooden structures and a window with white shutters. The image is slightly blurred.

“Empowering Women in a Male-Dominated Industry – Construction”

Click to Play or watch here

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMM1XM7_ed0

Women in Construction

02



Strategies in dealing with Stereotypes in the Construction Workplace



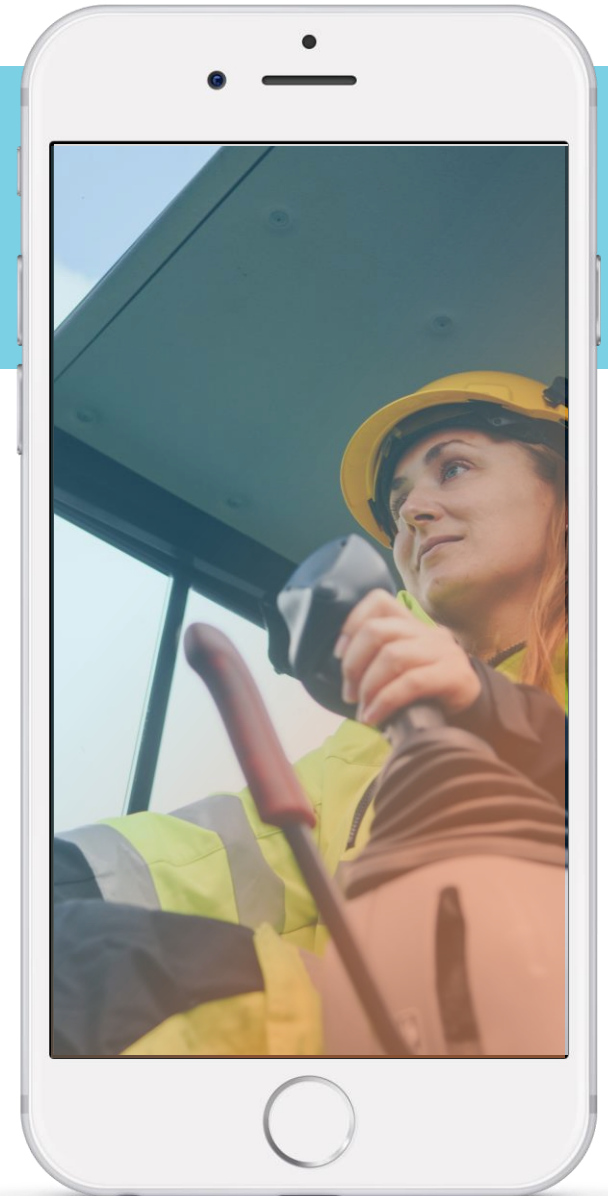
Not only the organisational practices hinder women's participation in the construction industry.

A country's traditional religion and cultural assumptions and norms, and gender ideologies also play a big factor but it does not mean we cannot change this.

Strategies for how to deal with stereotypes in the workplace effectively

1. Prepare Yourself

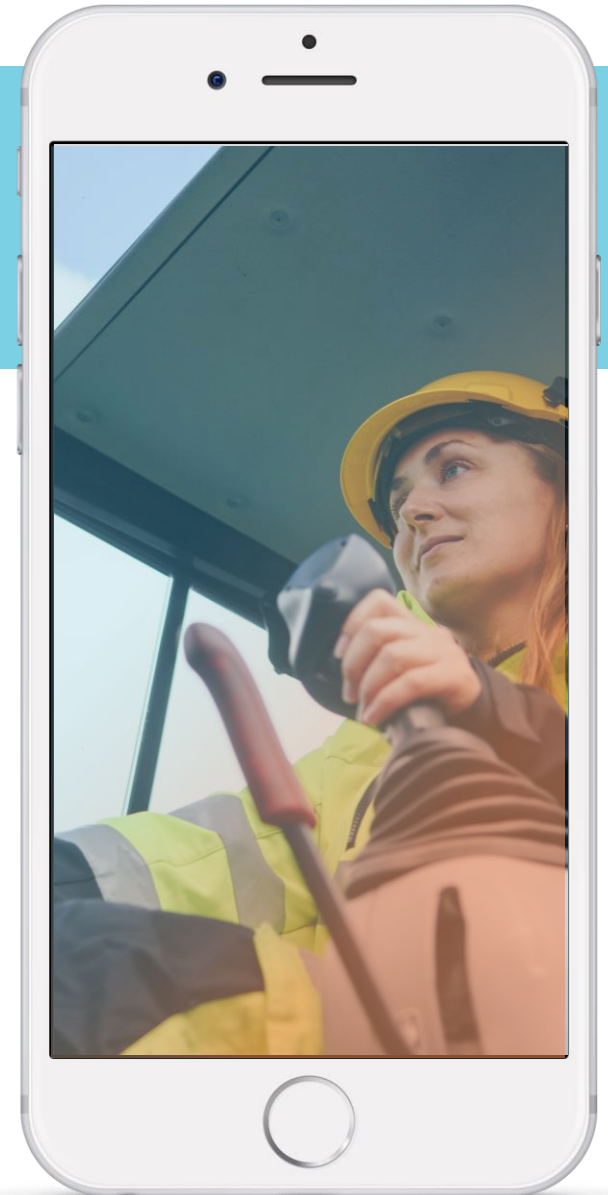
- ✓ The best way to deal with stereotypes in the construction workplace is being aware that it might happen, and you must be prepared mentally, emotionally and psychologically.
- ✓ Understanding the reasons why stereotypes occurs will help you respond better



