



District Deans Meeting, Feb. 16, 2013

## HOW WELL DO YOU COMMUNICATE?

Communication implies a two-way process — the transfer of ideas or information from one person to (an)other person(s).

If you are willing to look into yourself as you confront the issues of everyday living and examine your inner feelings, you can find new responses that better satisfy your needs and those of the people close to you. We are continually exposed to opinions and ideas — if we are open to new experiences and information, we can grow — explore the world naturally, fearlessly and joyfully — accept bumps and falls and continue to progress and learn.

### ONE PERSON TO A GROUP

- **Decide what you want to communicate.** What is your communication goal? What you have to say is important, so be prepared and transmit positive information. If you chatter and ramble while reporting or speaking, your audience will remember only that you went over your time and communicated little. Go over your material enough times to assure that you know the sequence of ideas you want to communicate — and your body's a-tingle and your mind aflame.. Practice your presentation until you are full of your subject. Write it down — time yourself — and don't deviate from your subject!
- **What is the make-up of your audience?** Are they young adults, chronologically mature adults, teens, children; are they familiar with your subject; what will you need to do to ensure they are listening? What will you do to capture their attention from the start (If your subject is Safety you might say something like, "Are you all strapped in?")? How can you make your talk or presentation interesting?
- **Just the facts and more.** Present your subject clearly and simply, with humor, visual-aids and supportive materials. Be professional. Incorporate hearing, seeing, writing and audience participation for better retention of the subject matter. Don't read papers you plan to distribute to your audience — assume that they can read.
- **Fake it until you can make it!** Don't apologize to your audience — for anything. Show confidence in your subject and yourself. Try to relate your subject to your audience in a personal way — such as telling a story on yourself or a Jane Doe (instead of a particular woman). Have a strong finish as well as a strong beginning. Tell your listeners what they can do with the information you have communicated to them (join, vote, write, investigate, support, contribute or give it further thought). Challenge the listeners to action.

### ONE PERSON IN A COMMITTEE

- **Plan and gather resource materials** prior to the committee meeting even if you are not the chair. Think about the primary purpose and goals of the committee. Develop your own ideas, but go to the committee meeting with an open mind.
- **Open discussion with all members on the purpose and goals.** All members must be heard (draw all members into the discussion). While another member is speaking, make notes on new ideas, but don't interrupt (not only is it rude, but you might stifle that

member). **BE A GOOD LISTENER!** Compliment and encourage newer and less experienced members.

- **Stop the discussion at intervals to evaluate.** Have you made any concrete decisions; broken the tasks down; and assigned certain members to do further investigation or do specific things to move the committee closer to its goals. Record all proceedings and develop a budget and other materials if needed. What is the committee's next step?
- **Communicating the committee's ideas** to the membership should be delegated to a member of the committee who is really excited with the goals of the subject at hand. An enthusiastic, well prepared and documented presentation is much more important than an experienced speaker. All members must stand behind the committee's decision. (As an aside, if you truly disagree with the committee's decision(s) you have a right to file a minority report — but the decision of the committee is the majority report.) **Be sure to reveal all the significant facts:** estimated costs, number of members required, number of hours, shifts, outside resources, who will benefit, and anticipated results. **If the committee's report has holes in it and members' questions aren't answered satisfactorily, the idea or project may fail to gain the necessary support.**
- **Be decisive.** Don't say: "The committee should have those answers by next week." Say: "The committee will have those answers by next Friday." Don't say: "Do you have any questions?" Say: "What questions have you?"

#### ONE PERSON TO ONE PERSON

- **Gain the other person's confidence** by giving compliments on some personnel aspect or by relating to some incident in which he or she is involved. Find areas of common interest.
- **Give your undivided attention** to the person to whom you are speaking. Really listen and demand full attention in return. It is most distracting to any conversation if there are continued interruptions from phone calls, other persons and outside influences.
- **Build support, gain cooperation, disagree agreeably, and admit any lack of correct information or proper actions** during your communications with another person. A clear, truthful understanding, by both parties, will make future communications easier and will give you more credibility. When someone makes a suggestion that doesn't impress you too much, don't say: "I disagree" Say: "That's an interesting idea, and I'd like to suggest a few more."
- **Encourage cooperation and reduce conflict** by eliminating conflict-producing words like "but" and "disagree" from your vocabulary. Don't say: "It's a good product, but it's expensive." Say: "It's good, and it's expensive." Control your own behavior, accept others as they are, and disagree agreeably. Remember that "3 + 3," "2 X 3" and "1 + 5" all equal 6 — it's just that getting there took a different path.
- **Good communication means being willing to take risks** — to suggest new ideas, new directions and even unusual things. Be willing to dismiss old ways or procedures and feel free to grow in a new direction. Don't be afraid of losing the security of "It's always been done this way."

(Leadership/Communication Workshop - 93/jb)