

Course Name	: Basic Communication Skills
Course Code	: BIRD 112
Course level	: level 1
Credit Units	: 4 CU
Contact Hours	: 60 Hrs

Course Description

The Course defines different perspectives of communication, its types and overview of the process of communicating, issues involved in public relations, its methods and tactics, advertising and its forms, having strategic communication, and above all the importance of having organizational communication to enhance the business setting.

Course objectives

- To enable students acquire different communications skills relevant in the labor market/organizational setting.
- To assist students in developing competency in the fundamentals of business writing, reporting and research.
- To help them understand the most common barriers to communication as well as their remedies.

Course Content

Introduction

- Definition of Communication
- Overview of Communication
- Types of Communication
- Communication as an academic discipline

Public Relations

- Definition of Public relations
- Methods, tools and tactics of public relations
- Politics and civil society
- Media relations key elements of strategy-based media relations

Advertising

- Definition of advertising
- Forms of advertising
- Criticism of advertising
- Communication design

Strategic Communication

- Definition of strategic communication
- History of strategic Communication
- Application objectives
- Defence application
- Public administration application

Organizational Communication

- History of Organizational Communication
- Assumption underlying organizational communication
- Communication networks
- Direction of communication
- Organizational theory

Other related topics

- Easy ways to bring fun back to work
- How to ensure that your written message gets a reply
- How to respond to angry customers
- How to lose a customer in two steps or less
- Customer service skills that make a big difference

Mode of delivery Face to face lectures

Assessment

Coursework 40%

Exams 60%

Total Mark 100%

Introduction

Communication is the process of generation, transmission, or reception of messages to oneself or another entity, usually via a mutually understood set of signs.

The following outline is provided as an overview of and Communication

Communication is a process of transferring information from one entity to another. Communication processes are sign-mediated interactions between at least two agents which share a repertoire of signs and semiotic rules. Communication is commonly defined as "the imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs". Although there is such a thing as one-way communication, communication can be perceived better as a two-way process in which there is an exchange and progression of thoughts, feelings or ideas (energy) towards a mutually accepted goal or direction (information).

Overview

Communication are a process whereby information is enclosed in a package and is discretized and imparted by sender to a receiver via a channel/medium. The receiver then decodes the message and gives the sender a feedback. Communication requires that all parties have an area of communicative commonality. There are auditory means, such as speech, song, and tone of voice, and there are nonverbal means, such as body language, sign language, paralanguage, touch, eye contact, and writing.

Communication is thus a process by which we assign and convey meaning in an attempt to create shared understanding. This process requires a vast repertoire of skills in intrapersonal and interpersonal processing, listening, observing, speaking, questioning, analyzing, and evaluating. It is through communication that collaboration and cooperation occur.^[2].....

There are also many common barriers to successful communication, two of which are **message overload** (when a person receives too many messages at the same time), and **message complex**. Communication is a continuous process.

Types of communication

There are three major parts in human face to face communication which are body language, voice tonality, and words. According to the research:

- 55% of impact is determined by body language—postures, gestures, and eye contact,
- 38% by the tone of voice, and
- 7% by the content or the words used in the communication process.

Although the exact percentage of influence may differ from variables such as the listener and the speaker, communication as a whole strives for the same goal and thus, in some cases, can be universal. System of signals, such as voice sounds, intonations or pitch, gestures or written symbols which communicate thoughts or feelings. If a language is about communicating with signals, voice, sounds, gestures, or written symbols, can animal communications be considered as a language? Animals do not have a written form of a language, but use a language to communicate with each another. In that sense, an animal communication can be considered as a separate language.

Human spoken and written languages can be described as a system of symbols (sometimes known as lexemes) and the grammars (rules) by which the symbols are manipulated. The word "language" is also used to refer to common properties of languages. Language learning is normal in human childhood. Most human languages use patterns of sound or gesture for symbols which enable communication with others around them. There are thousands of human languages, and these seem to share certain properties, even though many shared properties have exceptions.

There is no defined line between a language and a dialect, but the linguist Max Weinreich is credited as saying that "a language is a dialect with an army and a navy". Constructed languages such as Esperanto, programming languages, and various mathematical formalisms are not necessarily restricted to the properties shared by human languages.

Nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication is the process of communicating through sending and receiving wordless messages. Such messages can be communicated through gesture, body language or posture; facial expression and eye contact, object communication such as clothing, hairstyles or even architecture, or symbols and infographics, as well as through an aggregate of the above, such as behavioral communication. Nonverbal communication plays a key role in every person's day to day life, from employment to romantic engagements.

Speech may also contain nonverbal elements known as paralanguage, including voice quality, emotion and speaking style, as well as prosodic features such as rhythm, intonation and stress. Likewise, written texts have nonverbal elements such as handwriting style, spatial arrangement of words, or the use of emoticons. A portmanteau of the English words emotion (or emote) and icon, an emoticon is a symbol or combination of symbols used to convey emotional content in written or message form.

Other communication channels such as telegraphy fit into this category, whereby signals travel from person to person by an alternative means. These signals can in themselves be representative of words, objects or merely be state projections. Trials have shown that humans can communicate directly in this way without body language, voice tonality or words.

Categories and Features G. W. Porter divides non-verbal communication into four broad categories:

Physical. This is the personal type of communication. It includes facial expressions, tone of voice, sense of touch, sense of smell, and body motions.

Aesthetic. This is the type of communication that takes place through creative expressions: playing instrumental music, dancing, painting and sculpturing.

Signs. This is the mechanical type of communication, which includes the use of signal flags, the 21-gun salute, horns, and sirens.

Symbolic. This is the type of communication that makes use of religious, status, or ego-building symbols.

Static Features

Distance. The distance one stands from another frequently conveys a non-verbal message. In some cultures it is a sign of attraction, while in others it may reflect status or the intensity of the exchange.

Orientation. People may present themselves in various ways: face-to-face, side-to-side, or even back-to-back. For example, cooperating people are likely to sit side-by-side while competitors frequently face one another.

Posture. Obviously one can be lying down, seated, or standing. These are not the elements of posture that convey messages. Are we slouched or erect ? Are our legs crossed or our arms folded ? Such postures convey a degree of formality and the degree of relaxation in the communication exchange.

