

Business Credit News

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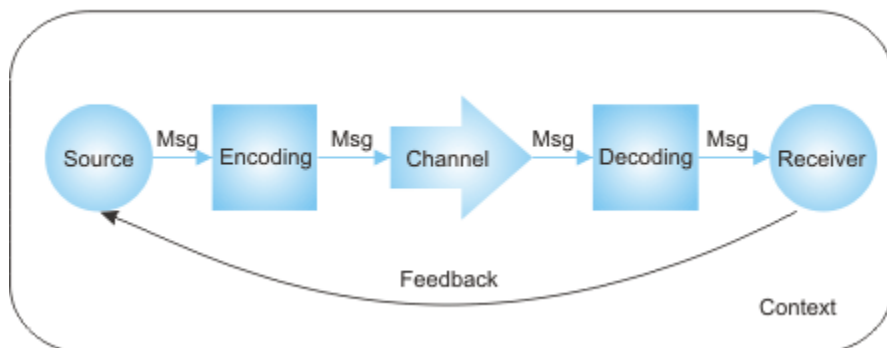
“HOW GOOD ARE OUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS”

Communication skills are some of the most important skills that we need to succeed in the workplace.

We talk to people face to face, and we listen when people talk to us. We write emails and reports, and we read the documents and emails that are sent to us. Communication, therefore, is a process that involves at least two people – a sender and a receiver. For it to be successful, the receiver must understand the message in the way that the sender intended. This may sound quite simple. But have you ever been in a situation where this hasn't happened? Misunderstanding and confusion often occur, and they can cause enormous problems. If we want to be excellent communicators, we need to be effective at all points in the communication process – and we must be comfortable with the different channels of communication. When we communicate well, we can be very successful. On the other hand, poor communicators struggle to develop their careers beyond a certain point.

Whenever we communicate with someone else, we and the other person follow the steps of the communication process shown below.

The Communications Process



The person who is the source of the communication encodes it into a message, and transmits it through a channel. The person who is the receiver decodes the message, and, in one way or another, sends back, through feedback, either understanding or a lack of understanding to the source.

By understanding the steps in the communication process, we can become more aware of our role in it, recognize what we need to do to communicate effectively, anticipate problems before they happen, and improve our overall ability to communicate effectively.

The Source – Planning Our Message

Before we begin communicating, we need to take a moment to figure out what we want to say, and why. We don't want to waste our time conveying information that isn't necessary – and we shouldn't waste the listener or reader's time either. Too often, people just keep talking or keep writing – because they think that by saying more, they'll surely cover all the points. Often, however, all they do is confuse the people they're talking to.

Plan What We Want To Communicate.

- Understand our objective. Why are we communicating?
- Understand our audience. With whom are we communicating? What do they need to know?
- Plan what we want to say, and how we will send the message.
- Seek feedback on how well our message was received.

When we do all of the above, we'll be able to craft a message that will be received positively by our audience. Good communicators use the KISS ("Keep It Simple and Straightforward") principle. They know that less is often more, and that good communication should be efficient as well as effective.

Encoding – Creating a Clear, Well-Crafted Message

Once we know what we want to say we need to decide exactly how we'll say it. Our responsibility is to send a message that's both clear and concise. To achieve this, we need to consider not only what we'll say, but also how we think the recipient will perceive it.

We often focus on the message that we want to send, and the way in which we'll send it. But if our message is delivered without considering the other person's perspective, it's likely that part of that message will be lost. To communicate more effectively:

Understand what we truly need and want to say.

Always anticipate the other person's reaction to our message.

Choose words and body language that allow the other person to really hear what we're saying.

When writing our message always make sure that what we write will be perceived the way we intend it to be. Words on a page generally have no emotion – they don't "smile" or "frown" while we're reading them. So when writing, always take time to do the following:

Review our style

Avoid using slang.

Always check for grammar and punctuation.

Check also for tone, attitude, nuance, and other subtleties. If we think the message may be misunderstood, it probably will be.

Take the time to clarify it!

We should familiarize ourselves with our company's writing policies. Another important consideration is to use pictures, charts, and diagrams wherever possible. As the saying goes, "a picture speaks a thousand words."

Also, whether we speak or write our message, consider the "cultural context". Avoid any potential for miscommunication or misunderstanding due to cultural or language barriers.

Choose The Correct Channel.

Along with encoding the message, we need to choose the best communication channel to use to send it. We want to be efficient, and yet make the most of our communication opportunity. Using email to send simple directions is practical.

However, if we want to delegate a complex task, an email will probably just lead to more questions, so it may be best to arrange a time to speak in person. And when our communication has any negative emotional content, we need to stay well away from email! Make sure that we communicate face to face or by phone, so that we can judge the impact of our words and adjust these appropriately. When we are determining the best way to send a message, consider the following:

The sensitivity and emotional content of the subject.

How easy it is to communicate detail.

The receiver's preferences.

Time constraints.

The need to ask and answer questions.

Decoding – Receiving and Interpreting a Message

It can be easy to focus on speaking; we want to get our points out there, because we usually have lots to say. However, to be a great communicator, we also need to step back, let the other person talk, and just listen. This doesn't mean that we should be passive. Listening is hard work, which is why effective listening is called active listening. To listen actively requires that we give our undivided attention to the speaker:

Always look at the person, preferably maintain eye contact as often as possible.

