

Effective Communication

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Communication Survey

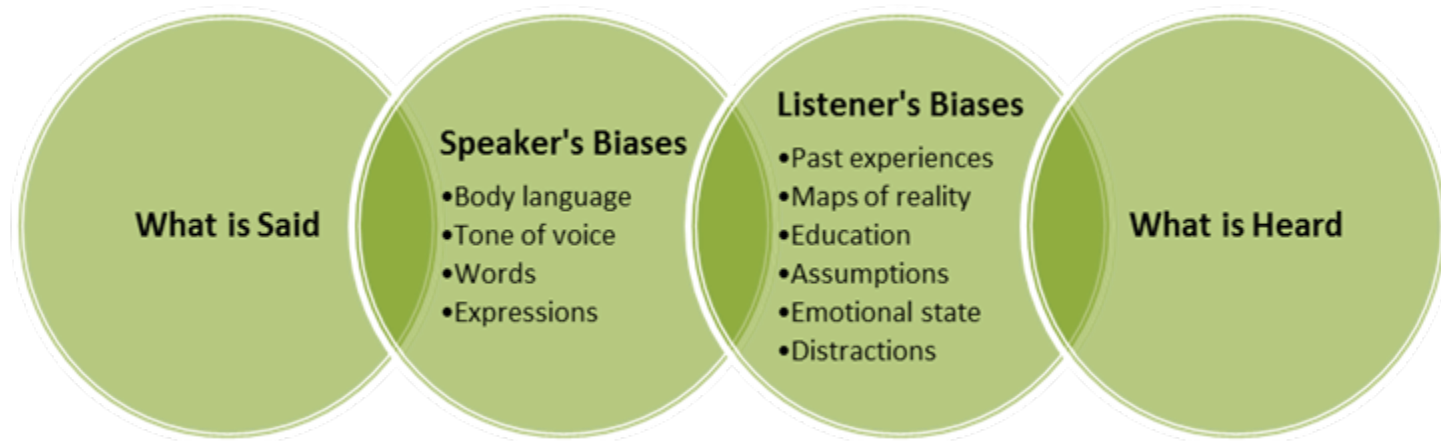
- I try to anticipate and predict possible causes of confusion, and I deal with them up front.
- When I write a memo, email, or other document, I give all of the background information and detail I can to make sure that my message is understood.
- If I don't understand something, I tend to keep this to myself and figure it out later.
- I'm sometimes surprised to find that people haven't understood what I've said.
- I can tend to say what I think, without worrying about how the other person perceives it. I assume that we'll be able to work it out later.
- When people talk to me, I try to see their perspectives.
- I use email to communicate complex issues with people. It's quick and efficient.
- When I finish writing a report, memo, or email, I scan it quickly for typos and so forth, and then send it off right away.
- When talking to people, I pay attention to their body language.
- I use diagrams and charts to help express my ideas.
- Before I communicate, I think about what the person needs to know, and how best to convey it.
- When someone's talking to me, I think about what I'm going to say next to make sure I get my point across correctly.
- Before I send a message, I think about the best way to communicate it (in person, over the phone, in a newsletter, via memo, and so on).
- I try to help people understand the underlying concepts behind the point I am discussing. This reduces misconceptions and increases understanding.
- I consider cultural barriers when planning my communications.

What is Communication?

- If you send a letter to someone who never receives it, but someone else reads it and understands it, is this communication?
- If you send a letter to someone who receives it, but misunderstands what you meant by it, is this communication?
- Does a person have to be conscious of his or her goals in order for there to be communication?
- Can a person communicate to an inanimate object such as a wall or cloud or the ocean?
- Is blushing a form of communication?
- Is a fake yawn communication?
- Could two people be talking and yet not be communicating?
- Can a person communicate with himself or herself?

Listening is Communicating

What we say isn't always what the other person hears. Our message goes through a complicated system of filters and outside influences before it reaches the recipient. We must always clarify that the person has received the message that we intended to send.