Strategies for how to deal with stereotypes in the workplace effectively

2. Shift your mindset from inaction to action

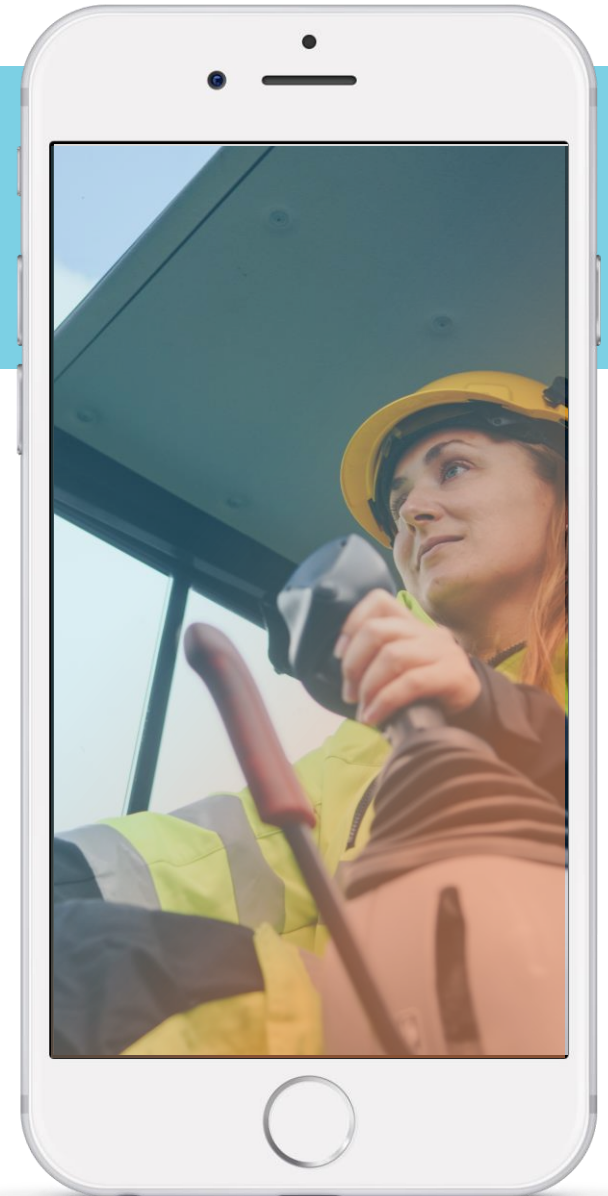
- ✓ When faced with gender discrimination or any type of harassment in the construction workplace, it is important that it is reported to the management or authority in charge. Do not ignore this unfair treatment, take action.
- ✓ Your action towards these kind of situation will be a precedent therefore it critical that is managed properly.



Strategies for how to deal with stereotypes in the workplace effectively

3. Say it Right

- ✓ Speak up against bias/unjust situations and choose to respond properly
- ✓ How you say it matters. Your voice and temperament can affect the delivery of the message.
- ✓ Remain calm, firm and confident.



03



Understanding Conflict and the Importance of Working in a Team

Understanding Conflict

Conflict refers to a disagreement or clash of interests, values, or goals between individuals or groups in the construction industry. It is a common occurrence in a dynamic work environment where various stakeholders with different perspectives and objectives collaborate.



Common Causes of Conflict

- **The Difference in Communication Styles:** Communication gaps resulting from varying communication styles, language barriers, or misinterpretations can lead to conflicts. Women in the construction industry often face unique communication challenges due to preconceived notions or biases.
- **Misunderstandings and Misinterpretations:** Lack of clarity or misinterpretation of information can create conflicts. In a diverse workplace, where men and women may have different communication patterns, misunderstandings can arise.
- **Competing Interests and Goals:** Different stakeholders in construction projects may have competing interests or goals, leading to conflicts. It can include conflicts related to resource allocation, project timelines, or decision-making processes.

Strategies for Addressing and Preventing Conflicts

To address and prevent conflicts related to women in the construction industry, specific strategies can be implemented:

- Promoting open communication and active listening is essential. Creating a safe space for open dialogue and encouraging team members to express their thoughts and ideas helps ensure that everyone's perspectives are heard and understood. Active listening skills should be fostered to create an inclusive environment that values women's viewpoints.



Strategies for Addressing and Preventing Conflicts

- Establishing clear roles and responsibilities is another important strategy. Clearly defining and communicating the roles and responsibilities of each team member minimises confusion and reduces conflicts arising from overlapping tasks or lack of clarity. By ensuring that everyone understands their specific contributions, conflicts related to role ambiguity can be mitigated.
- Implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives is crucial in preventing conflicts. Fostering an inclusive work environment that appreciates and values diverse perspectives, including those of women, creates a positive atmosphere for collaboration. By encouraging teamwork that embraces different backgrounds, experiences, and ideas, conflicts stemming from biases and stereotypes can be reduced.

Strategies for Addressing and Preventing Conflicts

- Training programs addressing gender biases, diversity awareness, and communication skills empower women in construction while equipping employees with conflict resolution techniques.
- Collaboration and team-building activities promote understanding, respect, and cooperation, reducing conflicts by fostering a collaborative environment. Establishing mediation and support mechanisms is crucial in resolving conflicts.
- Mediation processes and support mechanisms provide impartial conflict resolution and guidance through formalized procedures, mentorship programs, and employee assistance initiatives.



The Importance of Effective Teamwork

Effective teamwork is crucial in the construction industry for achieving project success. It enables the coordination and collaboration of diverse professionals, ensuring efficient project delivery, and fostering a positive work environment. Strong teamwork enhances productivity, maximises resources, and improves overall project outcomes.



Key Elements of Successful Teams

Clear Roles and Responsibilities: Clearly defining and assigning roles and responsibilities to team members is essential. This clarity minimizes confusion, avoids duplication of efforts, and ensures that everyone understands their contributions to the project.

Open and Transparent Communication: Open communication is fundamental for effective teamwork in construction. Encouraging team members to express their ideas, concerns, and feedback openly fosters a culture of collaboration. Transparent communication helps avoid misunderstandings, promotes better decision-making, and strengthens working relationships.

Mutual Respect and Trust: Building a team environment based on mutual respect and trust is vital. Respecting diverse perspectives, expertise, and experiences fosters a positive and inclusive atmosphere. Trust among team members enhances collaboration, encourages open dialogue, and promotes innovative problem-solving.

Key Elements of Successful Teams

Collaboration and Cooperation: Successful teams in construction emphasise collaboration and cooperation. Encouraging team members to work together, share knowledge, and support one another fosters synergy and maximizes collective strengths. Collaborative approaches enhance problem-solving, boost creativity, and drive project success.

Accountability and Support: Each team member must take accountability for their assigned tasks and deliverables. Establishing a culture of individual and collective accountability ensures the timely completion of work and project milestones. Providing support, resources, and guidance to team members helps them overcome challenges and achieve their goals effectively.

Encouraging Diversity and Inclusion: Embracing diversity and inclusion in construction teams leads to better outcomes. By promoting diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, background, and perspectives, teams benefit from a wider range of ideas and approaches. Inclusive environments foster creativity, innovation, and a more comprehensive understanding of client needs.