Physical Contact. Shaking hands, touching, holding, embracing, pushing, or patting on the back all convey messages. They reflect an element of intimacy or a feeling of (or lack of) attraction.

Dynamic Features

Facial Expressions. A smile, frown, raised eyebrow, yawn, and sneer all convey information. Facial expressions continually change during interaction and are monitored constantly by the recipient. There is evidence that the meaning of these expressions may be similar across cultures.

Gestures. One of the most frequently observed, but least understood, cues is a hand movement. Most people use hand movements regularly when talking. While some gestures (e.g., a clenched fist) have universal meanings, most of the others are individually learned and idiosyncratic.

Looking. A major feature of social communication is eye contact. It can convey emotion, signal when to talk or finish, or aversion. The frequency of contact may suggest either interest or boredom.

Visual communication

Visual communication as the name suggests is communication through visual aid. It is the conveyance of ideas and information in forms that can be read or looked upon. Primarily associated with two dimensional images, it includes: signs, typography, drawing, graphic design, illustration, color and electronic resources. It solely relies on vision. It is form of communication with visual effect. It explores the idea that a visual message with text has a greater power to inform, educate or persuade a person. It is communication by presenting information through visual form.

The evaluation of a good visual design is based on measuring comprehension by the audience, not on aesthetic or artistic preference. There are no universally agreed-upon principles of beauty and ugliness. There exists a variety of ways to present information visually, like gestures, body languages, video and TV. Here, focus is on the presentation of text, pictures, diagrams, photos, et cetera, integrated on a computer display. The term visual presentation is used to refer to the actual presentation of information. Recent research in the field has focused on web design and graphically oriented usability. Graphic designers use methods of visual communication in their professional .

Oral Communication

The first step in planning an oral presentation involves acknowledging two fundamental differences between oral and written communication. One essential goal of oral communication is to make

personal contact with the audience, and to help connect them to the content. Reading a written report aloud is not usually an effective strategy for engaging with the audience. The needs/preferences of the audience play an even larger role in oral presentations than in writing. The content of presentations should be prepared with this goal in mind. Second, oral presentations are fleeting (or time-sensitive). If readers get lost or stop paying attention for a few minutes, they can always flip back a few pages. Listeners, on the other hand, usually can't interrupt the speaker and ask that s/he start again and go back a few minutes. Once words are uttered, they vanish. Presenters can account for the fleeting nature of oral presentations by making sure that the presentation is well organized and by making structure explicit in the talk, so the audience can always know where they've been and where they're going

Communication modeling

Communication is usually described along a few major dimensions: Content (what type of things are communicated), source / sender / encoder (by whom), form (in which form), channel (through which medium), destination / receiver / target / decoder (to whom), and the purpose or pragmatic aspect. Between parties, communication includes acts that confer knowledge and experiences, give advice and commands, and ask questions. These acts may take many forms, in one of the various manners of communication. The form depends on the abilities of the group communicating. Together, communication content and form make messages that are sent towards a destination. The target can be oneself, another person or being, another entity (such as a corporation or group of beings).

Communication can be seen as processes of information transmission governed by three levels of semiotic rules:

1. Syntactic (formal properties of signs and symbols),
2. Pragmatic (concerned with the relations between signs/expressions and their users) and
3. Semantic (study of relationships between signs and symbols and what they represent).

Therefore, communication is social interaction where at least two interacting agents share a common set of signs and a common set of semiotic rules. This commonly held rules in some sense ignores auto communication, including intrapersonal communication via diaries or self-talk, both secondary phenomena that followed the primary acquisition of communicative competences within social interactions.

In a simple model, information or content (e.g. a message in natural language) is sent in some form (as spoken language) from a sender/ encoder to a destination/ receiver/ decoder. In a slightly more complex form a sender and a receiver are linked reciprocally. A particular instance of communication is called a speech act. The sender's personal filters and the receiver's personal filters may vary depending upon different regional traditions, cultures, or gender; which may alter the intended meaning of message contents. In the presence of "communication noise" on the transmission channel (air, in this case), reception and decoding of content may be faulty, and thus the speech act may not achieve the desired effect. One problem with this encode-transmit-receive-decode model is that the processes of encoding and decoding imply that the sender and receiver each possess something that functions as a code book, and that these two code books are, at the very least, similar if not identical. Although something like code books is implied by the model, they are nowhere represented in the model, which creates many conceptual difficulties.

Theories of co regulation describe communication as a creative and dynamic continuous process, rather than a discrete exchange of information. Canadian media scholar Harold Innis had the theory that people use different types of media to communicate and which one they choose to use will offer different possibilities for the shape and durability of society (Wark, McKenzie 1997). His famous example of this is using ancient Egypt and looking at the ways they built themselves out of media with very different properties stone and papyrus. Papyrus is what he called '**Space Binding**'. it made possible the transmission of written orders across space, empires and enables the waging of distant

military campaigns and colonial administration. The other is stone and '**Time Binding**', through the construction of temples and the pyramids can sustain their authority generation to generation, through this media they can change and shape communication in their society (Wark, McKenzie 1997).

The Krishi Vigyan Kendra Kannur under Kerala Agricultural University has pioneered a new branch of agricultural communication called Creative Extension.

Communication as academic discipline

Communication as an academic discipline, sometimes called "communicology, relates to all the ways we communicate, so it embraces a large body of study and knowledge. The communication discipline includes both verbal and nonverbal messages. A body of scholarship all about communication is presented and explained in textbooks, electronic publications, and academic journals. In the journals, researchers report the results of studies that are the basis for an ever-expanding understanding of how we all communicate.

Communication happens at many levels (even for one single action), in many different ways, and for most beings, as well as certain machines. Several, if not all, fields of study dedicate a portion of attention to communication, so when speaking about communication it is very important to be sure about what aspects of communication one is speaking about. Definitions of communication range widely, some recognizing that animals can communicate with each other as well as human beings, and some are more narrow, only including human beings within the parameters of human symbolic interaction.