Pay attention to his or her body language.

Avoid any distractions.

Nod and smile to acknowledge points.

Occasionally think back about what the person has said.

Allow the person to speak, without thinking about how we'll respond to what they are saying.

Never interrupt.

Empathy listening also helps us decode the message accurately. To understand a message fully, we have to understand the emotions and underlying feelings the speaker is expressing. This is where an understanding of body language can be useful.

Feedback

We need feedback, because without it, we can't be sure that people have understood our message. Sometimes feedback is verbal, and sometimes it's not. We've looked at the importance of asking questions and listening carefully. However, feedback through body language is perhaps the most important source of clues to the effectiveness of our communication. By watching the facial expressions, gestures, and posture of the person we're communicating with, we can easily spot:

Confidence levels.

Defensiveness.

Agreement.

Comprehension (or lack of understanding).

Level of interest.

Level of engagement with the message.

Truthfulness (or lying/dishonesty).

As a speaker, understanding our listener's body language can provide us the opportunity to adjust our message and make it more understandable, appealing, or interesting. As a listener, body language can show us more about what the other person is saying.

We can then ask questions to ensure that we have, indeed, understood each other. In both situations, we can better avoid miscommunication if it happens. Feedback can also be formal. If we're communicating something really important, it can often be worth asking questions of the person we're talking to so we can insure that they've understood fully. And if we're receiving this sort of communication, repeat it in our own words to check our understanding.

It can take a lot of effort to communicate effectively. However, we need to be able to communicate well if we're going to make the most of the opportunities that life has to offer. By learning the skills we need to communicate effectively, we can learn how to communicate our ideas clearly and effectively, and understand much more of the information that's conveyed to us. As either a speaker or a listener, or as a writer or a reader, we're responsible for making sure that the message is communicated accurately. Pay attention to words and actions, ask questions, and watch body language. These will all help us ensure that we say is what we mean, and that we hear what is intended.

David Balovich is an accomplished author and public speaker. He is presently the North Region credit manager for Holt Cat.

***** **MAY 2013** *****

Day	Date	Group	Location	Time
Tues	7	Austin Construction	Texas Land & Cattle, 6007 N IH 35 & Hwy 290, Austin TX	11:30
Thurs	11	SW Food Credit Group	Las Palapas, 4802 Walzem Rd, San Antonio TX	11:00
Tues	14	Coastal Bend Group	Holt Cat, 1325 South Padre Island Dr, Corpus Christi TX	11:30
Wed	15	Rio Grande Group	Victoria Palms Resort, 602 N. Victoria Rd. Donna TX	11:30
Thurs	16	Austin Ad Media	Santa Rita Tex Mex, 1206 W38th St. Austin TX	11:30
Fri	17	SW Electrical Group	Onion Creek Country Club, 2510 Onion Creek Pkwy, Austin TX	11:30
Fri	17	SA Ad Media	Teleconference Meeting 1-800-791-2345	10:00
Tues	21	Austin Construction	Texas Land & Cattle, 6007 N IH 35 & Hwy 290, Austin, TX	11:30
Wed	22	Victoria Credit Group	Sky Restaurant, 236 Foster Field, Victoria TX	11:30
Thurs	23	Fuel & Lube/Heavy Eq.	Teleconference Meeting 1-800-791-2345	2:30
Thurs	23	HVAC Credit Group	Texas Air Products, 11122 Gordon Rd, San Antonio TX	11:30
Tues	28	SA Construction	Las Palapas, 4802 Walzem Rd, San Antonio TX	11:30
Wed	29	Laredo Credit Group	Laredo Country Club, Laredo TX	11:30

CREDIT REPORTS.....

INDUSTRY CREDIT GROUPS.....

COLLECTION RECOVERY.....

A company with financial problems does not acquire them overnight. It has usually experienced one to three years of surfaced difficulty. The earlier these warning signals are identified and analyzed the greater the chance of effective correction action. Are you using NACM Credit Reports and Industry Group Meetings to help you identify and analyze? Are you using NACM Collection Recovery for the past due account(s)? Call NACM, your Association for all your credit needs and service at (210) 225-7106 or 800-256-5306.

WHY IS IT BENEFICIAL TO PARTICIPATE IN NACM'S CREDIT INDUSTRY GROUPS:

1. Networking of credit associates you can use as a resource for establishing credit.
2. Monthly information on customers you may have concern with.
3. Timely information on customers who may be credit risk or HMAs (high maintenance accounts).
4. New business that may be coming into the area.
5. General discussions on how to handle NSF check, credit applications, COD's, etc.
6. Insightful data on current problems in the area.
7. Last, but no least, is the fact that it takes just one bit of information from your credit meeting, that you were not informed about, that could save your company thousands of dollars.

These are not all the benefits for going to your credit groups, but again, if you only came and gathered information on one company that helped save your company a PAL (write off) at the end of the year, IT'S WORTH IT! So, get involved with your industry group, give us a call at (210)225-7106 and we may be able to find a group or start one for you.