

Top five ways to talk to women in 2015

 By [Cécile Gorgeon](#)

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It seems hard to believe, but many companies continue to under-deliver to the 50% of the world's population that is female. According to Tom Peters, "women are unmistakably in my opinion economic opportunity number 1", and with global earning power of \$18 trillion and growing, it's easy to see why...

But if you do sit in a business that struggles to understand the role and influence of women, what are some of the latest things to take note of? I suggest five ways below...



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From self-esteem to singularity

In 2003, Dove launched its Campaign for Real Beauty, featuring women deemed as having appearances that were outside the stereotypical norm. But fast-forward more than a decade, and we are now asking whether featuring curvy women in their underwear really speaks to women today or just on their behalf?

The 'Real' phenomenon has taken a new path, with more and more female-focused brands tossing aside the idea of perfection in challenging ways. The 'No Photoshop' movement is not about featuring 'anti-system' models, but rather celebrates the uniqueness of every woman. Take lingerie brand Aerie Real, for example, which features youthful, unretouched models showing tattoos, stretch marks, dimples and lines.

Modcloth and Dear Kate focused their last campaigns on 'real women' (including employees and Silicon Valley CEOs) whilst Desigual chose Chantelle Brown-Young (a sufferer of vitiligo skin disease) as the star of its ad campaign... all authentic women. And this is translating into action: the clothing brand American Eagle agreed to stop airbrushing its models in January 2014 - at the end of the year, sales were up by 9%.

Embrace a multifaceted femininity

By thinking of themselves as unique individuals, women have liberated themselves from gender stereotypes, redefining and widening the codes of 'femininity'. Conforming to gender clichés is a thing of the past. Femininity is now more complex and completely disables the traditional archetypes of the Femme Fatale (with her beauty, sex appeal and irresistible charm), the Amazon (determined, ambitious and willing to go to any lengths to succeed) and the Idealist (straight out of a fairytale,

waiting for her prince).

While some luxury brands are struggling to embrace the diversity of today's femininity, premium brands have, on the whole, become more exploratory, controversial and bold. [MAC's Viva Glam](#) campaign is a stand out example; igniting women's desire by leveraging a ballsy, provocative and influential face of femininity, redefining the role of the muse in advertising.

Use humour and play on sexist clichés

Self-expression and opinion-sharing have replaced docile womanhood with women now enjoying more liberated speech and expression. They no longer hesitate to show their true colours, but reveal their personalities, show their uniqueness and fight for their beliefs. Be it in the way they speak, dress, or act, they now let their authentic personality shine through, freed from fear of judgment.

Thirst for variety, optimism, renewal and new experiences are at the forefront, all through the channel of humour. They are turning the world (and the man's world) into a joke, manipulating sexist clichés to their advantage. Like Renault, Fiat, Kenzo... become their partner in crime.

Engage with a woman's inner self

After centuries of self-sacrifice and focusing on others, the time has come for personal focus, reward and self-fulfillment. Embracing the world of opportunities that surrounds them, women are looking for intellectual and experiential substance to guide their personal path and ignite their passion. Moving away from traditional traits of femininity, the focus is now on the mind, well-being and inner self.

To succeed with women in this area, brands need to connect them to the world and people around them, inspiring them on an intellectual level, as underwear brand Dear Kate did by including empowering quotes from women in business in its ad campaign.

Support the cause of women, but don't step on their toes

Feminism has shifted from protest to integration, from [extreme and violent activism](#) to a smoother, consistent speech on sexual equality, including both males and females. The '[he for she](#)' UN initiative (with Emma Watson as ambassador) has taken feminism to the masses, revamping it under a new and fresher light. A string of brands have joined the conversation on equality with equally relevant campaigns, including [Verizon Inspire Her Mind](#), [Always Like a Girl](#) and [Pantene Not Sorry](#).

In contrast, the Apple and Facebook egg-freezing financial scheme received substantial criticism. What was intended as a bold move to support women has been perceived by many women as greater pressure on female employees to stay at work for longer. The lesson? The most successful brands are following to the beat of Women in 2015 and supporting them (rather than speaking out for them) in their cause.

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