



FIVE THINGS THAT MAKE COMMUNICATIONS DIFFICULT

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01 AMBIGUOUS LANGUAGE

When transmitting, some people will use ambiguous language unintentionally while others will use it on purpose to give themselves an escape when things go wrong: "That's not what I meant..." You owe it to your people to use clear and concise language when transmitting. If you want to give them latitude in how they perform a task, say so but be clear in the outcome you are looking for.

When receiving ambiguous language in communications, you owe it to yourself, your team and the person transmitting to ask for clarity on the specific parts that are not clear. This is especially important when your boss is doing the transmitting...



02 ASSUMPTIONS

This goes both ways; never assume that you are understood when transmitting and never assume what someone meant when receiving. Actively listen when receiving communications and ask the recipient of your communications to "brief back." Never end a communication assuming that you understand or were understood.



03 DISTRACTIONS

Multi-tasking is a myth; you can only REALLY attend to one target with one sense (sight, sound, taste, touch, smell) at one moment. You can get really good at quickly shifting between senses and targets, but your true attention can be on one thing at a time. So, pay attention to your target when you are transmitting; do they show signs of not understanding or not being interested? Pay attention to the transmitter when you are receiving communications; don't try to read an important email while you are listening to something else. Be present when transmitting and when receiving communications.



04 DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES

We all process information in different ways but usually in one of the four main learning styles: Visual, Audio, Reading/Writing, Kinesthetic (physical). Understand what your natural style is and be aware when it's different from the people you are communicating with. If you are a visual learner you might need to ask for a diagram of some concept that is being transmitted to you in words only. If you send written instructions over email to an audio learner, you would be well served to call them instead. In many ways, learning to communicate in another learning style is like learning a foreign language—it may not be easy but it is well worth the effort to ensure effective communications.



05 TRANSMIT BIAS

Many of us have a bias to transmit: "You didn't understand me? Let me say it again, or let me say it louder..." Many times when we are not understood, it isn't because we didn't transmit enough, it's because we didn't transmit well. Ask for feedback and take it in; receiving feedback and listening to your target audience is often the best way to transmit more effectively.



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