Public relations

Public relations (PR) is the practice of managing the communication between an organization and its publics. Public relations gains an organization or individual exposure to their audiences using topics of public interest and news items that do not require direct payment. Because public relations places exposure in credible third-party outlets, it offers a third-party legitimacy that advertising does not have. Common activities include speaking at conferences, working with the press, and employee communication. It is something that is not tangible and this is what sets it apart from Advertising.

PR can be used to build rapport with employees, customers, investors, voters, or the general public. Almost any organization that has a stake in how it is portrayed in the public arena employs some level of public relations. There are number of related sister disciplines all falling under the banner of Corporate Communications, such as Analyst relations, Media Relations, Investor Relations, Internal Communications or Labor Relations.

Definition

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) claimed: "According to the PRSA, the essential functions of public relations include research, planning, communications dialogue, action and evaluation.

Edward Louis Bernays, who is considered the founding father of modern public relations along with Ivy Lee, in the early 1900s defined public relations as a "management function which tabulates public attitudes, defines the policies, procedures and interests of an organization... followed by executing a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance" (see history of public relations).

Today, "Public Relations is a set of management, supervisory, and technical functions that foster an organization's ability to strategically listen to, appreciate, and respond to those persons whose mutually beneficial relationships with the organization are necessary if it is to achieve its missions and values. Essentially it is a management function that focuses on two-way communication and fostering of mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics.

Building and managing relationships with those who influence an organization or individual's audiences has a central role in public relations.

Methods, tools and tactics

Public relations and publicity are not synonymous but many PR campaigns include provisions for publicity. Publicity is the spreading of information to gain public awareness for a product, person, service, cause or organization, and can be seen as a result of effective PR planning.

Publics targeting

A fundamental technique used in public relations is to identify the target audience, and to tailor every message to appeal to that audience. It can be a general, nationwide or worldwide audience, but it is more often a segment of a population. Marketers often refer to economy-driven "demographics," such as "black males 18-49," but in public relations an audience is more fluid, being whoever someone wants to reach. For example, recent political audiences include "soccer moms" and "NASCAR dads." There is also a psychographic grouping based on fitness level, eating preferences.

In addition to audiences, there are usually stakeholders, literally people who have a "stake" in a given issue. All audiences are stakeholders (or presumptive stakeholders), but not all stakeholders are audiences. For example, a charity commissions a PR agency to create an advertising campaign to raise money to fund a cure for a disease. The charity and the people with the disease are stakeholders, but the audience is anyone who is likely to donate money.

Sometimes the interests of differing audiences and stakeholders common to a PR effort necessitate the creation of several distinct but still complementary messages. This is not always easy to do, and sometimes – especially in politics – a spokesperson or client says something to one audience that angers another audience or group of stakeholders.

Lobby groups

Lobby groups are established to influence government policy, corporate policy, or public opinion. An example of this is the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, AIPAC, which influences American foreign policy. Such groups claim to represent a particular interest and in fact are dedicated to doing so. When a lobby group hides its true purpose and support base it is known as a front group. Moreover, governments may also lobby public relations firms in order to sway public opinion. A well illustrated example of this is the way civil war in Yugoslavia was portrayed. Governments of newly succeeded republics of Croatia and Bosnia invested heavily with American PR firms, so that the PR firms would give them a positive war image in the US.

Spin

In public relations, "spin" is sometimes a pejorative term signifying a heavily biased portrayal in one's own favor of an event or situation. While traditional public relations may also rely on creative presentation of the facts, "spin" often, though not always, implies disingenuous, deceptive and/or highly manipulative tactics. Politicians are often accused of spin by commentators and political opponents, when they produce a counter argument or position.

The techniques of "spin"s include selectively presenting facts and quotes that support one's position (cherry picking), the so-called "non-denial," phrasing in a way that assumes unproven truths, euphemisms for drawing attention away from items considered distasteful, and ambiguity in public statements. Another spin technique involves careful choice of timing in the release of certain news so it can take advantage of prominent events in the news. A famous reference to this practice occurred when British Government press officer Jo Moore used the phrase *It's now a very good day to get out anything we want to bury*, (widely paraphrased or misquoted as "It's a good day to bury bad news"), in an email sent on September 11, 2001. The furor caused when this email was reported in the press eventually caused her to resign.

Spin doctor

Skilled practitioners of spin are sometimes called "spin doctors," despite the negative connotation associated with the term. It is the PR equivalent of calling a writer a "hack." Perhaps the most well-known person in the UK often described as a "spin doctor" is Alastair Campbell, who was involved with Tony Blair's public relations between 1994 and 2003, and also played a controversial role as press relations officer to the British and Irish Lions rugby union side during their 2005 tour of New Zealand.

State-run media in many countries also engage in spin by selectively allowing news stories that are favorable to the government while censoring anything that could be considered critical. They may also use propaganda to indoctrinate or actively influence citizens' opinions. Privately run media also uses the same techniques of 'issue' versus 'non-issue' to spin its particular political viewpoints.

Meet and Greet

Many businesses and organizations will use a Meet and Greet as a method of introducing two or more parties to each other in a comfortable setting. These will generally involve some sort of incentive, usually food catered from restaurants, to encourage employees or members to participate.

There are opposing schools of thought as to how the specific mechanics of a Meet and Greet operate. The Gardiner school of thought states that unless specified as an informal event, all parties should arrive promptly at the time at which the event is scheduled to start. The Kolanowski school of thought, however, states that parties may arrive at any time after the event begins, in order to provide a more relaxed interaction environment.

Politics and civil society

Defining the opponent

A tactic used in political campaigns is known as "defining one's opponent." Opponents can be candidates, organizations and other groups of people.

In the 2004 US presidential campaign, Howard Dean defined John Kerry as a "flip-flopper," which was widely reported and repeated by the media, particularly the conservative media. Similarly, George H.W. Bush characterized Michael Dukakis as weak on crime (the Willie Horton ad) and hopelessly liberal ("a card-carrying member of the ACLU"). In 1996, President Bill Clinton seized upon opponent Bob Dole's promise to take America back to a simpler time, promising in contrast to "build a bridge to the 21st century." This painted Dole as a person who was somehow opposed to progress.