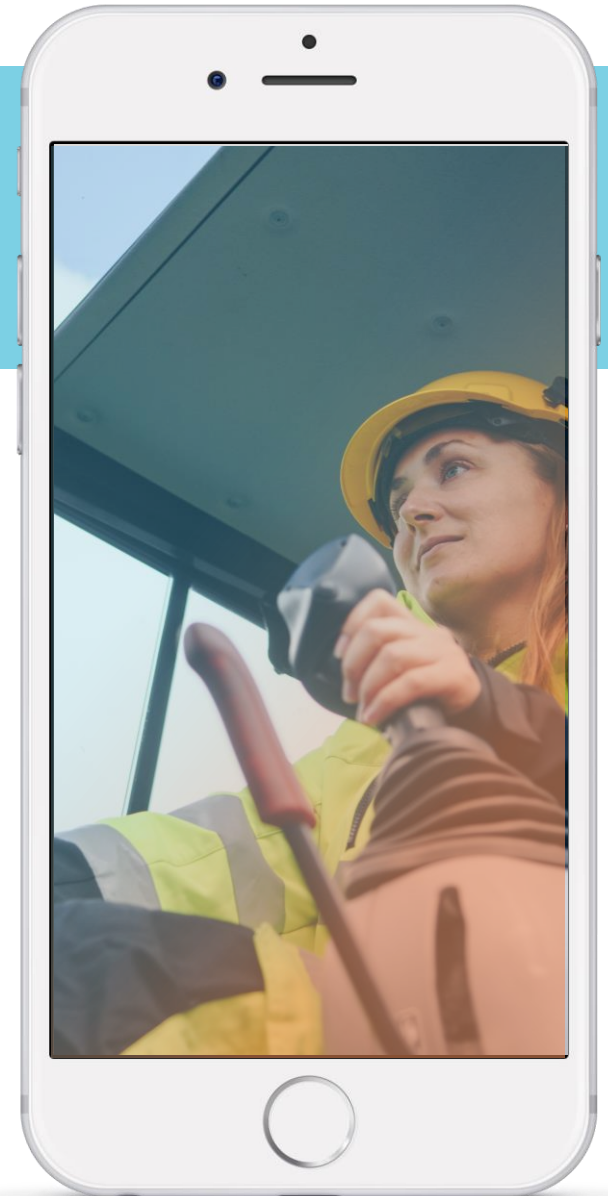
04



Importance of Assertive Communication in the Workplace

Importance of Assertive Communication in Workplace

- ✓ How you communicate with your male colleagues in the construction workplace site builds positive relationships and stops the tolerance stereotyping of women.
- ✓ Fighting stereotypes of women in the construction workplace starts with YOU properly communicating your needs and rights.

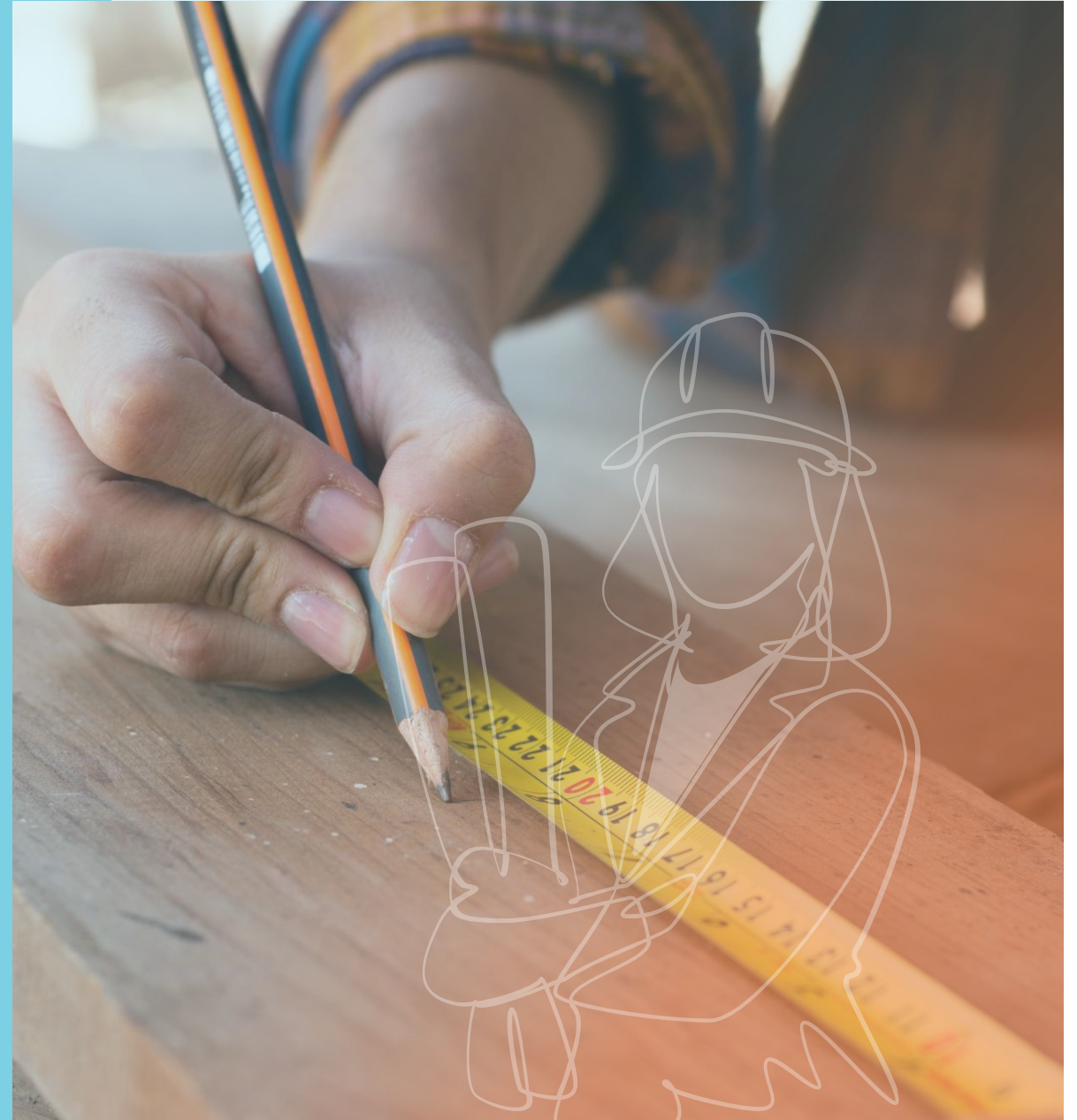




Women in the industry can lay a solid foundation for those interested in pursuing a career in construction.

