

The Road to Clear Communication:

7 Strategies

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by Joanne L. Smikle

Everyone I know complains about communication in their workplace. Either they don't feel heard, they don't understand what they're hearing from the senior executives or they aren't getting enough input from team members. Not to mention the complaints about how messages are sent and received. Whatever the complaint, it boils down to a communication issue, some large others small. This article covers seven practical strategies for improving individual and organizational communication.

- #1. Listen to the message.**...ignore the affect of the sender, even if they're angry or agitated. Pay close attention to the message that is being sent. Process that message before responding.
- #2. Consider the perspective.**...even if it is dramatically different from your own, give yourself time to consider the other person's perspective. Don't use your energy trying to rebut it, instead, give it serious thought. This is a sign of respect for the sender.
- #3. Respond with care.**...instead of just shooting from the hip, take the time to thoughtfully formulate a response. Try to keep it free of sarcasm and derision. Be honest and considerate in your reply.
- #4. Encourage questions.**...help people throughout the organization understand the full intent of new programs, policies and procedures. The same applies to customers. Encourage everyone to ask questions so that you are sure they really understand your intent.
- #5. Fill the gaps with facts.**...when employees don't know, they fill the gaps with speculation, innuendo and general gossip. Keep the knowledge quotient high by keeping everyone well-informed. The facts should not be a secret; they don't impact national security, so let's fill folks in on the basic information.
- #6. Establish communication plans.**...coordinate every tool (newsletters, e-mail, payroll stuffers, meetings, etc.) at your disposal to keep employees in the know when there are new products, services and systems. Have a formula for reaching everyone, whether they telecommute, work in the field or are at the home office.
- #7. Foster interdepartmental chatter.**...be sure that different departments are aware of the priorities and pressures facing their colleagues in the company. This makes everyone more valuable to customers because they are better able to answer questions, provide direction and even do a little suggestive selling.