

Margaret Becker on the art of living • Melt-proof makeup

BODY, MIND & SPIRIT

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## Deniece Williams

on blessed  
assurances  
& making the  
hymns hers

You love him,  
but can you live  
with him?

Why prayer's  
the best drug

Doable  
discipline



# The Female Factor

**A** new hire in my first job at a small publishing firm, I expected to work hard. What I didn't expect was I'd have so much fun. Looking back I think it had

something to do with all the employees being women (and many Christians). The female owner didn't plan it that way. It just happened and the environment was friendly. We cooperated, collaborated and laughed a lot.

Seven years later, when my career shifted to a larger organization where I was often the only woman in meetings with senior executives, the landscape had definitely

changed. The behavior was much more formal and less personal — men were in charge.

I adapted quickly to communicate effectively with my male colleagues, but I couldn't help but wonder if these differences were really gender-based or the result of moving from a smaller company to a larger one. What was it like for other women? Did they support each other as the Christian women I had worked with did? Or were they looking for an edge behind each other's backs like two of this year's most talked about female coworkers, Monica Lewinsky and Linda Tripp?

Reports of that scandal, involving former White House intern Lewinsky whose private conversations were secretly taped by a co-worker she trusted and confided in read like a cautionary tale for women in the workplace. The lesson, according to author Judith Briles, is "Don't think sisterhood in the workplace will help you succeed."

In her book *Woman to Woman: From Sabotage to Support* (New Horizon Press) Briles

chronicles how 30 years ago too many women had to fight for the success once reserved for men. Today, though, too many women in the workplace lie, spread rumors, gossip and even sabotage coworkers — male or female — in the name of making it to the top. Gender isn't the issue. Success is.

That may be more because of generation than gender, says Marilyn Helms, director of the Institute for Women Entrepreneurs at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. "Generation Xers have the advantage of seeing lots of women in the workplace," Helms says. "It is normal to them that women would help one another. [They] don't realize how it was before."

Thankfully, Helms confirms, more women of all ages working in the '90s are recognizing the benefits of helping each other and drawing strength from the gender we share.

"Women understand, appreciate and respect our sisterhood," muses an administrative assistant for a nonprofit organization.

A managing partner of a national media firm agrees. Typically women manage their employees more relationally, she says, telling how she confided in many men, with disappointing results: "They can yell at you and not care how you feel about it. As a woman I care about how my employees will react to me when I have to discipline them."

That desire is rooted in not only wanting to produce good work, but in having good relationships while going about it, writes Briles. "For every man who says he cares about the result you'll find three women who say they care as much, if not more, about the process."

Still, the gender differences are subtle, says Dr. Faye Crosby, a professor of psychology at Smith College and the University of California at Santa Cruz. For instance, Catalyst, a not-for-profit organization in New York that helps women in corporate environments, found, not surprisingly, that men have created just as many great workplaces as women, and conversely, companies that aren't good for women typically aren't good for men either.

Really, then, the sexes have more in common after all. ●

*Leslie L. Nunn, a marketing consultant in Dallas, Texas, owns her own business and still works with talented, fun and friendly women — and men.*



**What happens when women work together? Leslie L. Nunn finds the answer of "sometimes support, other times sabotage" may have more to do with generations than gender.**