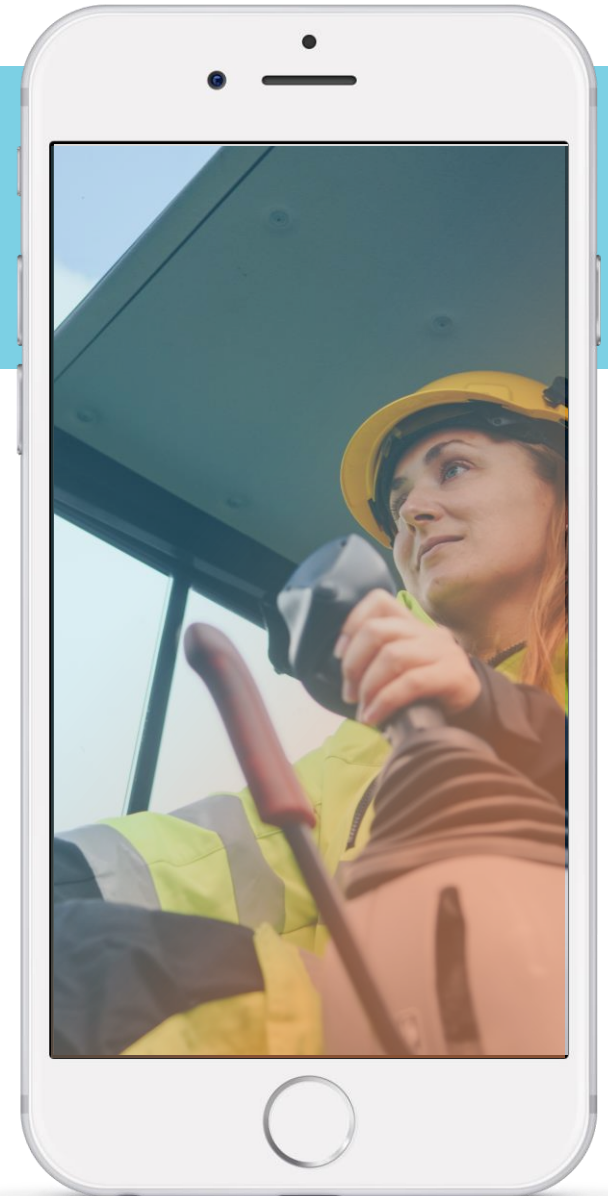
What is Assertive Communication

Assertive Communication is the ability to speak and interact in a manner that considers and respects the rights and opinions of others while also standing up for your rights, needs, and personal boundaries (Pipas & Jaradat, 2010, pp. 649).



Assertive Communication is a powerful tool

- ✓ You can get across your point without being aggressive
- ✓ Practicing assertive communication enables you to communicate your wants and needs clearly and helps you handle difficult situations in the construction workplace



A woman, Keisha Brewer, is speaking at a TEDx event. She is wearing a dark blue dress and is gesturing with her right hand. The background is dark with a large American flag on the left and a screen on the right. A light blue rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing text.

*It's Not Manipulation, It's
Strategic Communication | Keisha
Brewer | TEDxGeorgetown*

Click to play or watch at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGeHS4j00X0&t=367s>

05

Characteristic of Assertive Communication



Characteristics of Assertive Communication

Non-Verbal

1. Direct Eye Contact – shows the person is not intimidated
2. Assertive Posture/Stance
3. The Tone of Voice – strong and confident but not too loud
4. Facial Expression – does not show anger, anxiety or negative facial expression
5. Timing – speak at the right time, when addressed or when is appropriate.

Verbal

1. Clarity - use words that clearly communicate needs and speak clearly
2. Non-Threatening – do not use aggressive or blaming language
3. Positive – frame the request in a positive way and maintain a positive composure
4. Criticism – When being critical, do it in a way that is constructive and helpful. Do not negatively criticise

06



Understanding the Different Communication Styles Aggressive Vs. Passive Vs. Assertive

Understanding the different communication styles: Aggressive vs. Passive vs. Assertive

Scenario: A colleague in the workplace requested a favour from you but you are preoccupied with other tasks at hand

Aggressive Response: Absolutely no! You should learn to manage your own time, so you do not ask for favour at the last minute.

Passive Response: Okay. No problem

Assertive Response: As much as I'd love to help you in the project. Unfortunately, I have a lot of work to get finish today. I hope you will be able to find someone else to assist you

Understanding the different communication styles

Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Too afraid to say what you think	Expresses self clearly and confidently	Expresses self with aggression and anger/irritation
Avoids eye contact	Maintains eye contact	Stares in a judgmental way
Speaks softly or weakly	Speaks firmly	Speaks loudly/Shouting
Reduces own self esteem	Firm yet welcoming posture	Closed posture(making body bigger)
Others' needs are put first	Self and others' needs are considered	Own needs are put first
Can't say no to others request or demands	Can say no in a calm and direct way	Says no in an aggressive and reactive way
Aims to please others	Aims to express needs	Aims to win

Gatchpazian (2023)



As a woman, you can defy all stereotypes, go against the grain and still dominate in a male dominated industry.

