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Career & Self-Development

Work With Me

The 8 Blind Spots Between Men and Women in Business

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

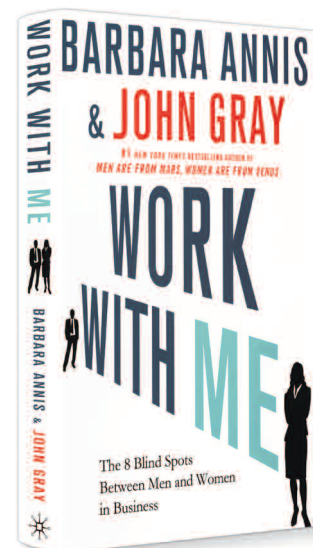
Each day, men and women looking to bring their best to work are often challenged by false assumptions and mistaken opinions about the other gender—persistent blind spots that frequently result in misunderstandings and miscommunication, affecting their ability to find success and satisfaction in their work lives as well as in their personal lives.

Work With Me is a timely collaboration of Barbara Annis, world-renowned expert on gender issues in the workplace, and John Gray, author of the bestselling relationship book, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*. Told through science, stories and the results of over 100,000 in-depth interviews with male and female executives of over 60 Fortune 500 companies, *Work With Me* reveals the Eight Gender Blind Spots that create tension between the sexes at work and in their personal relations: Do Women Want Men to Change? Do Men Appreciate Women? Are Women Being Excluded? Do Men Have to Walk on Eggshells with Women? Do Women Ask Too Many Questions? Do Men Listen? Are Women Too Emotional? Are Men Insensitive?

This work–personal life relational guide brings insights and offers solutions to help both men and women remove the blind spots that separate them, allowing for greater success and satisfaction in their professional and personal lives.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- What “Gender Blind Spots” are.
- What “Gender Intelligence” is.
- How we stop misunderstanding each other.
- How we build trust and credibility with each other.
- How we achieve work–personal life harmony.



by Barbara Annis
and John Gray

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: WORK WITH ME

by Barbara Annis and John Gray

The authors: Barbara Annis is a world-renowned expert on Gender Intelligence® and inclusive leadership, advocating the value and practice of Gender Intelligence in Fortune 500 companies, governments and numerous organizations across the globe. Her book *Same Words, Different Language* is considered a seminal contribution to the new conversation between men and women at work. She serves as chair emeritus of the Women’s Leadership Board at the Harvard Kennedy School.

John Gray, Ph.D. is a leading relationship expert in the world and bestselling author. His book *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* is ranked by *USA Today* as one of the top 10 most influential books over the last 25 years. Founder of Mars Venus coaching, he has trained over 500 coaches in 27 countries to bridge the gender gap in business through gender-smart leadership, sales and team-building training programs.

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Introduction

Have you ever felt this way or heard comments such as these expressed by friends or coworkers? “I’m tired of being excluded and having my ideas dismissed.” “Being the best person for the job means nothing here.” “I have to be so careful in what I say and do.” “I can’t and won’t act like someone I’m not.”

There are millions of people like this who are stuck, failing or quitting — not because of their abilities but because they haven’t figured out how to work effectively with the opposite gender. Women and men may see the same things, but they do so through a completely different set of lenses, very often thinking and talking past each other. This is due to what we call “gender blind spots”: incorrect assumptions held by both men and women, stereotypic baggage that continues to cause our miscommunications and fuel our misunderstandings.

It’s time for a cultural shift in our thinking. What we need now — more than ever before — is a new level of awareness and attentiveness to each other’s needs, a depth of understanding called “gender intelligence.” Gender intelligence is an awareness of the intrinsic nature of men and women beyond the physical and cultural. It’s an understanding of and appreciation for our differences. It recognizes that gender is a function of both nature and nurture.

Only by understanding the nature of our differences can we then gain the insight into how to nurture, develop and complement our differences instead of denying

and suppressing our own uniqueness and that of the other gender. ●

Are We Really the Same?

Men and women are often uncertain how to act with each other and how to react to each other. Many men admit they don’t understand women. Male behavior is more predictable, but not understanding or not trying to understand can lead to avoidance and not working well together. Both men and women are often hesitant to speak their minds or act in ways that feel authentic.

