

Communicating in Style: Discover How to Communicate with Everyone (and Like It!)
By Julie Barrett, PinnacleOne

Communication; a simple yet powerful word. A word that is understood by the masses and still remains a mystery in its effectiveness. Communication can be the making or breaking of all relationships. You have been there; I know you have. Trying to convey a tidbit of vital information to a coworker or a supervisor. You have rehearsed your lines, reviewed your facts, and you *know* the delivery to use because you *are* a communicator. Your very job exists because you a conversationalist. Right!? So why is it then when you do explain your ideas and expel your thoughts that the other party just doesn't get it! Your boss stares at you like you are an idiot. It isn't you with the communication problem, it's him. He's the boss who is supposed to be the master of all communication styles. So why doesn't he understand? That blank look on his face is as if you presented your ideas in a foreign language. The more you talk the less engaged your boss becomes until you have a major disconnect and you leave his office frustrated and confused. What went wrong? How can you be so prepared and have accomplished nothing? Welcome to the world known as the "Communication Abyss."

The art of getting your message across effectively is a vital part of being successful in today's marketplace. Whether you want to have a simple conversation, give directions, make presentations with confidence or to negotiate with ease, learning the skills to communicate clearly will help you to improve your success rate in relating to others. Learning to relate to coworkers, customers, family, and even the stranger down the hallway through body language, oral and visual cues is critical in becoming a masterful communicator.

Getting along with people in general, whether it is your coworkers, friends or family, is an increasingly important skill these days. As technology continues to move in and play an important role in our everyday lives, work places and homes, we still need to communicate and deal with the human side of life. Connie Podesta's famous line is, "Life would be simple if it weren't for other people!" Oh, how right she is, but the simple truth is people are what make the world different and colorful. If we take the approach and understanding that each person is unique and special with our own sets of qualities, talents, skills and characteristics that are inherently our own, we can then bridge the gap between irritation and annoyance by accepting others for *who they are*.

So where does the communication journey begin for lifelong fulfillment and "happily ever after" understanding? After all, the word *communication* conjures up several modalities and styles. We did say that there are a number of ways of communicating including verbal skills, tactile skills, kinesthetic skills, and written forms such as emails, letters, and journal papers. As a matter of reference, we, as a society in general, judge a person within a matter of seconds to the level and degree of their intelligence based on how well or poorly they communicate. If a person is a marvelous orator filled with passion and colorful stories and anecdotes that we can relate to, then that person is judged as a superior being, smart and intelligent, and a somebody in society regardless of his mental capacity. The reverse is true when we read a letter, article or story filled with grammatical and spelling errors that serpentine like an artful snake. The mental acuity of the writer is at stake because his linguistic skills are not top notch. So how does a person in today's stressed out environment learn to communicate clearly and effectively with everyone and still feel like a uniquely created individual? This is the heart and soul of the communications workshop.

In the communications workshop, I hope to convey some beneficial information to enable you to have a fun and productive working environment. The workshop materials and anecdotes should allow you to examine the different temperaments and personalities in your workplace and see how to piece them together to create a harmonious and productive environment. First, we will examine the visible pieces of

each person's temperament. Each personality type has certain *behavior patters*—ways of dressing, mannerisms, even posture—that make it easy to identify which piece or pieces of the “personality puzzle” they possess without analyzing them or submitting them to psychological testing. You can identify your colleagues, supervisors, coworkers, children you teach, customers, and even potential clients and they won't even need to know you have figured them out!

Once you have identified each personality type, you need to understand the *various characteristics* that make each person unique. You will discover the *strengths* and *weaknesses* of each temperament. You can then recognize the personality traits and respond accordingly or react to them and ultimately regret your actions. Through observations of others, you will begin to view each coworker, customer, and potential client for who they are rather than who you are. In the case of truly understanding people and the various temperaments, the new Golden Rule reads, “Do unto others as they would have you do unto them.” This is the secret of successful relationships.