In the debate over abortion, self-titled pro-choice groups, by virtue of their name, defined their opponents as "anti-choice", while self-titled pro-life groups refer to their opponents as "pro-abortion" or "anti-life".

Managing language

If a politician or organization can use an apt phrase in relation to an issue, such as in interviews or news releases, the news media will often repeat it verbatim, without questioning the aptness of the phrase. This perpetuates both the message and whatever preconceptions might underlie it. Often, something innocuous sounding can stand in for something greater; a "culture of life" sounds like general goodwill to most people, but will evoke opposition to abortion for many pro-life advocates. The phrase "States' rights" was used as a code for anti-civil rights legislation in the United States in the 1960s, and, allegedly, the 70s, and 80s.

Conveying the message

The method of communication can be as important as a message. Direct mail, advertising and public speaking are used depending upon the intended audience and the message that is conveyed. Press releases are also used, but since many newspapers are folding, they have become a less reliable way of communicating, and other methods have become more popular.

Arts organizations have begun to rely more on their own websites and have developed a variety of unique approaches to publicity and public relations, on and off the web.

Front groups

One of the most controversial practices in public relations is the use of front groups – organizations that purport to serve a public cause while actually serving the interests of a client whose sponsorship may be obscured or concealed. Critics of the public relations industry, such as PR Watch, have contended that Public Relations involves a "multi-billion dollar propaganda-for-hire industry" that "concoct[s] and spin[s] the news, organize[s] phony 'grassroots' front groups, spy on citizens, and conspire[s] with lobbyists and politicians to thwart democracy."

Instances of the use of front groups as a PR technique have been documented in many industries. Coal mining corporations have created environmental groups that contend that increased CO2 emissions and global warming will contribute to plant growth and will be beneficial, trade groups for bars have created and funded citizens' groups to attack anti-alcohol groups, tobacco companies have created and funded citizens' groups to advocate for tort reform and to attack personal injury lawyers, while trial lawyers have created "consumer advocacy" front groups to oppose tort reform.

Media relations

Media relations involves working with various media for the purpose of informing the public of an organization's mission, policies and practices in a positive, consistent and credible manner. Typically, this means coordinating directly with the people responsible for producing the news and features in the mass media. The goal of media relations is to maximize positive coverage in the mass media without paying for it directly through advertising.

Many people use the terms *public relations* and *media relations* interchangeably; however, doing so is incorrect. Media relations refer to the relationship that a company or organization develops with journalists, while public relations extend that relationship beyond the media to the general public.

Dealing with the media presents unique challenges in that the news media cannot be controlled — they have ultimate control over whether stories pitched to them are of interest to their audiences. Because of this, ongoing relationships between an organization and the news media is vital. One way to ensure a positive working relationship with media personnel is to become deeply familiar with their "beats" and areas of interests. Media relations and public relations practitioners should read as many magazines, journals, newspapers, and blogs as possible, as they relate to one's practice.

Working with the media on the behalf of an organization allows for awareness of the entity to be raised as well as the ability to create an impact with a chosen audience. It allows access to both large and small target audiences and helps build public support and mobilizing public opinion for an organization This is all done through a wide range of media and can be used to encourage two-way communication.

Key elements of strategy-based media relations

- The media strategy is documented and implemented according to principles agreed to by public affairs and senior management.
- A media policy is drawn up with responsibilities, profiles and positioning.
- Media activity is planned to reach target audiences in direct support of your organizational mission and goals.
- Media contact is broadly divided into proactive and reactive activities.
- Systematic use of consistent messages is made (e.g., about organizational performance, issues, use of new technologies and corporate behavior including environmental policy, corporate governance and corporate social responsibility).
- Spokespersons' roles are documented, communicated and supported.
- There are clear triggers for engagement as part of the issues management – stakeholder relations process.
- Decisions are agreed to beforehand with respect to follow-up activities after media coverage



Advertising is a form of communication used to influence individuals to purchase products or services or support political candidates or ideas. Frequently it communicates a message that includes the name of the product or service and how that product or service could potentially benefit the consumer. Advertising often attempts to persuade potential customers to purchase or to consume a particular brand of product or service. Modern advertising developed with the rise of mass production in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Commercial advertisers often seek to generate increased consumption of their products or services through branding, which involves the repetition of an image or product name in an effort to associate related qualities with the brand in the minds of consumers. Different types of media can be used to deliver these messages, including traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio, billboards or direct mail. Advertising may be placed by an advertising agency on behalf of a company or other organization.

Organizations that spend money on advertising promoting items other than a consumer product or service include political parties, interest groups, religious organizations and governmental agencies. Non-profit organizations may rely on free modes of persuasion, such as a public service announcement.

Money spent on advertising has increased in recent years. In 2007, spending on advertising was estimated at more than \$150 billion in the United States and \$385 billion worldwide, and the latter to exceed \$450 billion by 2010.

Advertising is communication used to influence individuals to purchase products or services or support political candidates or ideas. Advertising can be displaced on billboards, newspapers, T.V., websites, movies and more.

Public service advertising

The same advertising techniques used to promote commercial goods and services can be used to inform, educate and motivate the public about non-commercial issues, such as HIV/AIDS, political ideology, energy conservation and deforestation.

Advertising, in its non-commercial guise, is a powerful educational tool capable of reaching and motivating large audiences. "Advertising justifies its existence when used in the public interest - it is much too powerful a tool to use solely for commercial purposes." - Attributed to Howard Gossage by David Ogilvy.

Public service advertising, non-commercial advertising, public interest advertising, cause marketing, and social marketing are different terms for (or aspects of) the use of sophisticated advertising and marketing communications techniques (generally associated with commercial enterprise) on behalf of non-commercial, public interest issues and initiatives.

In the United States, the granting of television and radio licenses by the FCC is contingent upon the station broadcasting a certain amount of public service advertising. To meet these requirements, many broadcast stations in America air the bulk of their required public service announcements during the late night or early morning when the smallest percentage of viewers are watching, leaving more day and prime time commercial slots available for high-paying advertisers.

Public service advertising reached its height during World Wars I and II under the direction of several governments.

Radio advertising

Radio advertising is a form of advertising via the medium of radio.