Gender Facts:

- **9 percent of men say they “understand women.”**
- **68 percent of women say they “understand men.”**

One major problem is we’re trying too hard to be “equal” to each other, which has grown more to mean “acting the same.” The fact is, men and women are different. We do almost everything differently. We communicate, solve problems, prioritize, make decisions, resolve conflicts, handle emotions and deal with stress differently. It’s easy to say “we’re all equal” and go about treating each other the same. But in the end, that leads us further away from valuing each other and finding the complement in each other. Without gender intelligence, men and women will never truly understand and appreciate each other’s complementary nature. ●



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THE EIGHT GENDER BLIND SPOTS

Do Women Want Men to Change?

Women are not as content in today's workplace as men are. From the boardroom to the conference room to the call center, women feel valued differently than men. Women often sense that they have to work harder than men do just to prove themselves, and they feel doubted for their competence and commitment.

Men, on the other hand, are generally comfortable with the rules of engagement in today's corporate culture. They're not aware of how their behavior affects women, and they don't feel that they're acting intentionally against women.

Gender Facts:

- **58 percent of men believe that women have as equal a chance of getting ahead as men do. Only 24 percent of women share that outlook.**
- **83 percent of men believe both men and women are experiencing the same level of job satisfaction.**
- **93 percent of women believe men have job satisfaction. Only 62 percent of women feel job satisfaction.**

Two generations ago, for a woman to pursue a career may have been a choice, but today it's an economic necessity. Yet, the work environment that women are entering does not welcome the way in which women communicate, collaborate and generally engage in business. When women say they want men to change, they are really asking men to remove the obstacles to their success and to value their contributions.

Here are some examples of how men unknowingly dismiss women by pursuing a course of action that may be understandable to themselves and other men, but that tends to prevent women from participating in ways that work for them:

What men say: *"Those issues aren't directly related. We need to focus on what's critical and doable now."*

What women say: *"Those issues seem relevant and may impact our decision. All things should be considered."*

What men say: *"There's risk involved, but beating competition to the marketplace is worth it."*

What women say: *"To minimize the risk, let's think through the options one more time. We may not be first to market, but we'll have a solid product."*

As much as men need to understand how women think and behave, women need to understand the same about men. ●

Do Men Appreciate Women?

In the late 1940s, companies began surveying employees in an attempt to understand what motivated them to perform at their best. A pattern emerged, and the underlying principles are still found in almost every management training book today. These included offering employees a challenging job that aligned with their skills and interests, giving them the time and resources needed to accomplish the task, allowing them the autonomy to get the job done, and recognizing and rewarding them for their accomplishments. Back then, men made up the vast majority of the workforce. These ideas and principles were aligned with how men thought, behaved and preferred to work. Fast forward to this era, and the belief is that women will seek appreciation for the same reasons, but the data suggests otherwise.

Gender Facts:

- **79 percent of men feel appreciated at work while only 48 percent of women feel the same.**
- **82 percent of women want to be recognized for their effort in achieving the results.**
- **89 percent of men want to be recognized for their results.**

Men appreciate being acknowledged for their results. For men, it's not so much the journey or the efforts undertaken while achieving their objectives, but the successful completion of the task itself.

Men appreciate having the freedom to make their own decisions, not being micromanaged during the process of achieving their objectives, and having the latitude to make mistakes and learn from their errors.

What detracts from a man's sense of independence is offering him unsolicited help. It indicates to a man that he is not trusted or capable of accomplishing the job on his own.

Women feel most appreciated and validated when they're acknowledged for the challenges they faced in attaining those results. To most women, experiencing the journey is as valuable as arriving at their destination.

In addition, women tend to be relationship-oriented. Women generally approach projects collaboratively and cooperatively, while men tend to engage in work independently and competitively.

Only through expanding our gender intelligence can we begin to understand and respect our gender differences and learn to demonstrate and communicate appreciation in ways valued by the other gender and, in turn, acknowledge the ways appreciation is being offered. ●

Are Women Being Excluded?