– Kitchell Progress

07



Practical Techniques of Assertive Communication

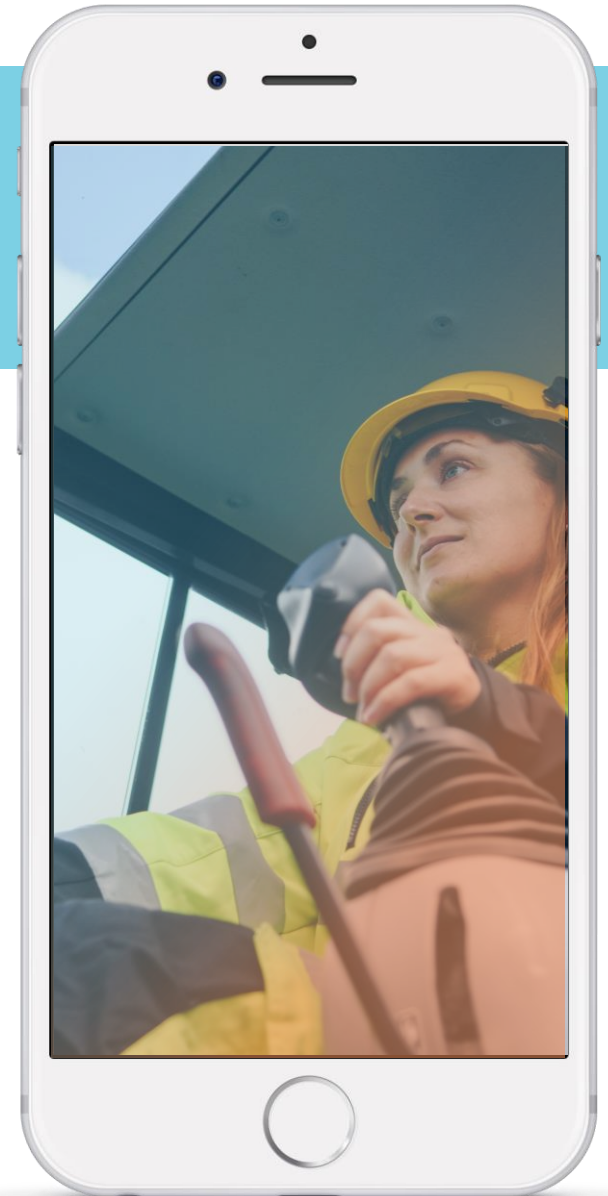
The Assertive Communication Formula

I feel _____
describe your emotions

When you _____
describe their behavior and situation

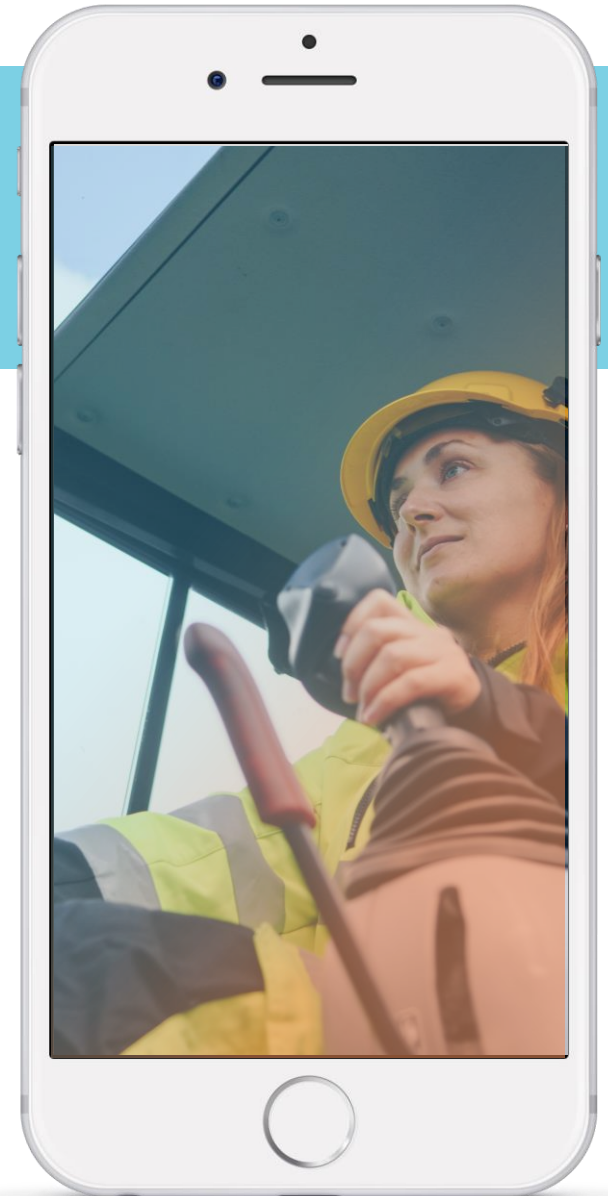
Because _____
*describe your reason for feeling that way
or the impact of their behavior to you*

I would like/need _____
*state what you want, need or would
prefer*



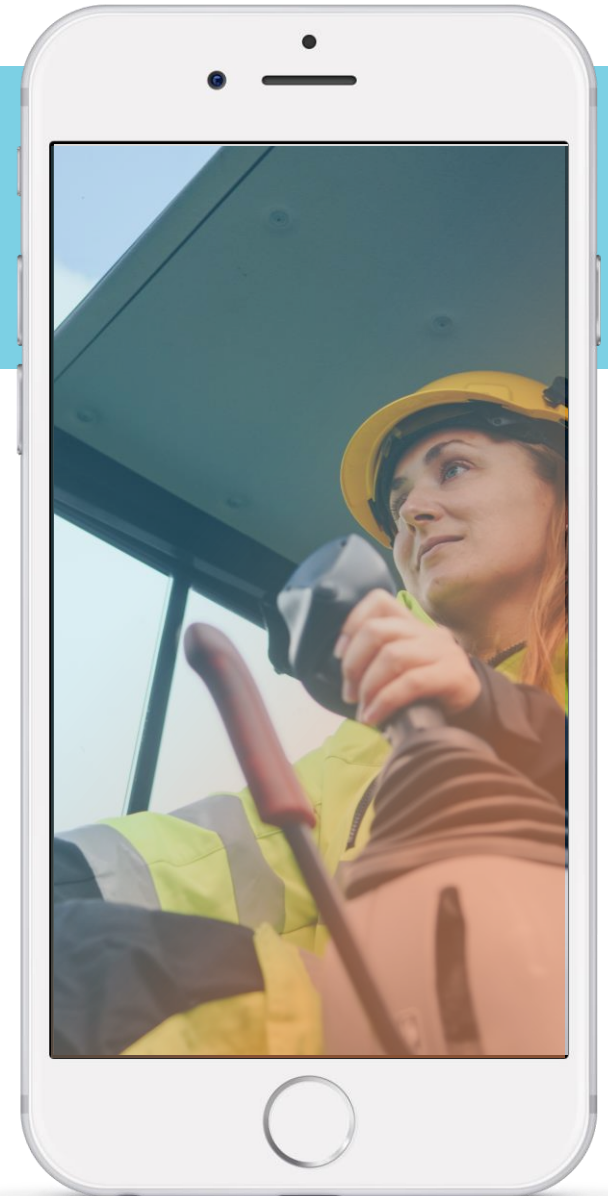
Examples of Using “I” Statements

- I felt uncomfortable with the way you presented
- I get frustrated when you do not acknowledge my contribution the project
- I appreciate that you acknowledge my contribution to the project
- I would like to take a larger role in the next project
- I need to know how this can be corrected and changed going forward