It is now time to take the next logical step and learn about the *basic desires* and *emotional needs* of the people in your life. These are the *valuable pieces* of information that enable us to not only understand our coworkers and potential clients, but also to get along with them and make all of our lives easier.

Putting together the visible, various, and valuable pieces will help solve the head-on collisions of personality traffic jams of each workplace. Going to work will become more and more fun!

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Back in the times of ancient Greek philosophers, Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, started observing his patients. He noticed that no two people were alike, although many had similar characteristics. Hippocrates and his coworkers began fitting these various types of likeness and obvious behavioral patterns into groups. They discovered there were four distinct groups that shared similar behavior patterns. Within each of these groups some people exhibited extremely different sets of behaviors, although they acted consistently within their group.

Hippocrates and his coworkers could accurately fit people into these particular groups due to the characteristics and obvious traits they exhibited. They called those whose obvious traits were being loud and late, optimistic and fun loving *SANGUINES*. They called those who loved to be the leader of the pack and tended toward bossiness *CHOLORICS*. The ones who needed to have all of life in order and were moodier than others were named *MELANCHOLIES*. Finally, they designated people who preferred to watch and who could easily go in any direction as long as someone else made the choice *PHLEGMATICS*.

Okay, so what do all of these terms (*Sanguine, Choleric, Melancholy, and Phlegmatic*) mean and how are they related to the four personality styles? Good questions and here are the answers!

Hippocrates originally felt that each group behaved as it did because of certain bodily fluids. The word Sanguine means blood and is related to high energy and optimism. Choleric is yellow bile, which is connected to anger and control. Melancholy is represented by black bile and was chosen because of the person's depth of intelligence and tendency towards depression. Phlegmatic comes from bodily phlegm, which keeps the person peaceful, passive and stolid.

In piecing together the personalities in your workplace, it is important to realize that all individuals are born with built-in desires. Left to function on their own, these basic desires form behavior patterns. If there were no bosses, deadlines, or rules, these basic desires would control their standard mode of operation. If there were no childhood traumas, abuse, or rejections, we will have the same personality pattern at age eighty as we had at age eight.

It is important to understand that our own personality is the dressing over our natural temperament. Just as we can alter and change our clothing for a specific situation or occasion, the person underneath the clothing remains the same. The same holds true for our personalities. A little tweaking here and there in different situations or times of the day is natural. What does not change is our temperament. It is the “raw material” ready to be molded and sculpted into a beautiful piece of art. The outcome of the raw material may resemble something very different from the beginning stages, but the material is the same. It has not changed its origin, just its shape, texture, and appearance! We have been born with inherent desires, tendencies, mannerisms, and thought patterns that will truly be ours for the rest of our lives. We can mask or dress (up or down) these tendencies, but our true nature will always be apparent in times of stress, strife or celebration.

MOVING BEYOND THE PERSONALITIES AND ONTO SPECIFICS

Everybody communicates in one way or another, but few managers deliver their messages as well as they can learn some basic rules to help you get your message across clearly.

Working Toward Better Communication

Good communication is the lifeblood of organizations. It takes many forms, such as speaking, writing, and listening though its purpose is always to convey a message to recipients. Use it to handle information and improve relationships.

Being Effective

Effective communication (and therefore effective business) hinges on people understanding your meaning, and replying in terms that move the exchange forward - preferably in the direction you would like it to go. Communicating is always a two-way process. In management, you communicate to get things done, pass on and obtain information, reach decisions, achieve joint understanding, and develop relationships.

Recognizing Barriers

There are always at least two parties involved in any communication, each of whom may have different wants, needs, and attitudes. These wants and needs can present barriers if they conflict with those of the other party, and such barriers may stop you conveying or receiving the right message. Any communication must overcome such barriers if it is to be successful, and the first step is to recognize that they exist.

Communicating Positively

Breaking down barriers is one of the first steps toward good communication. Maintaining eye contact, listening to what the other person is saying, and mirroring body language aids in successful communication.

