

Communication Is An Outcome – Not An Activity

You've all read the survey results. "Employees place communication problems at the top of their frustration list."

"Effective communications between management and employees is lacking in the majority of organizations."

There is an interesting paradox in most organizations because it is typical for the managers to feel they are quite effective communicators. In fact, one study showed that 80% of managers think they are better communicators than they really are.

In many of the corporate assessments that I have done, this has been proven time and again. The good news is that, once the situation is acknowledged, communication and understanding from both parties tends to improve.

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Are You Communicating Effectively?

How To Enhance Communication Within Your Company

In communication, what is true for human interaction is true for business. Listen well, express yourself and be receptive of suggestions and criticisms. Within the organization, good communication increases employee satisfaction, which is eventually translated to customer satisfaction.

Listen well – Communication allows the transfer of appropriate and accurate information from top to bottom or across different organizational levels. Oftentimes, top executives are too involved in planning and developing strategies that they readily assume that their directives will be received positively by the managers and employees. This is not always the case. An important ingredient of effective communication is knowledge of what the recipients need to know and there is no better way than to listen to them. To enhance communication, approach them and listen to them. Show courtesy. This way, the message "Listen to me as I listen to you" is conveyed concretely.

Be objective – Be understanding and do not judge their feedbacks immediately. Reaching the wrong conclusion can lead to strained work relationships.

Prevent this by being sensitive to the perceptions and expectations of managers and employees. Promote good will by politely accepting negative feedback. Avoid arguments in order to minimize undesirable feelings within the company. However, arguments are sometimes necessary for resolving issues.

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So much has been written about how to communicate better, usually about improving the process of communicating. Do this, don't do that. It all becomes a bit tiring, doesn't it?

We need to do a major shift in our thinking. We must concentrate on the outcomes, not on the process itself. Let's look at some key outcomes of communicating.

Building trust – You may not often think of this as a desired outcome, but you should. In order for people to truly follow a leader, they must trust that leader.

Without trust in the person, whatever is being communicated may not be fully understood, accepted and supported. Trust is at the core of effective communications.

Lack of trust creates a barrier or disconnect that is difficult, and time consuming, to overcome. No matter how important or impressive a title someone holds, no matter how big their bank account, or how much authority they have, what is really important is that others trust him or her and what is being said.

Sharing Knowledge – Bob Noyce, one of the founders of Intel, the high tech giant that runs most of our computers, once said, *“Knowledge is power and knowledge shared is power multiplied.”* That is one of the guiding principles that caused Intel to be so successful.

Have you ever worked on a jigsaw puzzle and got to the last piece and found it missing? How did you feel? Now, what if someone had that last piece in his or her pocket and they gave it to you?

The feeling you get is similar to someone who shares his or her knowledge with you to finish a project, make a decision or solve a problem. You feel pretty good about them, they've shared and you've succeeded.

On a broader scale – if you share with an individual or team of people how they fit into the bigger mission, you're creating value and gaining their trust. Sharing knowledge is the basis for understanding – the foundation of co-workers' cooperation and support.

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Providing Feedback – One thing that seems to stay the same in business is the need to change. Change is continual, change is renewal, and change is progress. It also creates the need to constantly have an effective feedback mechanism so managers and employees can stay on target.

According to author David Cottrell, *“Everyone has four basic feedback needs. A good feedback system encourages connected communications between managers and co-workers by addressing those needs.”*

Employees need to know what is required of them, especially during times of change. Employees need to know how they are doing. It's not enough to just tell them at the annual or semiannual performance reviews. Make it a point to be sincere, be timely, and give feedback to others.

Employees also need to know their manager cares about them and about how they are doing. Be available when they need you. Get them involved in decision-making by asking their opinion. An email *“thank you”* is not nearly as effective as the face-to-face, look `em in the eye, and say *“thank you”* technique.

In summary, if you change your way of communicating to focus more on the outcome rather than the process, as discussed above, you will have taken a significant step towards better communications. Try it this next week, I think you will be pleased with the results. ♦

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Awareness Calendar –

October

National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

For more than two decades, the **National Breast Cancer Awareness Month** has educated women about breast cancer, especially the importance of detecting the disease in its earliest stages through screening mammography, clinical breast examination, and for women 20 years of age and older, breast self-examination.

According to the **National Cancer Institute**, Breast Cancer is the most common non-skin cancer, and the second leading cause of cancer related death in women. Currently, \$570 million dollars a year is spent on breast cancer research.

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In such cases, give time to each contender and evaluate each side objectively.

