

Effective Communication is Your Choice

Why would the month of June be designated as Effective Communication month? It appears that effective communication should be an annual objective of all individuals and organizations. Why only one month out of twelve should the focus be on this very important issue?

The key component is the adjective – effective. Communication is all around us everyday and all the time. Yet, most communication is NOT effective. The key point is a choice must be made for effectiveness to rule. There lies the root cause for ineffectiveness in communication. The proper choice calls for an effort to be made for alignment, connection or buy-in to take effect.

So why do we need to be effective in our communication? Because it impacts every critical job and social function where people are involved. On the job side – what areas are clearly impacted by effective communication?

Leadership *Effective communication is a core competency for leaders. The ability to influence others regarding vision, goals, plans, projects and strategy are critical to success. It leads to others buying in and being committed to the execution of ideas, projects and operations.*

Sales *The ability to interact with customers and prospects is completely driven by effective communication skills. Great sales people are outstanding communicators. Their effectiveness is due to engaging others. Asking questions and really listening to their answers – even asking more questions for clarification and understanding of points of view. Sales is no longer a presentation contest – it requires interaction and active listening.*

Customer Service *Any customer contact qualifies as a customer service opportunity. While the customer service department gets the most attention – the customer is THE FOCAL POINT for effectiveness and service excellence. Again, the ability to ask questions and listen for all information points is critical to customer satisfaction.*

Teams *How well a team functions is based upon the principal of “respect for the individual.” Effective communication is the root element for respect. Understanding behavioral styles is the core element for whether communication is considered effective or ineffective. Since style patterns influence “how” an individual participates with others – communication is impacted either positively or negatively.*

While these specific areas warrant effectiveness in communication, every person in the organization benefits from effective communication. It contributes to overall productivity and understanding of all functions and directions. Yet, lack of communication remains the number one issue for organizations.

So, why is most communication ineffective? There are several factors contributing to ineffectiveness. The first factor is “no choice” regarding actions, just doing what is natural with no consideration for others. This is the biggest mistake made by all individuals – running on auto-pilot with no thought about the needs of others and especially “how” others prefer to communicate.

The second largest mistake is not really listening to others. Inactive listening includes many patterns of ineffectiveness – such as – having a closed mind about a subject; disrespect toward others; thinking about what you will say next rather than listening; lack of eye contact; or just thinking about anything while others are speaking.

Inattention to body language signals is another example of ineffectiveness in action. Not recognizing a sudden change of body language or “state” is a common mistake made by individuals.

Finally, being too strict or literal in listening to only what is being said. A lack of understanding regarding “meta talk” is a critical factor for intuitiveness in communication. Meta Talk is the ability to recognize what’s being said “between the lines” or what is not being said that should be said given the current circumstances. While this part is considered an advanced communication technique, it is critical to effectiveness.

So, how can an individual improve their effective communication? There are four primary factors to improve:

Behavioral Style: Learn about behavioral style – especially the DISC model. This is pure style and “how” a person behaves – especially regarding communication style. Then learn how to flex behaviors to match the communication style of others.

Active Listening: This technique engages others to share everything that is important to the situation or them. The better the flow of information, your choices will improve insuring effectiveness.

Body Language: Learn to “read” others regarding their current state of accepting new information; openness to information; engagement or commitment to a process; or finally buy-in to an idea or concept.

Passion: Speak and write with feeling, passion and emotion. Corporate speak is usually devoid of any emotion or commitment – it is focused upon safety. Engage yourself to engage others.

Communication is important to your success. Effective communication insures your success. It will have the highest return of time investments. Productivity will improve. Your influence will be wider. Your results will be faster and larger. And, most importantly, your self-esteem will climb to new heights. Make your choice to be an “Effective Communicator.”

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