- ❖ Facing the person you are talking to shows you are not afraid to listen to what is said
- ❖ Tilting your head slightly shows you are listening
- ❖ Break down barriers by adopting the other person's pose and actions
- ❖ Look the other person in the eye

Achieving Clarity

The three rules that govern good communication are all associated with clarity:

- ❖ Be clear in your own mind about what you want to communicate;
- ❖ Deliver the message succinctly;
- ❖ Ensure that the message has been clearly and correctly understood.

Good communication means saying what you mean - and fully comprehending any feedback.

Choosing A Method

It is essential when communicating a message that you give serious thought to medium that you choose. For many, this choice is often between the spoken and the written word. If you decide that you want speed and convenience, you may well choose speech as the best form of communication. Alternatively may want something more permanent and orderly - a typed document, for example - which will attract a considered reply.

Electronic media have generated even more possibilities by creating a hybrid form of speech and writing. Thus, e-mails have the speed and informality of a phone conversation, yet they are in letter form and can be filed. The purpose of the message will dictate which method to choose. Decide on your message first, and then select the best method to convey it, making sure that you have mastered its technique.

Cultural Differences

Broad generalizations are often made about a culture's use of word and gesture. Some Japanese and other Asians find it easier than some Europeans to be silent. The Germans, Nordics, and British, generally less voluble than many people in the Latin nations, are often more restrained in gesture. Some British seem to avoid saying what they mean, while Australians may disconcert others by forcefully saying exactly what they mean. Many Americans can be very straightforward.

Combining Methods

Methods of communication can be grouped into five main types:

- ❖ Written word
- ❖ Spoken (and heard) word
- ❖ Symbolic gesture
- ❖ Visual image
- ❖ Combination of these

Though the first four methods work well individually, it is now known that using two or more different communication methods together increases interest, comprehension, and retention. Methods are more potent in when combined with others. Examples of a combined approach include communicating via commercial media and electronic technology, such as multimedia and video conferencing. Multimedia allows better use of usual elements, and is increasing the medium of choice when it comes to communicating with large numbers of people, especially employees in a big organization.

CHOOSING METHODS OF COMMUNICATIONS

TYPE OF COMMUNICATION	EXAMPLES	USEFULNESS
<i>WRITTEN WORD</i> In any language and in various media, the written word is basic to literate societies.	Letters, memos, reports, proposals, notes, contracts, summaries, agendas, notices, regulations, minutes, plans, discussion documents.	The written word is the basis of organizational communication, and is used because it is relatively permanent and accessible.
<i>SPOKEN WORD</i> Communication that is effective only when it is heard by the right people.	Conversations, interviews, meetings, phone calls, debates, requests, debriefings, announcements, speeches.	Verbal exchanges in person and by phone are used because of their immediacy; they are the chief means by which organizations work on a day-to-day basis.
<i>SYMBOLIC GESTURES</i> Any positive or negative behavior that can be seen or heard by the intended target.	Gestures, facial expressions, actions, deeds, tone of voice, silence, stance, posture, movement, immobility, presence, absence	Actions and body language profoundly but unconsciously affect people - propaganda depends on the manipulation of positive and negative signs.
<i>VISUAL IMAGES</i> Images that can be perceived by a target group.	Photographs (slides and prints), paintings, drawings, illustrations, graphics, cartoons, charts, videos, logos, film, doodles, collages, color schemes.	Visual images are used because they convey powerful conscious and unconscious messages.
<i>MULTIMEDIA</i> Combination of the different methods above, often involving IT (information technology).	Television, newspapers, magazines, leaflets, booklets, flyers, posters. Internet. Intranet. Worldwide Web, video, radio, cassettes, CD-ROMs.	Media are especially useful when they can be participative. The more professional the use of multimedia, the more effective and productive they are likely to be.

Understanding, Body Language

Your body language -a huge range of unconscious physical movements -can either strengthen communication or damage it. Even if you are sitting completely *still*, may be unknowingly communicating powerful message about your real feelings.