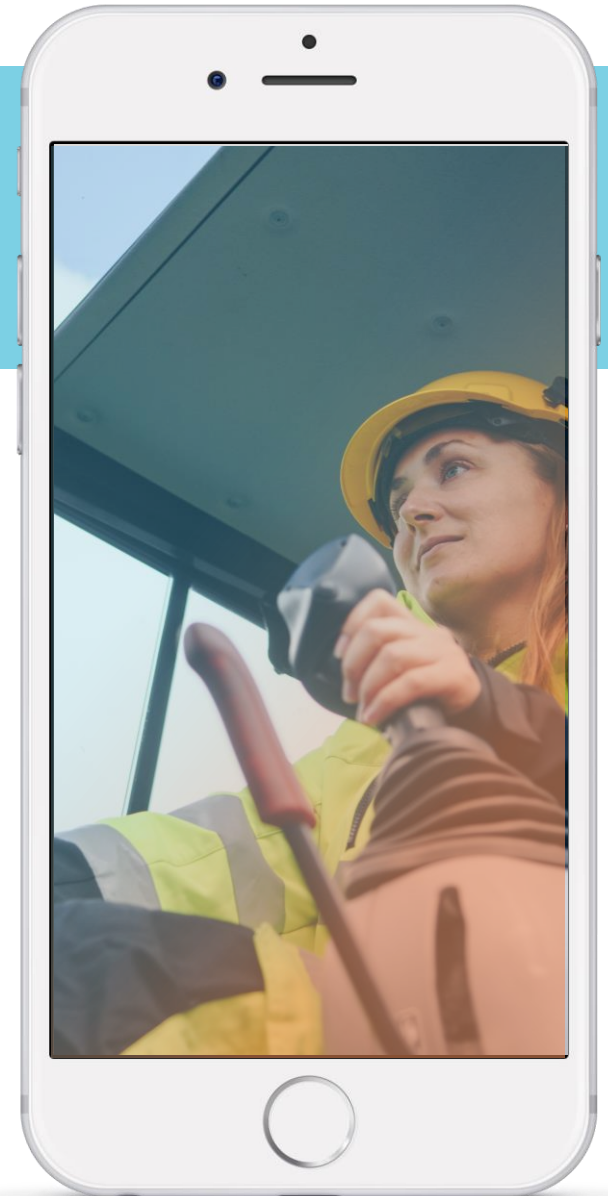
Examples of Using “I” Statements

- I understand where you’re coming from, but I’m afraid I must decline
- I don’t appreciate that you arrive late for the meeting
- I get frustrated when you consistently miss the submission of deadlines
- I had a busy week and need some time to relax. I cannot make any promises today. How about tomorrow?



Examples of Using “I” Statements

- I am sorry. I cannot take on additional work right now.
- I respect your opinion, but let’s agree to disagree



08



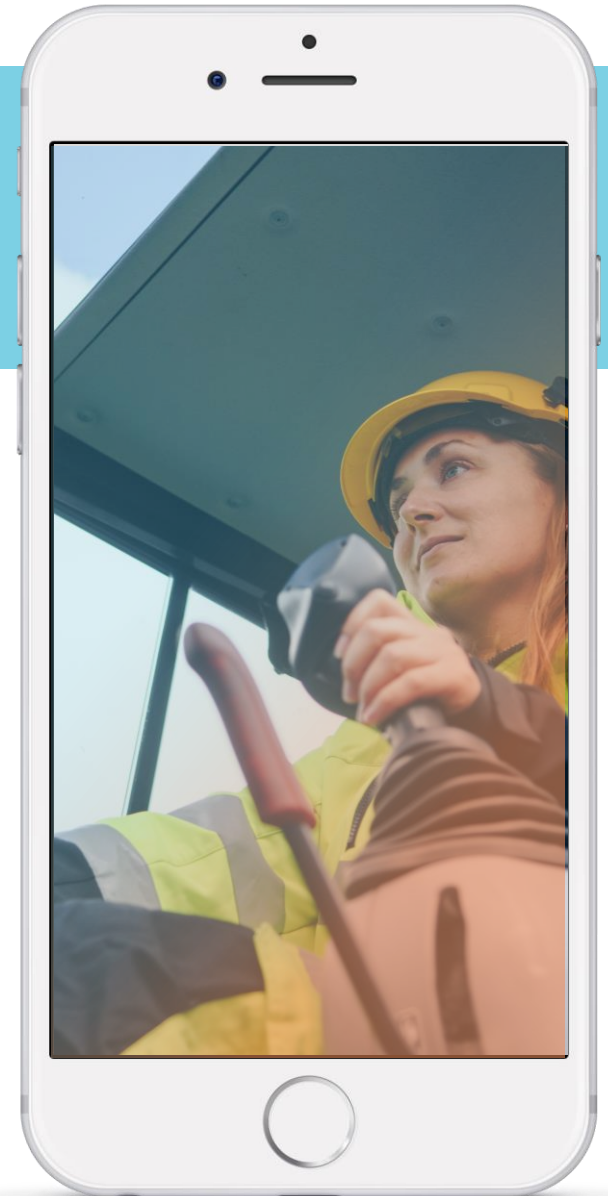
Practicing Assertive Communication in Various Scenarios

Practicing Assertive Communication

Scenario 1: Making Request

You need to ask for help and assistance for a project. How will you ask your colleague?

Assertive Statement: *Can you please help me with this portion of the project by the end of week? I'd appreciate your input and expertise.*