Radio advertisements are broadcasted as radio waves to the air from a transmitter to an antenna and a thus to a receiving device. Airtime is purchased from a station or network in exchange for airing the commercials. While radio has the obvious limitation of being restricted to sound, proponents of radio advertising often cite this as an advantage

Print advertising

Print advertising describes advertising in a printed medium such as a newspaper, magazine, or trade journal. This encompasses everything from media with a very broad readership base, such as a major national newspaper or magazine, to more narrowly targeted media such as local newspapers and trade journals on very specialized topics. A form of print advertising is classified advertising, which allows private individuals or companies to purchase a small, narrowly targeted ad for a low fee advertising a product or service.

Online advertising

Online advertising is a form of promotion that uses the Internet and World Wide Web for the expressed purpose of delivering marketing messages to attract customers. Examples of online advertising include contextual ads on search engine results pages, banner ads, Rich Media Ads, Social network advertising, online classified advertising, advertising networks and e-mail marketing, including e-mail spam.

Billboard advertising

Billboards are large structures located in public places which display advertisements to passing pedestrians and motorists. Most often, they are located on main roads with a large amount of passing motor and pedestrian traffic; however, they can be placed in any location with large amounts of viewers, such as on mass transit vehicles and in stations, in shopping malls or office buildings, and in stadiums.

In-store advertising

In-store advertising is any advertisement placed in a retail store. It includes placement of a product in visible locations in a store, such as at eye level, at the ends of aisles and near checkout counters, eye-catching displays promoting a specific product, and advertisements in such places as shopping carts and in-store video displays.

Criticism of advertising

While advertising can be seen as necessary for economic growth, it is not without social costs. Unsolicited Commercial Email and other forms of spam have become so prevalent as to have become a major nuisance to users of these services, as well as being a financial burden on internet service providers. Advertising is increasingly invading public spaces, such as schools, which some critics argue is a form of child exploitation. In addition, advertising frequently uses psychological pressure (for example, appealing to feelings of inadequacy) on the intended consumer, which may be harmful.

Advertising and constitutional rights

Advertising is equated with constitutionally guaranteed freedom of opinion and speech. Therefore criticizing advertising or any attempt to restrict or ban advertising is almost always considered to be an attack on fundamental rights (First Amendment in the USA) and meets the combined and concentrated resistance of the business and especially the advertising community.

The price of attention and hidden costs

Advertising has developed into a billion-dollar business on which many depend. In 2006 391 billion US dollars were spent worldwide for advertising. In Germany, for example, the advertising industry contributes 1.5% of the gross national income; the figures for other developed countries are similar. Thus, advertising and growth are directly and causally linked. As far as a growth based economy can be blamed for the harmful human lifestyle (affluent society) advertising has to be considered in this aspect concerning its negative impact, because its main purpose is to raise consumption. "The industry is accused of being one of the engines powering a convoluted economic mass production system which promotes consumption.

Children and adolescents as target groups

The children's market, where resistance to advertising is weakest, is the "pioneer for ad creep" "Kids are among the most sophisticated observers of ads. They can sing the jingles and identify the logos, and they often have strong feelings about products. What they generally don't understand, however, are the issues that underlie how advertising works. Mass media are used not only to sell goods but also ideas: how we should behave, what rules are important, who we should respect and what we should value. Youth is increasingly reduced to the role of a consumer. Not only the makers of toys, sweets, ice cream, breakfast food and sport articles prefer to aim their promotion at children and adolescents. For example, an ad for a breakfast cereal on a channel aimed at adults will have music that is a soft ballad, whereas on a channel aimed at children, the same ad will use a catchy rock jingle of the same song to aim at kids. Advertising for other products preferably uses media with which they can also reach the next generation of consumers. "Key advertising messages exploit the

emerging independence of young people”. Cigarettes, for example, “are used as a fashion accessory and appeal to young women. Other influences on young people include the linking of sporting heroes and smoking through sports sponsorship, the use of cigarettes by popular characters in television programmes and cigarette promotions. Research suggests that young people are aware of the most heavily advertised cigarette brands.”

“Product placements show up everywhere, and children aren't exempt. Far from it. The animated film, Foodfight, had ‘thousands of products and character icons from the familiar (items) in a grocery store.’ Children's books also feature branded items and characters, and millions of them have snack foods as lead characters. Business is interested in children and adolescents because of their buying power and because of their influence on the shopping habits of their parents. As they are easier to influence they are especially targeted by the advertising business. “The marketing industry is facing increased pressure over claimed links between exposure to food advertising and a range of social problems, especially growing obesity levels.”

d 15% in magazines. In 2002 there were 360.000 people employed in the advertising business. The internet revenues for advertising doubled to almost 1 billion Euros from 2006 to 2007, giving it the highest growth rates

Communication design

Communication design is a mixed discipline between design and information-development which is concerned with how media intermission such as printed, crafted, electronic media or presentations communicate with people. A communication design approach is not only concerned with developing the message aside from the aesthetics in media, but also with creating new media channels to ensure the message reaches the target audience.

Communication design seeks to attract, inspire, create desires and motivate the people to respond to messages, with a view to making a favorable impact to the bottom line of the commissioning body, which can be either to build a brand, move sales, or for humanitarian purposes. Its process involves strategic business thinking, utilizing market research, creativity, and problem-solving.

The term communication design is often used interchangeably with visual communication and more specifically visual design, but has an alternate broader meaning that includes auditory, vocal, touch and smell. Examples of Communication Design include information architecture, editing, typography, illustration, web design, animation, advertising, ambient media, visual identity design, performing arts, copywriting and professional writing skills applied in the creative industries.

Visual design

Visual Design is the design working in any media or support of visual communication. This is a correct terminology to cover all types of design applied in communication that uses visual channel for transmission of messages, precisely because this term relate to the concept of visual language of some media and not limited to support a particular form of production, as do the terms graphic design (graphic) or Interface design (electronic media).

Internal communications

Internal communications is a generic expression for all communication (formal and informal) that an organisation undertakes with its close stakeholders — i.e. those people with whom it has a relationship that requires support, principally direct/indirect employees and/or members. The main purpose of formal internal communications is to inform employees or members of the direction and performance of the organisation (and/or team) to which they belong.