Communicating By Body Language

Posture is all-important in body language. On a first meeting, these three postures would create very different impressions. The positive posture might have the best effect on the outcome by encouraging open communication, while the negative one would make communication difficult.

Reading Body Language

Because of its subtlety and range, body language is difficult to read – and to control. However a broad understanding of body language is one route to understanding the real opinions of others. For instance, if people are inwardly feeling uncomfortable because they are lying, their awkward body language will betray the lie.

POSITIVE	NEUTRAL	NEGATIVE
Body facing front and open posture show confidence	Direct gaze shows attention	Indirect gaze is evasive
Hands on hips indicate determination and ability to take control	Relaxed arms & legs show lack of tension	Ear pulling indicates doubt
Direct gaze and broad smile show friendly attention		Body turned away signifies rejection of what other person is saying
		Slight slumping shows lack of confidence

Conquering Nerves

The nervousness people feel before making a presentation or attending an interview is very natural. Their minds prepare them for action via their nervous system, so nervousness is due in part to glands pumping the hormone adrenaline into their blood. Use body language to appear more confident than you feel by making a conscious effort to smile and to relax your arms. Look people in the eye while you are talking or listening to them, keep your posture comfortably straight, and do not fiddle with your hands.

Cultural Differences

Britons and Americans tend to leave more personal space around them than other nationalities, and are more likely to move away if they feel that their space is being invaded. People who live in rural areas may also stand farther apart than city dwellers.

Keeping Your Distance

Leaving an acceptable distance between people is part of body language, and this distance changes depending on situation. For instance, guests at a social gathering stand closer to one another than strangers in a business situation. Always take care not to intrude into another's personal territory in case you arouse defensive or hostile reactions.

Creating An Impression

First impressions are very important. It is thought that the initial five seconds of any first meeting are more important than the next five minutes, so attention to detail can make a huge difference. Think about grooming, appropriate clothing, and err on the conservative side. Even if an informal look is required, ensure your garments and shoes are in impeccable condition. Before going into a meeting, check your appearance in a mirror to make sure that your hair is neat.

Making an impact – Grooming & posture always create an impression. This woman looks much more confident & capable when she has made an effort to neaten her appearance.

UNDERSTANDING AND USING GESTURES

WRONG	RIGHT
Slovenly stance	Upright posture
Messy hair	Neat hair
Crumpled T-Shirt	Neatly buttoned jacket
Dirty Shoes	Shining shoes



Gestures, together with other nonverbal communications such as posture and facial expressions, are an important part of body language. Knowing how to gesture for effect, on public platforms or in face-to-face meetings, will help to convey your message.

Recognizing Gestures

All skilled public speakers use gestures for emphasis. For example, John Kennedy used a chopping motion, while Bill Clinton pointed his finger. Devices like smacking your fist into an open palm and spreading your palms can reinforce points you make verbally. Remember that over assertive gestures, such as banging a table, or other signs of anger, can alienate people. Also, if you do bang a table, take care not to drown your words.

Single gestures may combine to form complex patterns. For instance, in a private meeting, you may recognize that a colleague is appraising you while listening to you, by the position of their fingers on their cheek or chin. However, to know whether the appraisal is positive or negative, you need to observe other signs, such as whether their legs are crossed defensively, or if their head and chin are lowered aggressively.

Cultural Differences

The nonverbal language of gestures varies from county to country. Some gestures to watch for include the North American thumb and forefinger gesture for OK (may insult a Dane); pointing with a finger (considered rude in China); the French enthusiasm for shaking hands (excessive to Britons); shaking your head meaning "no" (means "yes" to Indians); and hugging in public (unacceptable in Singapore).

Giving Body Signals

Supportive gestures, such as making eye contact, and nodding while somebody is talking can create empathy - unless the person you are speaking with can tell that you are concealing your true feelings. Everyone can control his or her body language to an extent, but not totally. Choose your words with care, being as honest as possible; otherwise, your body language may contradict you.

