

DAZZLING DELIVERY

What is the secret to being a highly effective communicator?

Rachel Griffiths explains

Take a moment to think of a person that you consider as being brilliant at their job. Now consider why they have come to mind. What is it about them that makes them brilliant? What attributes do they have? What do they do well? The chances are that any person you are thinking of, right now, is a highly effective, personal communicator.

The ability to communicate with excellence is not just a matter of luck or a skill that you either 'have' or 'don't have'; it is an absolute must to succeed in any role, position or career.

You already have a successful career and have spent many years learning the ingredients needed to deliver the 'what' in your profession. You've taken exams and added professional credentials to your CV to prove your capabilities in delivering the 'what' in everything from monthly board reports to accurate figures and attained targets.

Yet when it comes to learning the 'how' to deliver, the chances are that you have not taken any exams. You have simply picked it up along the way, communicating almost unconsciously amid the everyday tasks that you carry out. After all, 'how' you communicate in your profession has got you to where you are today, hasn't it? You are not alone. New communication skills are usually only consciously developed when they are needed to be drawn upon and designed for use in an uncomfortable, confrontational or less than positive task.

Perhaps it is time to give the 'how' of communication a little more thought? Perhaps it is time to wake up and smell the communication coffee?

Think about it. Every successful leader will go way beyond delivering the 'what' in their role. These are people who really understand the power of 'how' and who are excelling because they have chosen to

become highly skilled in 'how' they deliver, not just 'what' they deliver. Outstanding professionals prioritise their focus and energy on communicating the 'how' effectively. It is this that sets them apart from others, makes others want to listen, makes it easier for them to be heard and allows them to shine.

So what is their secret? Their secret is that they are really conscious about communicating. They have actively chosen and developed their own blend of 'how' they communicate and are flavouring each and every working day with it.

Waking up and smelling the coffee of being an effective communicator takes a magical blend of 10 delicious qualities.

1. BE RESPONSIBLE FOR EVERY PIECE OF COMMUNICATION YOU ENGAGE IN.

How you choose to communicate starts with you. The first step in being an effective communicator is to realise that your communication is your choice, that communication skills are not learned or taught and that there is no 'right or wrong' way, but that you and you alone are responsible for how you communicate and its impact on others. This means that when your communication is not successful – you are not understood, your message is not received, the outcome is one that was not desired or perhaps that you are left feeling frustrated by a conversation – then you need to look at your own communication skills to examine how and what you could have done differently.

2. RESPECT THE RELATIONSHIP.

Effective communicators do not view communication as a function, but as a personal investment in an evolving, lasting relationship. Every communication is a step into the relationship you hold, whether with an individual, a group

or a team. Carefully craft each piece to demonstrate respect for the relationship, convey trust and as an invitation to reciprocate further investment.

3. BE INTENTIONAL.

Once you have acknowledged that communication is an investment in a relationship, take time to think about what the intention is for this piece of communication. What are you seeking from it? What purpose is it serving? What is the best possible result? The greater aim is always to develop a successful relationship with the individual or group and being intentional about the outcome will affect your choice of channel, language and tone.

4. USE ALL THE INTELLIGENCE AVAILABLE TO YOU.

In any given situation, from a one-to-one to a team meeting or a telephone call, effective communicators use all the relationship



FOUR WAYS TO LISTEN BETTER

- ◆ **Receive.** Stop thinking about the point you want to make and open yourself up to really listening to the other person.
- ◆ **Appreciate.** Let the other person know that you have heard and understood them.
- ◆ **Reflect.** Summarise what you have understood correctly – begin with the word 'so'.
- ◆ **Check in.** Invite further information on some areas to expand your understanding of what is being said.



intelligence that is available to them. They are aware of not just what is being said, but what is being seen and sensed. Paying attention to, and being aware of all this intelligence, allows you to gain powerful and unspoken information that you can use to refine your communication and make it more effective.

5. PUT THE PERSON FIRST.

Think of this as communication customer service. Once you can stop seeing communication as a task to perform and as a relationship to evolve, you can learn to put the person first in every communication. That means always acknowledging your last conversation, respecting their situation, understanding their perspective and even asking questions before you begin. By putting the person first, you acknowledge the relationship and set a fertile ground for the communication to take place, thus increasing its chance of being successful.

6. LISTEN BETTER.

So often overlooked, listening is one of the key ingredients in any communication. Before you communicate, just listen. And I mean really listen. We retain only 25% of what we hear and are generally poorly practised at listening. Effective communicators aren't thinking about what they want to say while the other is speaking – they are appreciating what they hear by acknowledging what has been said. Then they repeat what they have heard to ensure that they have understood it correctly before checking in with the other person to ask and invite further information.

Listening provides new information that is often vital to healthy communication and the relationship.

7. BE REAL.

Powerful communication is authentic and transparent. Think of a time when you have heard someone say something that you didn't honestly feel they believed. What they said didn't matter; the fact that it didn't feel true, did. Just as you would in any relationship, be yourself and express your own values in your communication style. Know yourself and the values you consider to be important and be bold enough to include them in the way you communicate. If manners are an important value of yours, then be polite in your communication. Remember, communication is your responsibility and your choice. Skilful communicators retain a strong sense of self in all aspects of communication and as a consequence appear to have great integrity.

8. PILE ON THE POSITIVE.

Positivity is always the optimum way to approach any communication. Negativity is contagious; it can often serve to keep the relationship stuck and can easily block change. Eliminate it and replace it with a healthy dose of the powerful positive. Express positivity in your choice of language, your body language and your intention. Then watch how others are suddenly more open to your communication and how quickly a new range of possibilities suddenly opens up. Start by replacing the word 'but' with the word 'and', and notice what happens.

9. CARE ABOUT THE CHANNEL.

Take as much care over the choice of channel as you do about the communication itself. This says a great deal about your intention. Know that there is rarely a substitute for face-to-face communication in terms of the relationship intelligence and investment that can be made. Remember that, where you cannot use your preferred choice of channel, care over your language can serve to have a similar effect.

10. LOOK FOR CLUES.

Excelling at communication involves being confident enough to spot the clues and to follow them. Whether it is the channel you choose, the question you feel you want to ask or the sense that you are getting, pick up on these clues. They tell you that the communication is either working or not working. Bring them into the communication by asking the question or by stating what it is that you sense isn't quite right. The chances are that others will also sense it and that you will be made aware of more useful information that will help the communication to be even more successful. ♡



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