The profession of internal communications builds on fundamental principles of other disciplines like human resources (HR), marketing, project management and media planning. As a result it often gets adopted in organisations under different labels: employee communications, employee engagement, internal marketing, company communications, staff communication, etc. Responsibility can also reside within different functions: marketing, corporate communications, transformation, HR, CEO office, etc.

In common with other communication professions, there are different areas of specialism within internal communications: channel management, speech-writing, change communications, HR communications, project communications, event management, social media, intranets, etc.

Internal communication in practice

Why does internal communication matter?

- **Clear Line of Sight**

At the most basic level internal communication helps make a difference to organisations by providing clarity of purpose that help people do their jobs.

- **Employee Engagement**

Effective internal communications is one of the key drivers of employee engagement which has been widely researched and proven to add significant value to organisations on all metrics from productivity to customer research.

- **External reputation**

Market researchers MOR have highlighted the strength of employee advocacy in shaping an organisation's external reputation. Joep Cornelissen in his book *Corporate Communications* touches on the relationship between reputation and internal conversation.

- **Change management**

Communication is also a critical success factor for change or transformation programmes. (John Kotter says: "When the environment constantly changes, the organization must innovate to adapt to or control that environment. When your external environment changes, your internal environment should adjust as well, and internal communication is vital during these times.")

- **Regulation and compliance**

There is also in many countries a legal requirement that certain communications take place. For example within the EU, employers are expected to hold consultations with their staff on business decisions that affect them, like redundancy. Effective communications is essential for ensuring compliance with companies' policies on corporate governance, occupational safety and health, environment and quality assurance.

Internal communication strategy

There are two sides to strategy in internal communications. In the first instance there is the organisation's strategy — what it hopes to achieve and how it plans to go about achieving it. That strategy will be supported and, to some extent, delivered through effective internal communications.

In this context internal communication can help on several different levels:

- **Tell:** simply informing people of the direction, non-negotiable
- **Sell:** anticipating some form of backlash, requiring some persuasion
- **Consult:** seeking specific areas of input to the decision-making process
- **Involve:** seeking varying degrees of involvement and co-creation

Secondly, and more importantly, internal communications needs a strategy of its own. It should be positioned more than a simple plan of tactical interventions in support of business activities. The strategy should consider the following:

- **Market:** What does the organisation know about its audiences' needs? How should its audiences be segmented?
- **Message:** What is it the organisation's message is trying to achieve? In what tone should it be conveyed?
- **Media:** Which channels work best for the different audience segments? How will it maximise reach and cut-through? Are there clear editorial guidelines for each?
- **Measurement:** Are there clearly defined success criteria? What are the leading and lagging measures? As well as informing all of the other three M's, it should be used to demonstrate value and measures of performance (ROI, message penetration, hit rates, quality of feedback, etc)

The strategy will inform the best way to organize effective communications.

Internal communications functions

Internal communications functions can require several skills, eg: writing, marketing, event organisation, web channels, facilitation, advertising, stakeholder management, corporate social responsibility, branding and communications training.

Internal communicators are a broad church of professionals with both general and specialist skills. Generalist communicators often take on the role of internal communications business partners or consultants, drawing on the support from internal communications specialists who have one or more of the technical skills required to deliver channels (writing, planning, measurement). In practice, the delineation between these two roles is often blurred but it does highlight the diverse skills required.

Internal communication channels

The internal communications department should be responsible for developing and maintaining a number of 'channels' that allow effective communication to take place across the business. A communications channel refers to the medium used to convey information from sender to receiver - in this case from organisation to employee. The range and quality of channels differs between organisations, depending on their size and technical infrastructure.

The American political scientist and communication theorist Harold Lasswell popularised the concept of the communication channel in his 1948 paper *The Communication of Ideas*¹ where he proposed a simple five-stage model based around the following question(s):

- Who
- Say what
- In which channel
- To whom
- With what effect?

In reality internal communications is not a linear system and informal channels exist outside the internal pipework of formal communications channels. This is important for those practitioners that (wrongly) believe that internal communications is simply about controlling the message.

Formal channels

Formal channels typically fall into one of four broad categories:

- **Electronic:** - Communications that are delivered and/or accessed electronically, either by computer, telephone, television or other devices. Examples include email, intranet, video and webcasts, electronic newsletters, podcasts, blogs, Wikis, voicemail, conference calls, SMS text messaging, screensaver messaging, desktop alert messages, desktop news feeds and internal social media tools (eg: internal Twitter-style sites such as Yammer)
- **Print:** - Paper-based communications. Examples include magazines, newsletters, brochures, postcards and other desk drops, posters, memos, communication packs for line managers, etc.
- **Face-to-face:** - One-to-one and one-to-many forums where people are physically present. Examples include team meetings or briefings, conferences, site visits, 'back to the floor', consultation forums, 'brown bag' lunches, round-table discussions, 'town meetings', etc.
- **Workspace:** - the working environment. Examples include notice boards, plasma and LCD screens, accessories (eg: mousemats), window decals, etc.

Informal channels

These channels reflect the non-linear dynamics of a social network and can be as, if not more, influential than more formal channels. Often informal internal communications is more likely to stimulate and create discussion and dialogue. The channels often manifest themselves via the rumor-mill, water-cooler conversations, social networking, spoof newsletters, etc.

Selecting channels

One of the key challenges any internal communicator will face is how to select the right channels - and the right mix of channels - for both the audience and the message. The main considerations are:

- **Availability:** what channels either already exist within the organization or can be introduced effectively?
- **Audience:** who are they, where are they based, how do they prefer to access information and how effective will the proposed channel be in reaching them and engaging them?
- **Objectives:** what does the organization want people to learn, think, feel or do as a result of the message?
- **Content:** what is the context and substance of the message? (For example, sensitive messages may need to be communicated face-to-face, rather than by, say, SMS text message.)