Gender Facts:

- **82 percent of women say they feel some form of exclusion — whether in business social events and casual meetings, in conversations or in receiving direct feedback.**
- **92 percent of men don't believe they're excluding women.**

A woman's feelings of exclusion don't stem from isolated instances or specific incidents but rather from a recurring pattern of male behavior at work that tends to dismiss a woman's ideas and questions during meetings, prevents her from participating in informal networks, and impedes her chances of benefiting from valuable mentoring opportunities.

One of the major obstacles impeding women's visibility, and therefore their chances for advancement, is their omission from informal networks of communication — those casual situations and social settings in which team bonding takes place. These informal networks and settings can include client lunches, drinks and cigars after a meeting, shooting pool and golf outings.

Many of the networks and events are typically exclusive to men, primarily because they've been traditionally designed around men's interests. Women don't necessarily want to prevent men from engaging in male-related activities, but they do want to feel a part of the team and benefit, as men do, from the personal growth opportunities that tend to surface during these informal events.

Women will commonly point to "men's club" behavior in meetings and at business socials and maintain that it's men's *intention* to exclude. A man, confronted with those comments, will recall all the times he was inclusive and respond with, "No, that's not true. I really did want to include you." He'll discount the claim because, in his mind, his intent was never to exclude. Men, in general, want to find ways to work with women. Men behave in ways that are natural for themselves and understandable to other men, and they assume women want to be treated the same way.

Women derive personal gratification and support by questioning issues and being questioned and by sharing their discoveries and decisions with others. As a result, women derive feelings of acceptance and involvement that are typically not as important to men.

Inclusion is generally not a top-of-mind issue for men. As a result, a woman may misread a man's behavior in team meetings as being aloof and indifferent, which tends to amplify a woman's feelings of exclusion. ●

Do Men Have to Walk on Eggshells with Women?

Men often find themselves walking on eggshells with women in the workplace, an apprehensive and hesitant feeling that can potentially surface any time men interact with women. Examples of situations that men say they feel most uncomfortable in and take extra care not to offend and provoke an emotional reaction include bringing up certain topics that may raise too many questions and delay decisions; giving feedback during performance reviews; careless language, including sexual innuendo, off-color jokes and profanity; opening doors, holding elevators, buying lunch, or offering to carry heavy packages.

Gender Facts:

- **79 percent of men feel they have to be careful and indirect when providing women critical and timely feedback.**
- **82 percent of women say they want to receive direct feedback from men.**

Women don't believe that men need to walk on eggshells around them. They wish that men didn't feel that way and are often surprised that it occurs to the degree that it does. However, men often claim that they have a history of "saying the wrong thing," an awkwardness that many men confess dates back to their adolescence. They admit that their sense of caution is often a reaction to past situations and experiences, even if it was only an isolated incident when something they said or did caused a woman to react negatively.

Men walking on eggshells with women is clearly detrimental to both genders. It prevents men and women from bringing their authentic selves to work, being open and honest in their thoughts and actions, and building trusting relationships that can result in greater personal happiness and professional success. The only way to achieve a higher level of personal authenticity and trust is for both men and women to take steps toward understanding and valuing each other and not expecting the other gender to make all the effort. ●

Do Women Ask Too Many Questions?

"How long before we see the results of the new product test?"

"Two weeks, Susan. I'll email each of you the stats as soon as I receive them."

"But our regional sales managers are flying in next week for training."

“It’s the best the vendor can do. The product has to be in test market long enough to validate the design. There’s a number of other things I’d like to cover before this meeting is over, so if we can please move through the agenda.”

“I’m still uncomfortable with this waiting period. Why didn’t we let the vendor know we needed results sooner? Why do we have to wait two weeks?”

The team leader gets increasingly frustrated. “We interviewed three vendors before settling on the one we’re using. Two weeks is the fastest response time we can hope for.”

“Does sales support know about this delay? They’re already preparing collateral and training modules for the sales managers’ arrival next week, and everything is based on the current design.”

Gender Facts:

- **72 percent of men state that women ask too many questions.**
- **80 percent of women say they prefer to ask questions even when they know the answers.**

When we explore the challenges men and women face in working with each other, men often state that women tend to ask too many questions. Some men even say it’s a major problem, especially during meetings in which they believe women’s questions tend to slow down progress on action items and delay decision making.

Women generally acknowledge that they do ask more questions than men but that their questions are their best contribution, intended to stimulate an exchange of ideas, discover what’s important and arrive at a best possible outcome.