Hand on chin indicates approval	Raised eyebrows indicate interest	Gesturing with your hands adds emphasis
<i>Listening With Approval</i> Approval listening is shown here by the slight tilt of the head together with friendly eye contact.	<i>Paying Attention</i> Eyes making contact and the body leaning forward show alertness and readiness to assist the speaker.	<i>Emphasizing A Point</i> Using a hand gesture emphatically is one way of reinforcing a verbal point.
Indirect gaze adds to sense of uncertainty.	Arm wrapped around body is a form of self-comfort	Knitted brow and closed eyes show doubt
<i>Showing Uncertainty</i> Pen-biting is a throwback to the need to be nursed. This shows fear & lack of confidence.	<i>Needing Reassurance</i> One hand around the neck and the other around the waist show a need for reassurance	<i>Experiencing Conflict</i> The closed eyes and nose pinching reveal inner confusion and conflict about what is being heard.

Learning To Listen

The two-way nature of communication - so that both sides understand each other -is widely ignored. Listening techniques are vital, since how you listen conveys meaning to the other person and helps to make the exchange successful.

Showing Attentiveness

When you are in search of information, consensus, or a working relationship, the more obviously you listen attentively, the better. You may need to speak to get a response, but show you do not wish to dominate the conversation. Ask open questions, which lead to discussion, and keep your responses brief. Repeat key words silently as you hear them to help you to remember what is said.

Listening Skills: Putting Methods Into Practice

Empathize by imagining yourself in the other person's position, trying to understand what they are thinking, and letting them feel comfortable - possibly by relating to their emotional experiences. Pay close attention to what the person is saying, talk very little, and use encouraging nods and words.

Use analytical questions to discover the reasons behind the speaker's statements, especially if you need to understand a sequence of facts or thoughts. Ask questions carefully, so you can pick up clues from the answers and use the person's responses to help you form your next set of questions.

If you need to achieve a desired result, make statements to which others can respond with ideas. Listen and give your answers to others' remarks in a way that suggests which ideas can be enacted and how they might be implemented. Alternatively, include a different solution in your next question.

Type Of Listening

1. EMPATHIZING - Drawing out the speaker and getting information in a supportive, helpful way.
2. ANALYZING - Seeking concrete information and trying to disentangle fact from emotion.
3. SYNTHESIZING - Proactively guiding the exchange toward an objective.

Points To Remember

- ❖ Confidence is inspired in a speaker if you listen intently.
- ❖ What you are told should be regarded as trustworthy until proved otherwise.
- ❖ Misunderstandings are caused by wishful listening -hearing only what you want to hear.
- ❖ Constant interruptions can be very off-putting for people who find it difficult to get across their point of view.

Interpreting Dialogue

Take statements at face value without reading hidden meanings into what is being said. Test your understanding by rephrasing statements and repeating them to the speaker. It should then be clear that you have understood each other - or they may correct you and clarify their statement. However, watch for physical signs, such as evasive eye contact, and verbal signs, such as hesitation or contradiction, that provide clues to the truthfulness of the message. Be careful not to hear only what you want to hear and nothing else.

Using Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP)

One basic theory behind neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) is that the way in which people speak shows how they think. Thinking preferences can be categorized by choice of phrase. Categories include the visual, which is indicated by phrases such as "I see where you're coming from", and the auditory, indicated by phrases such as, "This sounds like a problem to me." By listening attentively, you can harmonize a conversation by "mirroring." That is, you can reply to visual language with visual, auditory with auditory, and so on. This all helps you to establish rapport with the other person. While listening intently and mirroring thinking preferences, you can also physically mirror the person. Adopting a similar posture and using the same gestures can create empathy.

Listening And Mirroring

NLP techniques can be used to take the tension out of a situation. For example, if you strongly disagree with someone seated opposite you, listen to them speak, and then speak yourself, using similar imagery and phraseology. If they are sitting defensively, subtly mirror their posture, then slowly change it into a more open one, as above, to encourage them to be less defensive.

