



Effective Communication

A View from Impact Factory

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Communication Skills

Communicating well really is a skill. These skills have to be developed, honed and added to on an on-going basis. They are the heart of interpersonal skills and the greater your awareness of how it all works, the more effective your communication will be.

We could write a book about communication skills, but for now you can content yourself with some essentials for becoming a more effective communicator.

- **Communication is individual**
- **How it happens**
- **What can get in the way**
- **Conflict resolution**
- **Be a good influence**

Communication is individual

We're not all the same

Everyone communicates differently and sees the world differently. The greatest skill you can have in order to instantly and significantly improve your communications skills is to understand the other person's point of view and how they see the world. Then you can adjust your own communication to take that into account.

Change yourself to change others

Alongside this has to be the knowledge that the only person you can be sure of changing in any communication is you. Therefore, the most effective way to be in charge of what happens in any communication dynamic is changing what **you** do.

You are the only one of you

There's never one right way to communicate. Authentic communication always happens when we reply on those things we know to be true about or for ourselves. Remember your personal style probably says more for you than all the words you use can.

What's *already* working?

Most people tend to look at what's wrong with themselves and others rather than focusing on what already works. Remember, something (more than one thing, of course) has to be working well for you to have got this far already!

How it happens

Verbal *and* Non-Verbal Communication

Everything communicates. Remember! If you aren't clear about what you mean and what your intention is, the other person (or people) could easily (and sometimes deliberately), misinterpret what you mean.

What you do matters as much as what you say. It's now accepted that the words account for only 7-11% of a communication. Your behaviour will 'read' unconsciously to other people and you can certainly be more in charge of the reading matter!

Language is one of the most powerful reflections of how we think and feel about ourselves and others. You need to be aware of the padding, justifications and excuses you use and whether they are appropriate. You can make a big impact simply by changing some of your language.

Communication Cycle

There is a neat communication cycle we've come across that can help you understand how to make communication work better. It means that you can take responsibility for every stage on the Communication Cycle:

Thought – Spoken – Heard – Understood – Agreed To – Acted On – Implemented.

Be aware of where you or others tend to fall off the cycle.

What can get in the way?

We all make too many assumptions

Be aware of the assumptions you make, especially making something up and then acting as though what you made up was true. Notice if you alter your behaviour with certain people because of the assumptions you make about them. Also be aware of the assumptions you think other people make about you.

Assumptions aren't necessarily 'bad'. Sometimes it's important to let people keep their assumptions (or some of them at least!) about you.

One effective way to deal with assumptions is to say to the other person, 'I've assumed such and such. 'Is that true?' or 'I'm making an assumption here about... Do you agree?'

Patterns/Reverting to type

We are pattern-making beings, which is good. However, sometimes we get so used to behaving and responding in certain ways that it's hard to see that there's any other way of doing things. When the pressure is on or we are under stress, even our best intentions may go out the window as we revert to type.

Habits, patterns, routine ways of thinking and behaving are difficult to change. Noticing your patterns at least gets you aware of them! Then you can decide if you want to change them or not.

Needing to be right

This is one area we all know about – the need to be right and in turn for the other person to be wrong. One skill that does need practise is to let go of needing to be right. Think of it as presenting information or a point of view rather than having to bludgeon someone else with your arguments.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict

One of the purposes of conflict is to arrive at a resolution, so if you avoid conflict, the problem usually (though not always) gets worse. The earlier you can identify that there is a problem and intervene, the better it will be.

Agreement

Find something (anything will do) in the other person's argument which you can genuinely agree with. This is a great way to take the wind out of someone's sails and ensure you don't get drawn into an insoluble argument. People usually won't listen until they feel heard.

Bridge Building

Really listen to what the other person is saying – they usually give a lot of information without realising it. Building bridges by making an offer can help enormously, as can changing what you want.

"I" not "You"

Use "I" statements, not "You" statements to avoid blaming. This also means that you take responsibility for how you feel, rather than making the other person responsible for making things all right for you.

Be a good influence

Attitude

You can change the direction of a communication if you change your attitude. There is no one attitude that's the 'right' one to have, though being direct and clear certainly helps.

Effective Listening and Responding

You can have tremendous influence on a communication as the listener *and* the responder. When we get little or no response from the listener, we often project our assumptions onto them about what they are thinking (and usually we assume they aren't thinking good things about us!).

Be positive

Use affirmation and encouragement to get the best out of people. Notice when others do things well (even if it's part of their daily routine). This shows you're being attentive; most people respond well when they know that others are aware of what they do.

What's most important is that you don't leave communication to chance. Raise your awareness, develop your skills and you'll be a role model for effective communication.

If you are interested in talking to us further about our work on Communication, please phone: 020 7226 1877 or e-mail: enquiries@impactfactory.com