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## Context to the nugget conversation

Sally speaks about the notion of Executive Presence and how that plays out for men and women. She alludes to a piece of research that suggests that women on average end up speaking 20,000 words a day while men end up speaking around 7000 words a day. She discusses the implication of this on how men and women could think about Executive Presence.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And moving themes, Sally, I wanted to talk about communication. And I was surprised actually to read that there is a research, which suggests that women are known to speak about 20,000 words a day on average compared to men who speak around 7,000 words an average. Of course, I am sure there is a spectrum in both situations. But I guess where I was going with this was as women and men rise, the talk-listen ratio changes as you sort of evolve into a leader. So I was curious when we think of executive presence, is that a nuance to the way women should think about it compared to men? I guess I am mixing two questions here. But if you could expand this notion of how communication applies to men and women and how they should find their own authentic style in developing their presence.

Sally Helgesen (JG): Yeah, that is a really important question. First of all, the 20,000 versus 7,000, it is very helpful to think of it and it is generally true. I think the research was US based and I would imagine it plays out some differently to different degrees in different cultures. But the way that I was using in the book was talking about the importance of developing a really concise and clear mode of communication that especially for women it helps men who are in positions of influence and authority to really hear you. And my mind goes back to a woman I spent some time with who was a leading operations person in one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies. And she had been a medical doctor before and I asked her, what do you think is responsible for your rapid rise in this organization. And she surprised me by saying I really think what it is I had to learn in my medical practice to be very concise in delivering often very important information to people because it was not that much time, the appointments are not that long anymore. And she said and that really served me well here because we have a kind of male tone as she put it in this pharmaceutical company and in the sector, she said where very crisp and concise communications are valued. And she said I saw that there are a lot of really talented women here who just used too many words and that some of the senior members' patients and some of their male colleagues cannot figure out what they are talking about because it is just a lot of words coming at them. And she said so what I have tried to do is really make myself a resource for coaching a lot of our extremely talented women to be more concise and to develop more of that concise leadership tone being very careful. Now, let us talk about it from the point of view of authenticity because on one hand, that is an important observation but does it sound like what I am recommending is that women try to talk like men, no,

not at all. But in my experience, the most effective leaders are very, very aware of the outsized value every single word they use has. When you are in a position of leadership, people listen to everything you say and try to discern clues about what it might mean or what that hidden message might be for them or what you really want, that is where people's minds are. And the most effective leaders I know are very aware of this, so they are careful in their communications. That does not mean they are censoring themselves but it means that they recognize what they say really has weight. So they tend to not be quite as profligate maybe. We could say with words because they understand that the more words you use, the more potential ground there may be for a misunderstanding. And they treat their communications with real respect and seriousness because they know how much impact they will have. So that is where I think that looking at it in terms of authenticity is probably not the most helpful thing. What is the most helpful thing, thinking how I can be as clear as possible? And I know there is a rider. I have big audiences but I deal with a lot of complicated topics around the leadership and technology, nature of the economy, etc. So my goal in everything I write is I want it to be as clear as possible. And I find that when you are in a position of authority, when people are listening to you, that is a good goal to strive for, not how can I be the most authentic, how can I be really me or what is my tone. Try to be as clear as you can. Not redundantly, not repeating over and over but being as clear as you can the first time and your tone will evolve naturally from that. It is what I find.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I recently came across the app – ORAI which is an AI powered app that sits on your phone, gives you an opportunity to record a small sample of your speech and gives you feedback for you to develop. I just got started on it and I am exploring the basic version but based on my initial usage, it felt like something interesting that I could try without dependence on others. In my case, it pointed out some of the things that were in my blind spot, for instance usage of mmm, aah and fillers.

## End of nugget transcription

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### **Sally Helgesen - Nuggets**

- 74.00 Sally Helgesen - The Full Conversation
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- 74.02 Sally Helgesen - How women often think about ambition
- 74.03 Sally Helgesen - Reluctance in accepting credit
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### **About Deepak Jayaraman**

Deepak seeks to unlock the human potential of senior executive's / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work [here](#).

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