Internal communication audiences

Audience segmentation

An internal audience is rarely homogeneous. Audiences differ according to the core business or activity of an organization. For example, a manufacturing company may have four main groups:

- **Management:** (*see Line managers section below*)
- **Executives and specialists:** This group is generally office-based and regularly, if not constantly, online. For example, they spend a lot of time creating and sharing information/knowledge both in meetings and online. They interact with their line managers

on a regular basis, even if this is virtually by telephone conference, and also give significant credibility to online news and social media.

- **Technical experts and engineers:** This group is often out at customer sites, spending a significant amount of time on manual tasks. For example, they have an office base which they may visit daily or weekly. They are likely to have a laptop and email account but the key difference is they may only check-in to online information sources at specific times. A lot of their direct communication is by telephone. They make good use of physical noticeboards back at base and printed materials such as newsletters.
- **Factory workers:** Even though production lines are highly automated, factory-based employees still spend most of their time on the factory floor, often working a changing shift pattern. They have limited access to generic online channels, perhaps sharing a computer station to log on to emails and check the intranet. Literacy levels can be low in this audience group which means more emphasis on face-to-face communication and story-telling.

Line managers

Employee communication is an important skill for all line managers, irrespective of their seniority. Like any skill it requires training and development. Often, organisations do not invest the appropriate amount of time and effort in developing managers' communications skills. Too often this leads to managers abdicating responsibility for communications to their 'internal communications department' and a lack of confidence in facilitating discussion in their teams. This raises debate around the following issues:

- The nature of supervisory relationships and organizational communication
- The potency of managers as a channel of official communications
- How best to support managers in their roles

Managers as official channels

Although local leaders are undoubtedly a potent force in communications for the reasons explored below – there is little evidence that they hold a supreme position above all other channels of internal communications.

Research findings suggest that employees like to hear from their line manager on subjects in which the manager or supervisor is expert. So, for example employees like their manager to explain how the corporate strategy will affect our team but they don't expect them to be the best source on the detailed analysis behind the strategy. Employees might not naturally look to managers for advice on the workings of the pension scheme.

Managers as animated notice boards

Sending information down the line to local supervisors, expecting them to deliver it without any corruption, interpretation or deviation has long been the main focus of 'cascaded' internal communications (for example, UK guidance from The Industrial Society, now the Work Foundation, focused on giving managers very clear instructions about what to say and how to say it). However, in recent years thinking has evolved and literature now concentrates on empowering managers to facilitate discussion rather than cascade management of messages which will have little authority or impact. **Arrow approach** – Communications are carefully constructed and aimed at a target audience. It assumes the more accurate the message, the clearer the understanding of the recipient. Problems arise when it is taken for granted that information is mostly transmitted by words and that recipients are passive receptors.

- **Circuit approach** – Communications are achieved with positive relationships and job satisfaction of employees through understanding and discussion. It assumes that communicating is grounded in mutual understanding. Problems arise because of the myopic

view that understanding will lead to agreement and that this understanding should be the sole goal of communications.

- **Dance approach** – Communications are achieved through an intricate combination of the practice, understanding, and intuition. It believes that the communication involves the coordination of meanings, the understanding of common rules, and the recognition of patterns between two or more people.

Communication theory

There is much discussion in the academic world of communication as to what actually constitutes communication. Currently, many definitions of communication are used in order to conceptualize the processes by which people navigate and assign meaning. Communication is also understood as the exchanging of understanding. Additionally the biocommunication theory investigates communicative processes within and among non-humans such as bacteria, animals, fungi and plants.

We might say that communication consists of transmitting information from one person to another. In fact, many scholars of communication take this as a working definition, and use Lasswell's maxim, "who says what to whom in what channel with what effect," as a means of circumscribing the field of **communication theory**.

A simple communication model with a sender transferring a message containing information to a receiver.

Other commentators suggest that a ritual process of communication exists, one not artificially divorceable from a particular historical and social context.

Communication stands so deeply rooted in human behaviors and the structures of society that scholars have difficulty thinking of it while excluding social or behavioral events. Because communication theory remains a relatively young field of inquiry and integrates itself with other disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, and sociology, one probably cannot yet expect a consensus conceptualization of communication across disciplines.

Currently, there is no paradigm from which communication scholars may work. One of the issues facing scholars is the possibility that establishing a communication metatheory will negate their research and stifle the broad body of knowledge in which communication functions.

he Latin verb *informare*, to give form to, to form an idea of. Furthermore, Latin itself already contained the word *informatio* meaning concept or idea, but the extent to which this may have influenced the development of the word *information* in English is unclear.

As a final note, the ancient Greek word for *form* was "μορφή" (morf -> morphe, Morph) and also *εἶδος* *eidos* (kind, idea, shape, set), the latter word was famously used in a technical philosophical sense by Plato (and later Aristotle) to denote the ideal identity or essence of something (see Theory of forms). "Eidos" can also be associated with thought, proposition or even concept.

Strategic Communication

Strategic Communication can mean either communicating a concept, a process, or data that satisfies a long term strategic goal of an organization by allowing facilitation of advanced planning, or communicating over long distances usually using international telecommunications or dedicated global network assets to coordinate actions and activities of operationally significant commercial, non-commercial and military business or combat and logistic subunits. It can also mean the related function within organisations that takes care of internal and external communication processes.

History of strategic communication

Strategic communication at its nascent ancient application begun with the first attempts to transmit knowledge through writing either to the following generations, or to locations remote to its origin. The need to increase the distance and speed of transmission may have been one of the factors behind the domestication of the horse which remained the primary mode of communication until the invention of the semaphore, and later the telegraph. The business management reference for Strategic Communication may be the concept of Integrated Management Communication.

Definition of strategic communication

Strategic communication management could be defined as the systematic planning and realization of information flow, communication, media development and image care in a long-term horizon. It conveys deliberate message(s) through the most suitable media to the designated audience(s) at the appropriate time to contribute to and achieve the desired long-term effect. Communication management is process creation. It has to bring three factors into balance: the message(s), the media channel(s) and the audience(s).^[1] Current multinational concept development and experimentation defines Strategic Communication as "a function to integrate an organisation's information activities in order to advance its interests and objectives, and to promote the coherence of the organisation". (See Peter E. Westenkirchner: Framework Concept "Strategic Communication in Support of Multinational Coalition Operations within a Comprehensive Approach")

Application objectives

Strategic Communication (SC) provides a conceptual umbrella that enables organizations to integrate their disparate messaging efforts. It allows them to create and distribute communications that, while different in style and purpose, have an inner coherence. This consistency can, in some instances, foster an echo chamber that reinforces the organizational message and brand. At minimum, it prevents contradictory, confusing messaging to different groups across all media platforms.

