

## Effective Communication Practices

Be positive. Say what you are for, not what you are against. Say what you will do, not what you can't do. Instead of "I can't possibly get this done until Friday!" say, "I can get it to you on Friday."

Believe body language over words. Body language can cancel the meaning of words but words never override the meaning of body language. Listen for true meaning with your eyes.

Respond to communications! Don't react! Responding requires a thoughtful deliberate response that is more likely to lead to the desired result.

Avoid dogmatic announcements which make enemies of friends and followers. Instead of, "You're wrong!" "That's not true!" "That will not do good at all!" say, "I have a different understanding of the facts in that matter." or "Help me understand your thinking."

"But" statements negate what comes before. Replace "but" with "and".

Instead of: "I hear what you are saying but I disagree." Say "I hear what are you're saying and I have a different view."

Minimize the times you use the "hot" words such as "should", "must", "will" and "ought". Such words sound abrupt, intimidating even condescending. They make a listener feel somewhat inadequate.

Use powerful language. Rid your language of weak phrases. Instead of "We could possibly consider maybe...." say, "I suggest." Instead of "This plan could possibly work if..." say, "With our support, this plan will work".

To avoid the appearance of not 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 however is"

Listening is not waiting for your turn to talk. To enhance your listening skills occasionally paraphrase the meaning of the speaker to show that you fully understand their meaning not just hear their words. e.g. "What I understand you to mean is...is that correct?" "So, to sum it up then, you feel"

Don't fill all breaks in the conversation. Use silence to draw out more from the speaker.

To structure answers to questions so that the answers are clear, concise, and memorable use the following template:

Summary - Give a one sentence summary of your answer.

Elaboration - Provide details: who, when, where, why, how, how much. Give a brief example if possible.

Restate - End with a final sentence which is a restatement of your answer or position.

When people ask questions with negative connotations or hot words, restate the question before answering it.

Example: Why is management being so shortsighted and insensitive about this issue?

Answer: Are you asking why management has chosen to follow system wide guidance on this matter? We are obligated to take this stance because...

If you would rather not directly answer a question you are asked, use this question as a bridge to your points.

Example: I appreciate your question but of more importance to our department at this time is....

When you need to deliver unexpected bad news that will be a shock to the emotions of listeners, provide a warning of what is to come such as, "I am going to have to give you some bad news". The worse the news, the more important it is that you deliver it in person.

Praise in public; criticize in private. Criticize specifically not generally. Criticize the behavior, not the person. Criticize one thing at a time. Don't compare members of the staff. Be specific in your praise.

When communicating to try to change behavior in the workplace:

1. Say clearly how you feel, what you want or what you expect.
2. Describe the observable problem or behavior.
3. Explain the consequences or results of the behavior.

Deal with conflict promptly. Things unattended fester, hearsay happens. Intentions become suspect. Hurts humiliate. The faster you broach the subject the less infected are the wounds.

Many conflicts are simply the result of unclear expectations. Managers set standards for employees but don't tell them about those standards. It is difficult to live up to expectations you don't know about.

When conversation is heated give time for the other person to get the emotion out. People can't resolve anything when one or both are crying, cursing or yelling. Keep your face neutral and remain silent. When the emotion has been vented you can again engage in the problem resolution process.