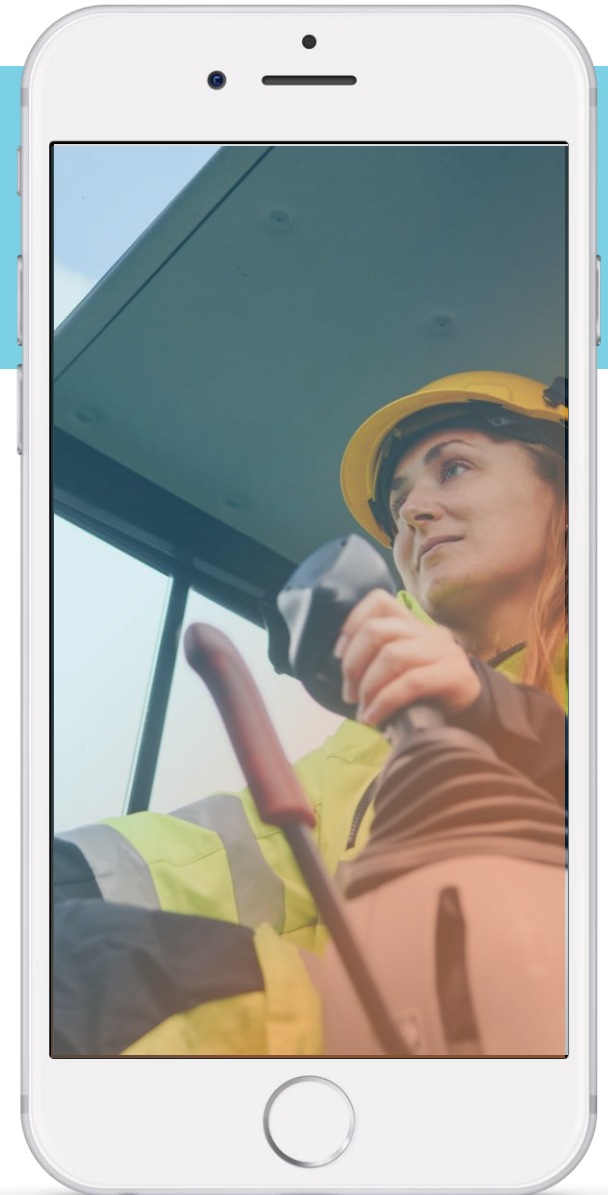


Practicing Assertive Communication:

Scenario 2: Saying No

1. Your colleague/manager asked you to work on project outside of working hours and you are about to go home in a few hours and will not be able to finish it on time
2. Your colleague/ manager requested you to take on additional work but your plate is full.

How will you decline and say no to your colleague or manager ?

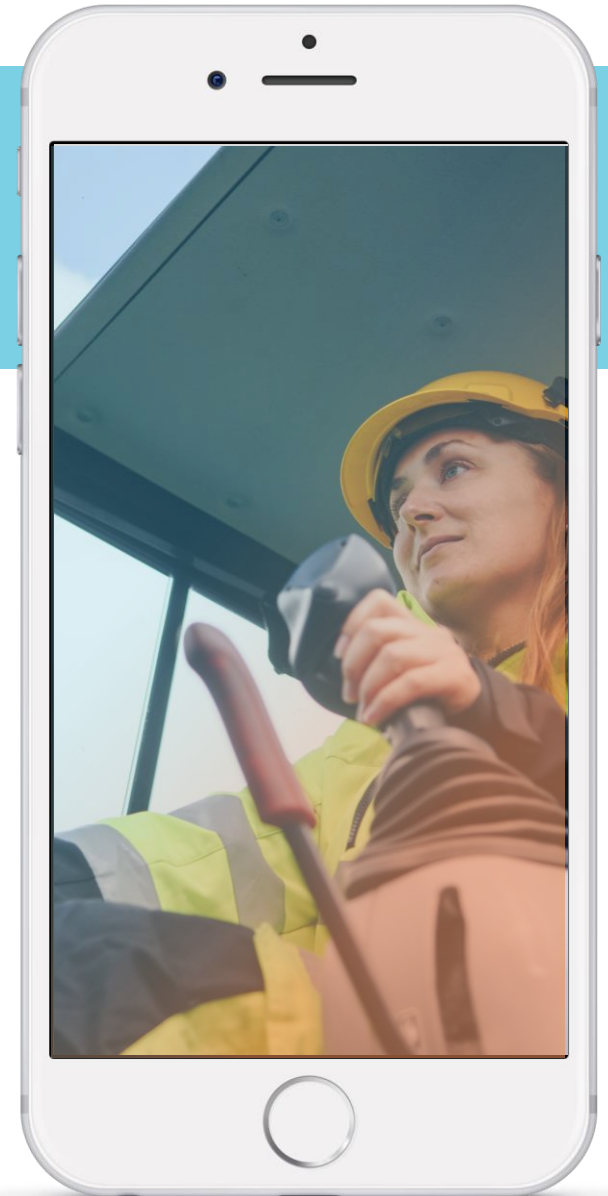


Practicing Assertive Communication:

Assertive Statement:

1. I will not be able to work on the project outside of my regular working hours and finish it today because I need to attend my personal activities. But I will continue to work on what you are asking me tomorrow

2. I am sorry. I cannot take on an additional workload as I am still completing this task for an important project. I hope you will be able to ask someone to help you with that work





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09



Effective
Communication is
the Ladder to
Career Progression

Effective Communication is the Ladder to Career Progression



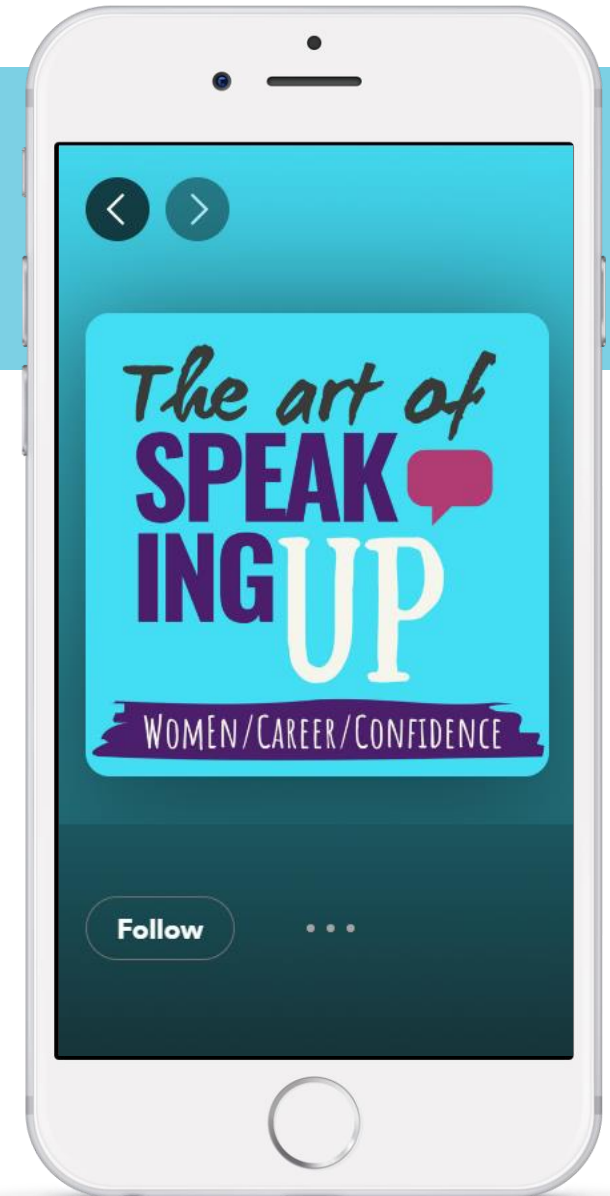
- Effective communication is a critical skill in the workplace
- Being able to effectively communicate increases overall productivity
- Having good communication skill empowers you to make decisions and build personal relationships providing a leverage for you to get ahead in your career

Have a listen...

