Ten Ways to Communicate with Power

Communication is more than the words we speak. Instead, it is the message we deliver through nonverbal as well as verbal means. Communication is the process of exchanging information and ideas—it is an essential aspect of leadership. To be an effective and valuable member of your workplace, it is important to become skilled in all the different methods of communication that are appropriate.

Here are ten factors to consider that will enable you to become a more effective and powerful communicator. Experiment with these ideas to strengthen your style of communication as well as your ability to interact with the people around you.

1. **Be clear about what you want to express.**
   What do you most want the other person or organization to understand? What is the primary idea, concept or message you want others to learn as a result of your communication? Often we spend more time speaking about superficial matters rather than addressing the core, significant and underlying concepts. To communicate effectively with another requires an inner clarity and a thorough communication with yourself. (You can’t make a request if you don’t know what you want.)

2. **Tact and good manners matter.**
   It is important to be respectful and understanding in your communications, but don’t let good manners inhibit you from speaking the truth. If your communication isn’t honest, integrity is lost and relationships suffer. Tact and honesty are equally important in powerful communication; a balance between the two needs to be achieved. (Tip: Ask yourself if you’re hiding under the pretense of manners because “I don’t want to hurt their feelings.” Are you using this as an excuse to avoid acknowledging or expressing your perspective? Develop tact and be compassionate in your truthfulness.)

3. **Precision matters.**
   Expressing yourself fully involves choosing your words precisely. We’re frequently sloppy in our communication by speaking in vague terms and using poor explanatory organization. Concepts and ideas don’t come to life when we’re not communicating clearly—resulting in the ultimate loss of powerful communication. Effective communication involves using clear, concise and conceptual language—words that accurately reflect and express our experience, perceptions, goals, requests and frustrations. (Tip: The more specific your words are, the more profoundly others will understand you.)

4. **Perspective matters.**
   From what perspective do you speak? We each have different perspectives based on our positions, motivations and needs. Understand the framework you speak and listen from. Recognize that your framework
influences how you listen and what you listen for. Also, consider the perspectives of those you are addressing—by gaining an overall picture of these perspectives you can better communicate and acquire a stronger sense of the working atmosphere. (Tip: Enhance communication by observing the filters people listen through.)

Diversity contributes an unparalleled richness and depth to our experience. Diversity expands our perspective and, therefore, our communication. Learn the art of integrating diverse viewpoints by identifying the common ground. Identify the interests of the person you’re speaking with, so as to find the shared purpose, perspective, motivator or values. This is essential for rapport and consensus building. (Tip: Identify and speak from common ground even as we live and communicate our differences. Appreciate that diverse viewpoints enlarge our perspective. Honor the differences and incorporate them into your perspective for a richer and more powerful communication. Create a context large enough to hold diverse viewpoints.)

6. Alignment & Continuity.
When words and actions are aligned, powerful results occur. Lack of alignment between words and action creates conflict and results in a loss of power. The more consistently we align our actions with our values and intentions, the more powerful our communication becomes. (Tip: Ensure that your actions are consistently aligned with your intentions.)

7. Silence.
Communication isn’t only the words a person verbalizes—it’s also the silence between the words. We learn about each other by what we don’t say as much as by what we do say. We learn about each other by listening to which topics we discuss as well as the ones we avoid. What topics does your organization NOT discuss? What topics are avoided by management, your peers or by your employees? What do YOU avoid? (Tip: Listen to the silences as much as to the words for a deeper understanding of a specific person or to a given situation.)

8. The nature of conflict.
Conflict and differences of opinion are inevitable, unavoidable and enormously productive. We learn more from differences of opinion than from validation of our position because conflict can lead to positive change and a fuller understanding of ideas. While validation provides support and encouragement, it’s our differences that create an expanded product or viewpoint. Don’t avoid conflict—seek to communicate with those who appreciate and can communicate differences of opinion. (Tip: Diversity expands our possibilities. Work to view conflict as a learning experience instead of a confrontation of viewpoints—be open-minded.)

9. Communication contains context, text and subtext.
Communication is the sum of our perspective (context), the words we use to speak out loud (text) as well as our personal motivators and perspectives (subtext). Subtext is also the meaning and the emotions that we assign to the text—the unspoken feelings behind the words. Communication involves all of these variables. Effective communication therefore requires awareness, flexibility and an acute yet agile listening—there’s a lot to listen for. (Tip: Pay attention to context, text and subtext for more thorough listening & communication.)

Communication is about being 100% responsible for the other person’s listening. This means that if you don’t feel that you are understood, you’ve not completed the job of communicating. Don’t blame others for their not hearing you; take responsibility for re-communicating your position to ensure that you’ve been properly heard. Take responsibility not only for what you say, but also for how you’re heard. (Tip: Don’t get attached to your choice of words. Be flexible in your communication and be willing to re-think how you can communicate a concept in a different way, so it can be heard. Play with your words until you’ve found the words that properly express what you want to say. Re-format your ideas if necessary.)