The challenge for women is not in asking fewer questions but in understanding why men tend to believe women ask too many and in discovering how to frame their questions in ways that communicate better with men.

In our workshops, we often find that women ask questions aimed at four different purposes: to build consensus, to show concern for a project or for others, to offer feedback and to ask for support. Men typically don’t ask as many questions. Men aren’t as prone to building consensus and tend to think and process their ideas alone, even when they’re working with others. They’re more inclined to announce their opinions, be more direct in their requests and when offering feedback, and seldom ask for support unless they’re overwhelmed with a problem and unable to solve it themselves.

The bottom line is that companies that have a blend of both approaches realize better results. Those that haven’t yet learned to complement the different behaviors tend not to be as successful. ●

Do Men Listen?

Without understanding the different ways and reasons a woman may ask a question to share what she knows or needs, make an opening remark to stimulate conversation, or express her feelings to show support, a man will often respond inappropriately or fail to react at all.

Common ways that indicate to a woman that a man is not listening are

- He ignores what she’s saying,
- He interrupts her in mid-thought.
- He presumes to know what she’s thinking.
- He becomes easily distracted.

You Missed My Point

When men fail to give the proper signals that they’re listening, women begin to feel that their words are not getting through.

Men love to solve problems and often feel honored to have the opportunity to help resolve an issue. Bringing a problem to a man is an open invitation for his advice. If he senses frustration or anxiety in a woman’s voice, a man will tend to assume that it’s his responsibility to step in and put her mind at ease. She’ll feel he isn’t listening when he interrupts her in midsentence with something like, “No, no, no, here’s what you should do.” He thinks his quick reaction and the relevance of his solution prove he was listening. The woman may only have wanted him to lend an ear, not render a decision.

When a man shows himself to be distracted, by not looking directly at a woman when she’s talking with him, fidgeting with his watch, or looking around the room, a woman tends to take it personally and conclude that he’s not interested in what she’s saying or that she’s unimportant to him.

In coaching women, I often stress that it’s a communication style difference for women and a listening style difference for men that we need to bring together in the workplace.

Men need to learn the value of incorporating women’s connective and consequential way of thinking to enhance problem solving and decision making. Women, though, need to verbally make that link so men can more readily associate the implicit value that women are bringing to that particular topic and to men’s linear way of thinking. ●

Are Women Too Emotional?

Yes, women are emotional, and they tend to express their experiences — their joys and frustrations, regardless of how large or small — more often than men do.

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Gender Facts:

- **A man will tell up to three people of a negative or positive experience, but only if it's relevant and only if he knows them.**
- **A woman will tell up to 32 people of a negative or positive experience, even if it's not relevant and whether she knows them or not.**

Plainly stated, women share with others, while men tend to seek space and solitude.

When men have strong feelings, they'll externalize the issue and explode if it's a major problem or become quiet and shut down, especially if there's nothing they can do to immediately resolve the issue. They'll focus on something else to distract their attention away from the problem.

Women don't react as quietly and can't change their focus as easily as men can. They'll tend to personalize the situation — blame themselves — and find others to share their experience.

Men and women simply manage and express their emotions differently. A man at work tends to show very little emotion during the course of his day, whether in team meetings or in one-on-one conversations. A woman, in expressing what she may feel is a moderate and reasonable show of concern for a project or for a client, can be misinterpreted by her male colleague as being too emotional.

At work, one of the biggest problems with the perception that women are too emotional is that a man will tend to avoid a woman expressing her emotions or even attempt to tamp down her feelings by dismissing them out of hand or by rushing in with a quick solution: "Don't worry about it" or "It's not that big a deal."

Women often say they don't feel comfortable or safe showing their true feelings at work, whether it's happiness, anger, frustration or fear. They don't ever want to be perceived by the men in the office as being weak or irrational.

Validating a woman's perspective doesn't necessarily mean that a man has to agree with her feelings or intuitions. Her heightened emotional tone may, on the surface, suggest to him that she's feeling negatively, her feelings are final, and her mind is closed, but none of these is necessarily her intention.

A woman's emotional reaction and reflective thoughts can often be the perfect complement to a man's impulse to take immediate actions. Men can benefit from taking the time to explore the consequences of their decisions before acting too quickly. And women can gain from

the impulse for forward momentum and the ever-present energy offered by the men on their team.

