



Effective Communication

Hints & Tips

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Change yourself to change others

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.

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!

Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

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.

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. Your behaviour will 'read' unconsciously to other people and you can certainly be more in charge of the reading matter!

Communication Cycle

You can take responsibility for every stage on the Communication Cycle:
Spoken – Heard – Understood – Agreed To – Acted On – Implemented.

Assumptions: Making it up and acting as though it's true

Be aware of the assumptions you make, especially making something up and then acting as though it 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.

If you are aware that you've given a habitual response you can go back and change it, exaggerate it, poke fun at it, which will also be a way for you to start reverting to a different type.

Trust vs Risk

It's up to you to engender trust in the other person, finding out what they might need in order to trust you. Sometime you do have to ask people to take a risk, but the more work you've done in the past to create trust, the more willing someone will be to trust you.

Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference are inextricably linked with Assumptions. Sometimes you simply have to make sure you're 'speaking the same language' as the other person by trying to see what they're seeing, or helping them to see what you're seeing.

Remember that when you have enough in common with people, the differences can often be unnoticeable. However, the reverse is also true: when there are enough differences, the similarities can often be unnoticeable.

The more abstract you are, including the use of jargon, the greater your chances are of being misunderstood. Problems come about when we assume other people are using the same terms of reference as we are. This is particularly true when we encounter people from overseas (and even *more* so if they speak English well) when we can get in a tangle of misunderstanding.

You're never going to get it completely right anyway, but checking out whether the other person understands what you're talking about is a good starting point. You may also have to far more specific with certain people than you are used in order to ensure understanding.

You may have to try to be more like 'them' rather than hoping that they'll become more like 'you'. Look to see where bridge – building might help resolve difficult issues.

Status

Changing your status helps you avoid being bullied or manipulated. Remember that a lot of status 'play' is about closing the tension gap that *other* people create. Keeping the gap within a manageable distance helps you stay more in charge.

Use status numbers as a short cut to changing your behaviour, especially when you find yourself slipping into old patterns of behaviour ("I think this situation warrants me being a 10." "Perhaps it's best if I play a two or three now." etc.).

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

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.

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.

Boundaries

Recognise that spatial differences are important. Know that you can protect your 'inner' boundary by being clear and direct. A firm voice, good eye contact and clear non-verbal signals work best.

Also know that you can recognise through non-verbal signals, when you have crossed someone else's boundary.

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!).

Use affirmation and encouragement of ideas (without hijacking or ending up being responsible for them) to get the best out of people.

Spheres of Influence

Focusing your attention on 'what needs fixing' rather than on what you can do will probably create more frustration than productivity. Use what you *already* know and are passionate about to increase your spheres of influence. Sometimes the 'route' may not be as straight-forward as you think in order to influence the 'right' person.

The Middle Ground

Sometimes it feels more difficult to go into the middle ground of behaviour, where we don't always know what will happen, than it does to stay in either end of the behaviour spectrum. But it is really important to remember that **all** parts of the spectrum are available for use. It's useful to be nice, nasty and everything in between as long as you are *choosing* it.

Making an Impact and Influencing Others

We all have the capacity to move and inspire people through our own passion and conviction. When you care about something and make that clear to people – even if they don't agree with you – you will make a positive **IMPACT!**

Making changes in your own behaviour that may be imperceptible to others, but will feel major to you gives you the opportunity to try new things out and create small wins for yourself.

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.

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

Remember, also, that the Resources section of our Website (<https://www.impactfactory.com/resources/>) has a stack of excellent articles.