

Communicating 4 Success

Often in the beginning of most of my communication training sessions, I would notice a few bright, smart, young managers refraining from any interaction as they lacked confidence in their communication skills. They would be present and attentive to all that I shared yet their body language would be, 'Don't ask me, please'

Sure, this would change over time as we worked together in a few sessions. They would often come back and share, "Coach, our interaction with our teams and our family has changed. We feel so satisfied now being able to communicate clearly. This brought to my mind the famous quote:

"The way we communicate with others and ourselves ultimately determines the quality of our life" - Tony Robbins

Come to think of it, how often have we worked on communicating with ourselves, do we even honour our thoughts and feelings or are we only focused on blaming outside events and behaviour for what we are feeling or going through?

Why is there a breakdown in communication in our interpersonal relationships, be it professional or personal? When do the biggest frustrations arise?

These situations happen when we feel that we are not understood, and others feel the same about us. Lack of awareness of our own needs and lack of awareness of others needs can often lead to a stalemate. Communication is a fundamental tool that can help us overcome this, making learning to communicate effectively extremely important.

The process of communication is a cycle of receiving <> perceiving <> understanding <> remembering <> evaluating <> conveying. Only when a response or feedback is received, is the communication considered complete.

The quality of effective communication plays a critical role in the success of any relationship. Hence it is considered an important leadership quality that can help enhance our overall success.

Corporate head honchos and HR managers found that often in investor or strategic partnership meetings, with only that much time to convey the most crucial message, lack of clear and crisp communication has often rendered these meetings non-productive leading to huge loss of time and money for their company.

This further emphasises the need to have or develop 'effective communication skills' in addition to ones' domain knowledge. The forced switch to predominantly digital communication in the ongoing COVID-19 era has made having this skill even more imperative.

Thankfully, it is a skill and as Brian Tracy says – 'Every skill is learnable'.

So, how does one go about developing this extremely important skill?

A good beginning is, understanding the 7C principles of Clarity, Correctness, Conciseness, Courtesy, Concreteness and Completeness.

- Clarity means the accurate transfer of ideas from the sender's side to the receiver's side. In written communication it means using simple language without jargon or unnecessary information. Short sentences and paragraphs make it further impactful.

- Correctness of spellings, punctuation and grammar further enhances written communication. It also needs to be factually correct.
- Concise is being brief but complete, sticking to relevant facts, avoiding any unnecessary repetition.
- Courteousness is a show of respect to your audience or the person with whom you are interacting. It is being polite, sincere, appreciative, thoughtful and without any racial or gender bias.
- Concrete, that is being specific and with meaning. Speaking in an active voice helps to make communication specific and meaningful.
- Considerate, is being empathetic about the receiver, thinking from their perspective, needs and difficulties.

When we adapt these principals not only are we impactful, but our audience is receptive too.

Asking insightful questions using What, Who, When, Where, Why, and How, (The 1H + 5W formula) also helps us get deep insights to make our communication effective.

While knowing 'why' is important to have clarity, consider avoiding the use of why and replace it with the other 4 W's as appropriate. For example, instead of 'Why do you wish to share this message', consider 'How is sharing this message important?' or 'What makes sharing this message important?' Other supporting questions could be:

What do you wish to convey? Knowing our message clearly and jotting it down helps in keeping it crisp and to the point.

For whom is the message intended? Knowing the target audience is particularly important to decide our words and the channel through which to communicate.

The 'When' and 'Where' questions shall provide time and space preciseness.

How is it going to be done? Is a question that provides us the clarity about the process to get it done.

Success in any communication is when people feel heard.

Listening, in my opinion is, "a deliberate process of submitting one's complete attention to what is being conveyed in content, context and intent. It is perceiving through the mind, heart and the gut" involving all the senses - visual, auditory, kinesics, gustatory and olfactory (VAKGO). Being totally connected to the audience, in that moment gives an important non-verbal cue of being heard.

Being a good listener or a good orator requires one to have Emotional intelligence (EI). In any interaction, to understand their perspective, build rapport to inspire and motivate them, EI comes into play. Even while speaking to your team or responding to probing questions during an interview, having emotional intelligence helps. You are then able to answer any unexpected questions without getting flustered or having regrets later. As emotional response and the corresponding body language happen subconsciously hence being aware of it, helps us control our responses in multiple situations. It helps give the right verbal and tonal responses besides keeping a check on the non-verbal cues presented.

Emotional intelligence amongst other things also comes from our values, beliefs and attitudes, our genetic setup contributes to how our personality shapes up.

The effects of culture on communication also cannot be ignored, it has influences over our value systems, beliefs, and attitude, which affect the way we perceive, the way we think and the way we respond to communication.

Let us understand what each of these terms mean.

- Values are the moral or ideal behaviour that helps us understand our world and build our beliefs and attitudes upon.
- Beliefs are all the ideas and thoughts we have picked up either as a part of our cultural exposure or the thoughts of our parents and relatives.
- Attitudes is the framework of negative and positive responses that we have developed to see the world, due to either our life experiences, our values, and beliefs. For a belief to last it needs to be based on our core values.

These provide a roadmap for impactful communication and for the audience to receive you well.

It will also help you understand that values, beliefs, attitudes, and our cultural exposure build unique characteristics in people. These form the different personality types. Understanding the personality type of others can help us understand them better and even respond to their needs better.

There are four basic types of personalities. Each one has its own communication style. Learning to detect and decode them helps impact your communication.

- Strong independent personalities are the Driver types. Internally driven, they take risks to get results, are action oriented and demanding in their interactions. They like direct communication that often borders on curtness. They do not need to many details and can deduce the outcome on their own.
- Amiable types are the people pleasers. They may ask questions and need micro details to be clear. They show care and concern and are enthusiastic and out-going people. Making them feel inclusive is the best way to ensure successful communication with them.
- Analytic types thrive on facts presented in an organised and methodical way. They are systematic and disciplined in their approach. With them, one must be thorough and well researched.
- Expressive types exude energy, enthusiasm, positivity, and charm. They like eye contact, are expressive and use hand gestures while communicating.

Let us remember, that no matter your personality type, a little curiosity in the people we interact with, a little empathy, can help build a deep rapport and communicate successfully. Mirroring some of the body language can also help.

Each of us is a brand, someone so unique that there is nobody like us. Our thoughts, our ideas and beliefs matter and help determine the quality of our life, whereas the quality of our communication defines the quality of our relationships, with ourselves and others and improving the quality of our communication is in our control. Think about it...

Deepak Kotak

aUt sUr Interventions & Transformations

M: +91 9820580984

E1: coachkotak@autsur.com

E2: coachkotak@gmail.com

W: www.autsur.com