Estimate their capacity for information – Before giving them information, gauge what the managers and employees can take in first to prevent information overload. Avoid giving insufficient information as well because this could lead to unsatisfactory performance.

Be creative – After factoring in their views and inputs in strategic plans and objectives, the next challenge is how to enhance information transmission. It is not enough just to talk or send out memos. Combine accuracy, creativity and sincerity to effectively communicate different kinds of information. Get the managers' and employees' attention by sending out teasers, then holding a big event. If this is too extravagant, provide information in appealing packages. Or send out messages that peak their curiosity so that they are encouraged to seek out information on their own.

Always evaluate – Evaluate whether your communication techniques are effective by asking your subordinates directly or conducting surveys. Ensure the anonymity of the participants so that they will answer truthfully. Collate and compare the results. If there are praises, then it means that the communication techniques are effective. If there are criticisms, then look at them constructively and learn from them. Through this, communication becomes a company-wide affair and not just the job of the HR department. ♦

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“To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as guide to our communication with others.” ~ Tony Robbins

Are We Really Listening?

The next time you're in conversation with someone think about this question for a second. Many times we're simply thinking of what we're going to say next, rather than actually listening to the person with a clear mind. If you're guilty (as I sometimes am) of this at times there's some really bad news. The other person knows this as well. It's written all over our faces.

It's in the very words that we use to follow up with in our discussion with that person. The good news is that by making ourselves aware of the fact that we're not truly listening we can begin at that very moment correcting the problem. Make yourself aware of the importance of listening and you'll reap many rewards. It's one of life's most awesome facts that people are drawn to those who are good listeners. Upon reading the biographies of many leaders one thing is clear. Each in their own way are magnificent listeners. ♦

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One Minute Ideas

Communication Basics

A large percentage of a person's day is spent communicating with other people such as customers, employees, and managers. This communication can be in person, on the phone or in writing. Even your body communicates a message when you haven't said a word. Being able to communicate effectively is an important skill that can be learned.

Some of the basic communication skills are:

1. Use statements such as "I need ...", "I feel", or "I want" to show ownership of your message.
2. Be complete and specific with your message. Define your expectations. Don't expect others to guess or anticipate what you need or want.
3. Be sure that your verbal and nonverbal messages are consistent. If you look angry but sound happy, you will confuse the emotion you are trying to express.
4. Be redundant. Present your message in more than one format to be sure that everyone "gets it."

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Future Insights

Beware of empires. Guard against any manager building a bureaucratic dynasty that gets in your way of performance. Cross-train your people, enable them to work productively together across departmental or functional lines. Stay fluid and flexible.

Emphasize personal and professional growth. Establish and maintain a learning environment. Use education, training, and development to help every worker become more competent, more confident. Link personal and corporate growth objectives to build the congruency that bonds people to your company. When people can meet their personal needs through their employment with you, they'll be more likely to stay.

Show appreciation. Tomorrow's employees, like today's, are hungry for appreciation. Thank your people every day. Be sincere and specific. Train all your managers and supervisors to follow your example, consistently. Seek creative ways to show you care.

Use contingent workers. Let go of the traditional belief that every worker must be a regular employee of your company. Open yourself to using part-timers, contract workers, leased employees, temporary staff, casual labor, and partnered outsourced companies.

Get closer to your people. Develop tighter relationships with your people, business focused. Share your visions, your dreams, and your needs. Learn how your people feel about these issues, and other things that are important to them. Stimulate and support vigorous open communication.

Stay alert to trends. Study your industry's publications. Scan popular newsmagazines, newspapers, and newsletters. Talk with colleagues, customers, suppliers. Attend an annual meeting if you're really interested in trends and creative ideas. ♦



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Schedule of Public Courses

The following courses are being offered to the public by Harmony Coaching & Consulting. Click on the associated link for more information on the program or to register.

Course Title	Date(s)	Time	For More Information/Registration
SHRM Learning System® is the preparation course for the HR Certification Exam <i>(Every other Saturday)</i>	Every Other Saturday 9/22 – 12/1	8:30AM – 4:30PM	www.cbu.edu/shrm
The Coaching Clinic® is a two-day workshop for executives, managers and leaders to experience and learn coaching skills and competencies.	December 10 & 11, 2012	8:30AM – 5:00PM	www.harmonycc.net/coaching-clinic.php
Leading at the Speed of Trust™ is a two-day workshop for anyone interested in increasing revenues, decreasing costs, enhancing/repairing relationships, or improving their credibility with employees or customers.	TBD	TBD	Email: info@harmonycc.net