Have a listen to the “Art of Speaking up” by Jessica Guzik

The Art of Speaking Up is a podcast that empowers professional women to achieve their wildest career goals by helping them strengthen their voices and find their inner power. The show aims to motivate, entertain, and remind working women that no matter what they might be struggling with, anything is possible for them in their careers. In addition to providing strengths-based professional empowerment, the show curates practical career advice on topics like career advancement, goal setting, job searching, stress management, salary negotiation and more.

<https://open.spotify.com/show/3LyebGhthoJztlNB5XAr9n?si=57a5d3df64334df4>



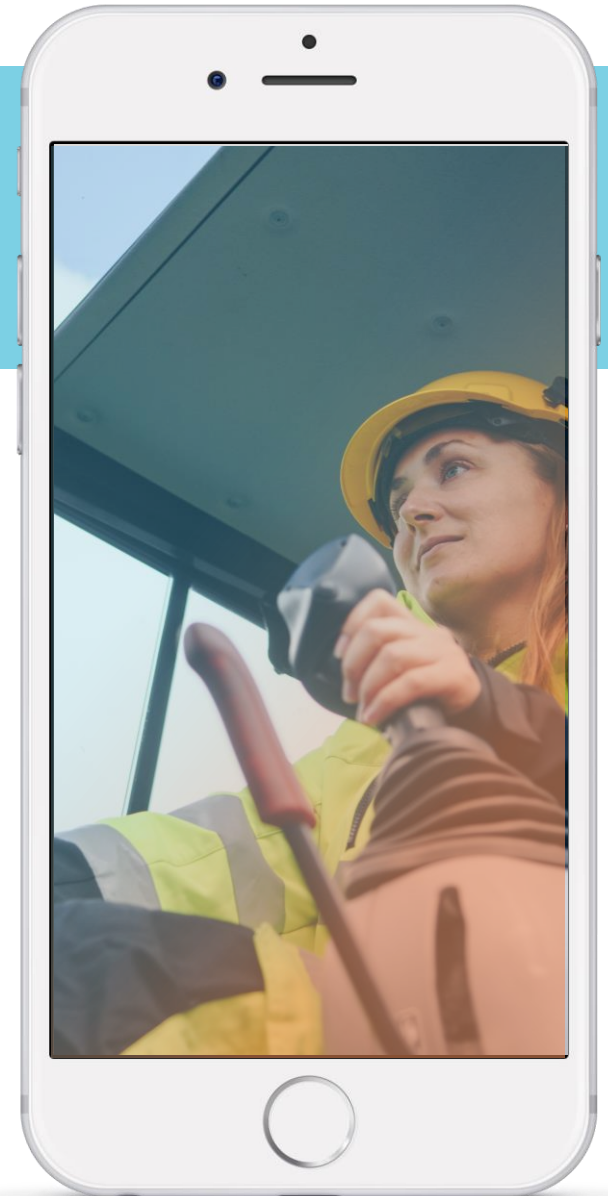
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Summary and Conclusion



Summary of Key Learning Points

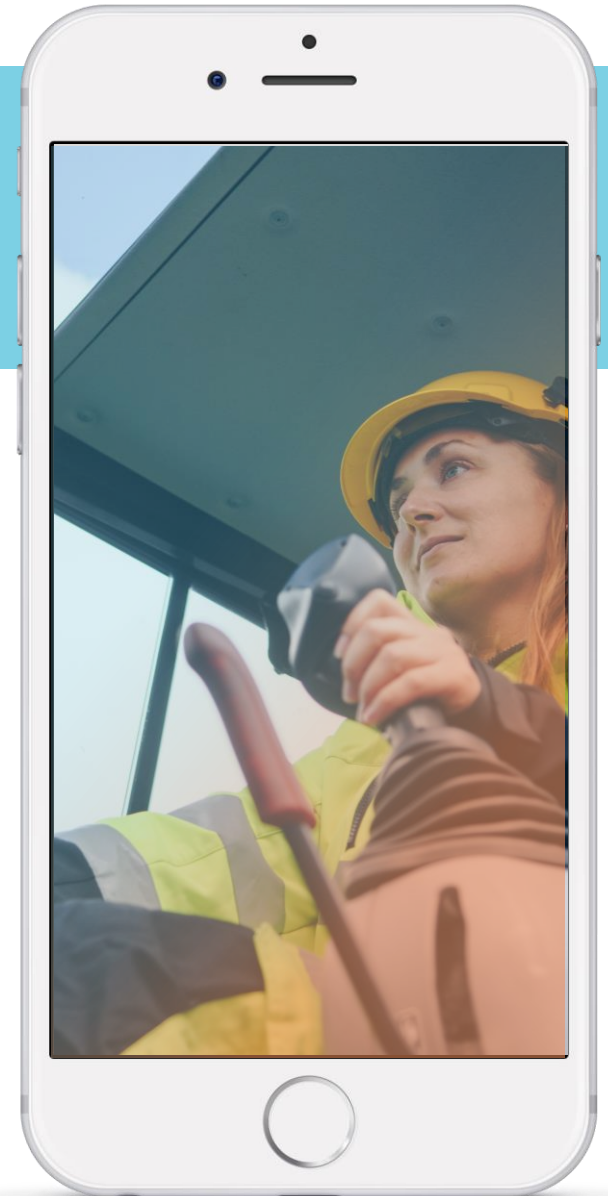
- Women are commonly stereotyped and face challenges in the construction industry however there are strategies on how to effectively deal with the situation
- Assertive communication is one of ways to empower women working in the construction industry
- Practice the use of assertive communication as this is an important tool in the workplace



Conclusion

Women who choose to work in the construction industry should not be restricted because of the limitations of the workplace

It is the collaborative responsibility of the employer and employee to create a safe and non discriminatory work environment for women in the construction industry





A woman's place is wherever she wants it to be, even in the cab in a 40-ton bulldozer
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Thank you

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