

COMMUNICATING CLEARLY

Different Communication Styles

We all use these styles in our lives. You may use one more than the others.

Assertive

You communicate clearly and work to create mutually satisfying solutions.

You have an even tone of voice and use open and positive body language.

Aggressive

You make people do what you want by inducing guilt (acting hurt) or intimidating and controlling (using anger).

Your tone of voice will be loud or quietly angry. Your body language will be aggressive (folded arms; frowns; pointing;)

Passive

You will act compliant and avoid confrontation at all costs. You don't react strongly to confrontation and won't ask questions.

Your tone of voice will be quiet and body language will be fairly still.

Passive Aggressive

You will get what you want by a mixture of manipulation (aggressive) and avoidance of direct confrontation (passive).

Lots of mixed messages in tone of voice and body language.

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The focus of communication is to help customers solve a problem – to find solutions for their needs.

A Few Facts about Communication

- In a **face to face** situation 93% of the message gets communicated through tone of voice (38%) and body language (55%). Only 7% is through words.
- In **phone conversation** 85% of your message is communicated through tone of voice and 15% is through words.
- In **written communication** 100% of your message is communicated through words.

It's important to build trust and open communication with your voice.

Think about how you react to other peoples voices.

Pitch **Low**  **High**

Pace **Low**  **High**

Volume **Low**  **High**

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Your intention is to clarify the message and its meaning; establish rapport and build trust; and participate in a discussion which provides information and solves problems.

1. Listen Actively

- Listen without interruption.
- Be aware of any cues in terms of body language, tone of voice and the words they are using.
- Be aware of your own body language if it is a face to face conversation. Stay physically open. Look at them. Use appropriate facial expressions (i.e nod, smile or frown where its needed).

2. Encourage

- Ask for more information.
- "When and where did it happen?"
- "How do you feel about it?"
- "What do you think about it?"

3. Acknowledge / Empathise

- Reflect back their concern
- Acknowledge what they are saying and feeling. Don't act defensive.
- " So, you have concerns about our price/product/delivery time"
- " I can understand that you are feeling angry/ frustrated/ concerned."
- " What you've just told me is important."

4. Ask Questions and Paraphrase

- Probe to uncover more information, issues and concerns.
- Paraphrase when you want the speaker to know that you understand the essence of what she/he has said.
- "Tell me about ..."
- "You said you were upset by our service. Tell me specifically what upset you."
- " So, what your saying is ..."
- " If I understand you correctly, your saying that you agreed a delivery date with us and the consignment still hasn't arrived...."

5. Summarise

- You've asked questions and they've given you more information. Now summarise what they said. This assures both the speaker and listened that the message has been received and understood.
- " Let me just recap what you said.
1. Your concerned about price.2. You have a limited budget. 3. You need a high quality product."
- " The key issues seem to be ..."
- " What I've heard so far suggests to me that your key concerns are ..."
- " Let me see if I got what you have said so far ..."
- The customer will either agree with your summary and you can move to the next step – or - they will add to the list or restate and issue.

6. Offer Solutions

- Depending on their issues or requests you offer them solutions.
- If they have been skeptical offer them sales information, testimonials, hard facts.
- If they have misunderstood then offer them clear information.
- If they have real problems then describe what has or will change to deal with it. Explore options with them.
- If it's about price, promotion or distribution then negotiate within your authority. You may need to bring another person in on this if you don't have the authority to do these deals.

7. Confirm Agreement

- Ask " Does that sort out your concerns ?" If yes, well done. If no, go back a few steps until you are both clear on the issues/ topics of the conversation.

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Hints

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Open and Close ended Questions

- Open Ended – “Tell me more about your business/ event.”
- Close Ended – “ How many will you want and by when?”
- Be aware why and when you use open ended and close ended questions.

Dealing with the Rambler

- “ Let me jump in here for a minute.” Summarise what they just said.
- “ So, what your saying is ...”
- “ It seems to me that you’re looking for two different things. 1..... 2..... Is that right?”

Ending

- Let me summarise Have I got that right? Is there anything else I can do for you?”

Enthusiasm

- This is particularly important when you are talking on the phone.
- People can hear when you have a smile in your voice.
- Don’t overdue it and be enthusiastic when it is appropriate.
- The way you will be enthusiastic will depend on the person, situation and nature of the conversation.

Customer Cues and Information

- Watch and listen to the customer and focus on any cues they are giving you – verbal and non verbal.
- If they sound and look rushed then check and see if they want you to ring them at a more convenient time. If they say no then say “ You’re obviously busy so we’ll keep this chat to the point. How can I help you?”
- Pick up on what they are saying and feed back to them. “ You just mentioned that you have a number of events coming up in June. We can help you by providing”

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Making it easier for the Customer

- Introduce yourself when they ring. " Hello, this is Ruth at the Cat and the Moon."
- Request. "How can I help you?" "What can I do for you?"
- Filter people to the right person. Ever had to explain yourself to 4 people when you ring a business? Keep it clear. "Martina's not available. Are you looking for information on our products/ prices? I can put you through to Caroline or Ruth who can help you." " Would you tell me why you're ringing and I can put you through to the person who you can help you right now?"
- Be aware that in a conversation the speaker will be conveying: **feelings; facts; thoughts; opinions; tasks and processes**. You need to listen very clearly and be able to reflect back appropriately.
- Sometimes it is more appropriate to keep your opinions to yourself and stay neutral in the conversation. " So you think you are in a dead end job" "You feel that the manager is playing favourites."
- Listen Listen Listen
- A good listener works to understand the speaker and not project their own ideas and opinions.
- Try to listen and respond openly and not act defensively. Leaping in with statements such as "You're wrong. What would you know." will only start a defensive cycle that leads to conflict and not win win solutions.
- Suspend judgement and try to put yourself in their shoes. Try to understand their perspective.
- Try and focus on one issue at a time and avoid 'Topic Jumps'. " We've nearly dealt with your concern about price. Let's finish that and then move on to your ideas about distributing our product."
- Get feedback throughout a conversation to confirm that you are accurately understanding what they are saying.
- Until a customer feels that his/her situation is clearly understood, she/he will resist hearing solutions.

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