Asking Questions

How you ask questions is very important in establishing a basis for good communication. Why, what, how, and when are very powerful words. Use them often to seek either from yourself or from others, the answers needed to manage effectively.

1. Ask a specific question if you want to hear a specific answer
2. Use open questions to gain insight into the other person's character, and to invite a response
3. Write a list of questions before you start a meeting
4. Do not be afraid to pause while thinking of your next question

Knowing What To Ask

The right questions open the door to knowledge and understanding. The art of questioning lies in knowing which questions to ask and when to ask them. Address your first question to yourself: If you could press a magic button and get every piece of information you want, what would you want to know? The answer will help you compose the right questions. If you are planning a meeting, prepare a list of any answers you need to obtain. As the meeting progresses, check off the answers you receive. If new questions occur to you while others are talking, note them down and raise them later.

Choosing Questions

When preparing questions in advance, always look at the type of question that best meets your aims. You may want to initiate a discussion to obtain specific information, attain a particular end, or send a command cloaked as a query. However, be aware that prepared questions will rarely have enough answers to them, may be incomplete or may prompt a completely new line of questioning. Keep asking questions until you are satisfied that you have received the answers you require. When asking prepared questions, watch out for clues in the answers that you can follow-up later with a new set of questions.

Choosing Questions For Different Responses

TYPES OF QUESTION	EXAMPLES
Open Question does not invite any particular answer, but opens up discussion.	Q What do you think about the company setting up a canteen for all staff members? A I think it is a good idea for a number of reasons.
Closed Question is specific and must be answered with a yes or a no, or with details as appropriate	Q Do you ever read the company magazine or newsletter? A No.
Fact-Finding Question is aimed at getting information on a particular subject.	Q What percentage of staff has replied to the employee attitude survey? A Out of 2,000 questionnaires, we got 1,400 replies- that's 70 percent.
Follow-Up Question is intended to get more information or to elicit an opinion.	Q Is this a good response compared with last time? A Two-thirds is average, so this indicates reasonably good morale.
FEEDBACK Question is aimed at getting a particular type of information.	Q Do you think that communications within the company have improved? A Yes. I find it is useful being able to talk to my manager in our new weekly meetings.

Striking The Right Tone

Your tone of voice is a part of communication in itself - for example, you may convey anger by speaking harshly or sympathy by speaking softly. The wrong tone may generate a counterproductive response, so work on improving your ability to manage your tone of voice. Using a tape recorder, play back your voice. Is there any unintentional sharpness? Is it too conciliatory? Practice until you are happy with how you sound. You can often steer people toward agreement by using an optimistic and confident tone of voice.

Final Thoughts...

Zig Ziglar has long been a popular author and speaker on leadership and motivation. In *Top Performance*, he cites research that shows 85% of your success depends on relational skills: how well you know people and interact with them. In the record-breaking bestseller, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey asserted, "Communication is the most important skill in life." Thomas Faranda echoed the point in *Uncommon Sense: Leadership Principles to Grow Your Business Profitably*: "Nothing is more important to a leader than effective communication skills."

The importance of interpersonal skills is increasingly critical because of four factors of growing importance in most organizations these days: technology, time intensity, diversity, and liability. Beginning from the very basic of all interpersonal skills is understanding the similarities and differences in our inherent temperaments. These "relational skills" are the building blocks or the foundation for every type of communication. By understanding relational skills—skills that build and maintain

relationships—we can effectively communicate with our peers, subordinates and superiors on their terms and in their mode of communication. Relational skills pertain to how well you relate to a person. These skills include the abilities to establish rapport, instill trust, foster cooperation, form alliances, persuade, mediate conflict, and communicate clearly and constructively.

You now have the basics. Go forth and have fun! Take the time to watch those around you, put these basics into practice, and start celebrating the success of clear and effective communication.