

Effective Communication Practices

Talking is easy! Communication is hard!!! The greatest problem in communication is the illusion that it has been accomplished. We view things differently based on factors such as: personality, age, cultural background, experience, gender, education and values.

Barriers to Effective Communication

1. Reacts rather than responds to input. Manipulates through displays of emotion.
2. Pretends to listen but actually is formulating the next response or is multitasking.
3. Jumps to conclusions based on prior experience or bias.
4. Does not communicate when it is needed or uses the wrong media.

Elements of Effective Communication

1. People trust the provider of the information.
2. The speaker delivers the information effectively and uses specifics and speaks to be understood not to impress.
3. The communicator is brief, clear and specific and often uses repetition, word pictures and levity.
4. Non-verbal cues of the speaker are consistent with the words provided (meaning comes through body language-60%, tone/sound quality-30% and words-10%).
5. Good communicators listen intently for meaning with their eyes and their ears and clarify when they are not sure they understand.
6. Effective communicators seek to build or maintain the relationship. They are willing to reveal real emotion but do not lose control and do not show disrespect for the other party.
7. Good communicators are authentic in their intent to listen to understand.

8. Effective communicators know that they are communicating to others all the time even when they are not speaking.
9. Effective communication requires redundancy. When new or complex ideas are introduced it takes several communication efforts to achieve full understanding.
10. Effective communicators don't have to agree with the ideas presented by others; they may actually be offended by the position of the speaker. To be effective, however, they set aside their judgment and withhold blame or criticism in order to fully understand the person.

Tips to be More Effective Communication

1. Be positive. Say what you are for, not what you are against. Say what you will do, not what you can't do.
2. Believe body language over words. Listen for true meaning with your eyes.
3. Respond to communications, don't react. Responding requires a thoughtful deliberate response rather than a visceral reaction.
4. Avoid dogmatic announcements which make enemies of friends and followers e.g. You are wrong! That's not true! Instead say, I have a different understanding of the facts in that matter or Help me understand why you believe that to be the case.
5. Replace "but" with "and" statements. Instead of saying, "I hear what you are saying but I disagree". Say, "I hear what you are saying and I have a different view."
6. When anger threatens to overcome you, breathe deeply, slow down and concentrate on control. Respond in a low voice. Your words and opinions will come across as firm and factual rather than emotional.
7. Minimize the times you use hot words such as, "should", "must". These words sound intimidating or even condescending.
8. To demonstrate that you are listening to the arguments of another speaker, hear them out, pause, agree with some element of their argument and then make your statement. e.g. "This is an important issue, I agree. The first thing we need to do is"
9. To enhance your listening skills and insure comprehension, occasionally paraphrase

the meaning of the speaker. e.g. "What I understand you to mean is...". "So, to sum it up you feel."

10. Don't fill in all the blank spaces in a conversation. Use silence to draw out more from the speaker.
11. When communicating to try to change behavior in the workplace: Say clearly how you feel and what you want in the future. Describe the observable behavior that needs to be changed and explain the consequences or results of that behavior if it is not changed.
12. Misunderstandings and conflicts happen in every workplace. When they do happen, respond to the behavior not the person. Criticize specific behavior and only one thing at a time.
13. What someone says and what we hear can be very different. Our personal filters, assumptions, judgments and beliefs can distort what we hear. Repeat back or summarize to make sure you understand.
14. When conversation is heated give time to let the other person get the emotions out. Keep your face neutral and remain silent. When the emotion has been vented you can again engage in problem resolution.
15. Be courteous in communication. Be friendly, open and honest. Do not hide insults or use a passive aggressive tone.
16. Many conflicts are caused by unclear expectations and misunderstandings. Clarify first before assuming there is a problem.
17. When communicating concerns to a colleague: be specific rather than general, describe rather than evaluate, focus on behavior rather than the person, and seek to maintain the relationship rather than indulge in self-serving behavior.