As men and women in the workplace learn to support each other more effectively, emotional tension decreases, while cooperation and collaboration increase. The result is better problem-solving, enhanced decision making and greater productivity. •

Are Men Insensitive?

It seems that since the beginning of time, a man has responded to a woman's claims that he is being insensitive with the same innocent, perplexed reaction: "No I'm not ... How's that? ... When?"

Women often read and react to people and environments differently than men do, and they tend to bring more memory and empathy to virtually every relation and situation. Men are generally not as attentive. That doesn't necessarily mean that they aren't observant. Men simply tend to take in less, focus only on those things directly related to an objective, and often do this with far less concern for details. The actual blind spot is the belief that men are often purposeful in their indifference and forgetfulness.

Gender Facts:

- **72 percent of women say that men are not as attentive as women to people's feelings, situations and environment.**
- **68 percent of men tend to agree.**

Men understand, more than ever, that successful leadership requires becoming more perceptive of their environment and mindful of the needs, motivations and interests of the people around them. Nevertheless, being sensitive is not a natural and effortless response for men.

Knowing this, a woman can become more understanding when a man appears to be indifferent, self-absorbed or noncollaborative. She can appreciate that it's more than likely not personal or intentional on his part but stems from his preoccupation with his own thoughts.

A man's tendency is to be singularly focused and sequential and to make decisions as quickly as possible. Although a woman may have her own position already thought through, her inclination is not to give her opinion as much as it is to encourage ideas from others. Her tendency is to have everyone weigh in before she'll share her thoughts. She'll feel more comfortable with a decision, knowing first that all ideas have been explored.

Men believe they are performing at their peak by offering their best ideas without hesitation. They also believe that if others have something to say, they'll speak

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up without being prodded. A man feels he is being sensitive by not putting another person on the spot, so he avoids asking directly for other opinions.

When women communicate, they tend to look directly at each other throughout their conversation. The more intent women are, the more they focus on each other's eyes.

A man, on the other hand, will tend to look away to stimulate his thinking process as he asks himself, "What's the solution to this?" His inclination is not to maintain eye contact while he's searching for an answer or lending greater concentration to the discussion. Instead, he'll look up or over or down, or even cock his head to the side. Another man will be comfortable with this behavior and think, "He must be focusing intently about what I'm talking about," while a woman's personal reaction will be, "Hello in there! He's so easily distracted. He probably doesn't even care about what I'm saying."

The bottom line is that there is equal opportunity for learning by both genders. It's not enough for a man to simply say "I'm just being myself" and not make an effort to connect more deeply with his coworkers and read situations around him with heightened awareness.

Gender intelligence will help a woman understand that what she may perceive as insensitivity or lack of care on the part of a man is most likely not intentional. This understanding can help her to become more direct in her interactions and to frame her conversations in ways that will ensure her male coworkers are more aware of her meaning, needs and expectations. ●

GROWING IN OUR GENDER INTELLIGENCE

Building Trust with Women, Increasing Credibility with Men

Recognizing and dispelling our blind spots and understanding and valuing our gender differences are the important firsts in creating professional and personal relationships that are built on a foundation of trust.

Trust must be present before we willingly open ourselves up to greater understanding and acceptance. It's the most effective way of relating to others, working with others and getting results. We each want to be trusted, we respond to trust, and we thrive on it.

Gender Facts:

- **95 percent of men and women consider trust to be the foundation of a working relationship.**

- **92 percent of women say men earn their trust through caring and concern.**
- **89 percent of men say women earn their trust by showing credibility and competence.**

For a man, trust is all about credibility — aligning with his goals, believing in him and helping him succeed. A man will place trust in a woman who understands, aligns with and acts upon those things that matter most to him — achieving the results and winning.

A woman can build her credibility with a man by first seeing the good in him and his efforts and supporting instead of correcting those efforts. When a man feels that a woman is not trying to improve him, he is much more likely to seek her out for her ideas and go to her often for feedback and advice. ●

Bridging Our Different Values

Men and women often find themselves at opposite ends of the spectrum when it comes to what they value at work, how they prefer to work, what they expect of others, and what they expect of themselves.