9 Steps to Effective Listening

- Face the speaker and maintain eye contact.
- Be attentive, yet relaxed.
- Keep an open mind to the speaker's message – try to feel what the speaker is feeling.
- Listen to the words and try to picture what the speaker is saying.
- Do not interrupt and do not impose your "solutions."
- Wait for the speaker to pause to ask clarifying questions - ask questions only to ensure understanding of something that has been said (avoiding questions that disrupt the speaker's train of thought).
- Give the speaker regular feedback, e.g., summarize, reflect feelings, or simply say "uh huh."
- Pay attention to nonverbal cues -- to feelings, tone of voice, inflection, facial expressions, gestures, posture.
- Be aware of potential barriers that impact your ability to listen effectively.

Clarify the Message

- When making a statement, paraphrase and reflect back what you've heard the speaker say.
- Reflecting is affirming to the speaker and encourages the speaker to elaborate further or delve more deeply into the topic.
- Meaningful exchanges between you and the speaker are built on feedback.
- In order to accurately feed back a person's thoughts and feelings, you have to be consciously, actively engaged in the process of listening.
- Try to experience what the speaker is describing, feeling the speaker's feelings through the lens of your own experience.

What Would You Do?

- What would you do if you were trying to talk to someone...
 - In a noisy workplace?
 - And there were lots of visual distractions around?
 - And they had a very strong accent?
 - And they were speaking too fast for you to understand?
 - And they kept using jargon words or terms you didn't understand?
 - And they appeared to be very stressed?

Express Yourself

- Your communication should include these five important components:
 1. What you are seeing – have seen
 2. What you are hearing – have heard
 3. What you are feeling – have felt about the issue
 4. What you need or want
 5. What the positive result will be from receiving/acting on your request

What Would You Do? #2

- For the three situations listed below, think how you would communicate:

- What you are seeing – have seen
- What you are hearing – have heard
- What you are feeling – have felt about the issue
- What you need or want
- What the positive result will be from receiving/acting on your request

1. Your boss marked you low on your performance review. This was the first indication you had of how you were performing in your job.

2. An employee you supervise has been frequently absent causing lost production and a hardship for the rest of the employees in your unit.

3. Your coworker has been opening your mail and going through your desk drawers, as well as saying negative things to others behind your back.

Emotional Barriers

- Emotional obstacles to effective communication include:
 - **Vulnerability** – people may not express their true feelings because they do not want to expose themselves to others
 - **Protecting** – people may not want to express their true thoughts because they don't want to hurt or upset the other person
 - **Expectations** - social, professional, or cultural “rules” may inhibit expression of some feelings
 - **Fear** – people seek approval and acceptance so they are often reluctant to say what they really mean for fear of rejection

Manage Your Emotions

- Recognize what you are feeling. Are you angry, embarrassed, or hurt?
- Simplify your feelings. Select one or two words to describe how you feel. Be specific.
- Do not act on your feelings right away. Don't make a decision, enter into a discussion, or send an email in anger or frustration.
- Choose an appropriate time and place to communicate.
- Accept that you are responsible for your emotions; Use "I" statements. Say "I feel angry when..." rather than "You make me mad..."

Managing Conflict

- Keep yourself calm by breathing slowly and deeply. Remember that this is only one temporary moment in your life.
- Concentrate on what you need to move forward rather than dwell on the other person's mistakes.
- Summarize the other person's feelings to make sure that you understand what they are communicating.
- Give affirmation to the other person about what they may be feeling.
- Acknowledge and apologize for any mistakes you may have made.
- Focus on positive results and make specific requests that will enable the achievement of those goals.

What Would You Do? #3

How can you use what you learned about managing your emotions and conflict in the following scenarios:

1. Your boss reprimanded you at a department meeting for emailing a joke to others in the workplace. Personal emails and jokes are routine at the office.
2. Recently you shared your idea with a coworker on how to improve departmental operating procedure that could result in greater efficiency and increased revenue for the college. You scheduled a meeting with your supervisor to introduce the concept, but your coworker beat you to it, and has claimed your idea for their own.
3. You have learned that one of the employees you supervise frequently criticizes you harshly to others in and outside of your department.