Women most value building alliances, developing relationships, and collaborating toward a common goal while improving processes and people along the way. Women value sharing their leadership and decision making and ensuring everyone is involved. Women place value on improving performance and maximizing productivity.

Men most value achieving results, from their own efforts and those of others. Men value independent work and, when on a team, getting each individual to work as effectively and efficiently as possible toward a shared goal as well as doing the right and necessary things in the shortest amount of time. They're comfortable working in hierarchies and often declare their leadership. Men place value on alignment, momentum and results.

The blind spot preventing change is men's and women's inability to understand what's most valued by the other gender and why.

Improve — Maintain

A woman's sometimes-endless pursuit of improvement to get something just right can cause her to fall into an improvement cycle trap — a perfection trap — in which overpreparation always succeeds in driving up her stress levels but not necessarily improving her work product.

At a recent keynote address to women executives in the financial services industry, I asked, "How many of

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you believe you overprepare for meetings? How many of you have difficulty in knowing and accepting when ‘good enough is good enough?’” Every hand in the room shot up.

Women often find themselves in the weeds because of their impulse to overthink an issue, improve a report, write an article or perfect a speech.

Men are on the other end of this spectrum. If something is working, their tendency is not to waste time looking to improve what’s not broken.

While there’s commonly a drive in women to improve things, there’s often a desire in men to achieve more with what’s already there. Men want growth and results, but they’ll only feel compelled to change something when that something stops functioning. Men will adapt to change, but only if it’s necessary and proven to be more effective than what they’re already doing.

Sharing and Declaring in Leadership

We distinguish what women and men value and personify in their leadership as *Sharing* in leadership and *Declaring* in leadership. Since the 1980s, shifts have occurred away from an exclusively male paradigm of leadership to a more decentralized and participative mode. Much of this change has been driven by the complexity and speed of global business and the need for companies to make quick and informed decisions, sometimes worlds apart. But change is slow, even for global companies whose workforces are comprised of as many women as men and who have customers who are virtually all women.

The reality is that there’s value on both sides of the leadership spectrum — a centerpoint of leadership that incorporates the best of what women and men bring to the table. Organizations that have a greater balance of women and men in leadership are discovering one another’s value points and accelerating toward the sharing of leadership.

Female Leaders

- Define their leadership in the strength and power of their networks.
- Are aware of the specific situations and needs of individuals and groups and how those issues can affect the organization.
- Decentralize planning and share decision making.
- Directly empathize, encourage and praise others, and seek to resolve emotional conflicts through communication: “Let’s talk about it.”

Male Leaders

- Define their leadership through their accomplishments and the results of others.
- Are more attentive at the macro-level — the financial and operational needs of the organization — and not as concerned at the individual level.
- Centralize planning with performance measures and hierarchal decision making.
- Promote independent resolution of problems and control emotional vulnerability: “Less feeling, more doing!” ●

Achieving Work-Personal Life Harmony

Today, a dual-income household is a global social norm. There is perhaps no other phenomenon that has had a greater effect on society, altering the way men and women interact and how families live and spend their time. The greatest challenge facing men and women today is how to juggle their jobs and family responsibilities so that everyone feels appreciated and fulfilled.

Regardless of country, women and men tend to describe the lack of balance quite similarly. Men feel the endless pressure to perform and deliver, while women feel they have too little time for daily life activities. In finding a work-personal life harmony, it’s important to begin with self-care, for the greatest value you can give to others is when you are whole and at your best.

It is not out of our reach or idealistic to think that women and men, working together, can make our world a better place. This is what we characterize as gender-intelligence — men and women seeing the world through each other’s eyes and valuing each other’s line of sight. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Work With Me*, you’ll also like:

1. ***Leadership and the Sexes* by Michael Gurian and Barbara Annis.** Learn how to use scientific gender intelligence for business success.
2. ***Don’t Think Pink* by Andrea Learned and Lisa Johnson.** The authors examine the different ways women think and how companies can engage women with visible and transparent marketing campaigns.
3. ***What Got You Here Won’t Get You There* by Marshall Goldsmith.** Only a handful of male and female executives will ever reach the pinnacle. Goldsmith shows that subtle nuances make all the difference.