Defence application

The recently approved NATO Policy on Strategic Communication defines Strategic Communication as "the coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communications activities and capabilities – Public Diplomacy, Military Public Affairs, Information Operations and Psychological Operations, as appropriate – in support of Alliance policies, operations and activities, and in order to advance NATO's aims" (SG(2009)0794). "It is important to underline that Strategic Communication is first and foremost a process that supports and underpins all efforts to achieve the Alliance's objectives; an enabler that guides and informs our decisions, and not an organization in itself. It is for this reason that Strategic Communication considerations should be integrated into the earliest planning phases - communication activities being a consequence of that planning" (MCM-0164-2009).

Commercial application

Strategic Communications in Commercial Environment is the non-military application of strategic communication principles and techniques are a new way for organizations to respond to a changed business landscape that results from today's networked communication environment. Back in the day, organizations could segment publics and audiences and target unique messages to each one. Employees, investors, partners, citizens of local communities, potential buyers and consumers could each receive messages that were not widely known or shared by the other groups. Now, all potential publics and audiences can access information about the organization. Providing dissimilar, even contradictory information is no longer possible and may even be problematic. Consumers see information targeted to investors and partners, employees see messages sent to members of the community. In short, with little effort, almost everyone can see almost everything.

Within organizations, the need to integrate communication efforts is moving the authority for creating messages from silos (media relations, investor relations, public relations, advertising, sales and promotion, community relations, corporate training) into corporate headquarters. When organizations adopt strategic communication processes, the message-originating departments -- although they were never fully autonomous -- must report to corporate communications units that issue guidelines for all organizational communication programs and efforts.

The term "strategic communication" means more than just getting the right message to the right people...and so on. It also means ensuring that communication programs meet the objectives of the organization. In order to meet those objectives and to obtain sufficient evidence to suggest that a program can or will meet them, SC is typically supported by a detailed research plan. Once the objectives are clarified, research to define audiences, to measure current attitudes, and to test ways to change those attitudes must be undertaken. Once the coordinating unit develops concepts, there will be focus groups and/or surveys to identify the most effective concepts. Final messages are also tested. The early research that shapes the message is called "formative evaluation." After implementation of the communication program, "summative evaluation" takes place. This research answers the questions: Did the program reach its goals? What effects did the campaign have? What remains to be done?

Research support for communication programs has long been a facet of advertising and, more broadly, marketing campaigns. In the commercial marketplace, sales are often the measurement for success and failure. In PR, the metric has generally been "clip files," the number of mentions in the editorial press: the more clips and the more influential the publications, the better. The underlying assumptions of strategic communication begin by rejecting these silos and adopting more robust measurements at all stages of program development, implementation, and post-campaign evaluation.

Public administration application

Educational institutions are responding to the perceived need for new ways of planning, developing, and implementing communication programs. In the last two years, a growing number of educational institutions offer programs in strategic communication, usually at the master's level. Prospective students can search the Internet for available programs.

Organizational communication

History of Organizational Communication

The field traces its lineage through business information, business communication, and early mass communication studies published in the 1930s through the 1950s. Until then, organizational communication as a discipline consisted of a few professors within speech departments who had a particular interest in speaking and writing in business settings. The current field is well established with its own theories and empirical concerns distinct from other communication subfields and other approaches to organizations.

Several seminal publications stand out as works broadening the scope and recognizing the importance of communication in the organizing process, and in using the term "organizational communication". Nobel Laureate Herbert Simon wrote in 1947 about "organization communications systems", saying communication is "absolutely essential to organizations".^[1]

In the 1950s, organizational communication focused largely on the role of communication in improving organizational life and organizational output. In the 1980s, the field turned away from a business-oriented approach to communication and became concerned more with the constitutive role of communication in organizing. In the 1990s, critical theory influence on the field was felt as organizational communication scholars focused more on communication's possibilities to oppress and liberate organizational members.

Assumptions underlying organizational communication

Some of the main assumptions underlying much of the early organizational communication research were:

- Humans act rationally. Sane people behave in rational ways, they generally have access to all of the information needed to make rational decisions they could articulate, and therefore will make rational decisions, unless there is some breakdown in the communication process.
- Formal logic and empirically verifiable data ought to be the foundation upon which any theory should rest. All we really need to understand communication in organizations is (a) observable and replicable behaviors that can be transformed into variables by some form of measurement, and (b) formally replicable syllogisms that can extend theory from observed data to other groups and settings
- Communication is primarily a mechanical process, in which a message is constructed and encoded by a sender, transmitted through some channel, then received and decoded by a receiver. Distortion, represented as any differences between the original and the received messages, can and ought to be identified and reduced or eliminated.
- Organizations are mechanical things, in which the parts (including employees functioning in defined roles) are interchangeable. What works in one organization will work in another similar organization. Individual differences can be minimized or even eliminated with careful management techniques.
- Organizations function as a container within which communication takes place. Any differences in form or function of communication between that occurring in an organization and in another setting can be identified and studied as factors affecting the communicative activity.

Herbert Simon introduced the concept of **bounded rationality** which challenged assumptions about the perfect rationality of communication participants. He maintained that people making decisions in organizations seldom had complete information, and that even if more information was available, they tended to pick the first acceptable option, rather than exploring further to pick the optimal solution.

Through the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s the field expanded greatly in parallel with several other academic disciplines, looking at communication as more than an intentional act designed to transfer an idea. Research expanded beyond the issue of "how to make people understand what I am saying" to tackle questions such as "how does the act of communicating change, or even define, who I am?", "why do organizations that seem to be saying similar things achieve very different results?" and "to what extent are my relationships with others affected by our various organizational contexts?"

In the early 1990s Peter Senge developed a new theories on Organizational Communication. This theories were learning organization and systems thinking. These have been well received and are now a mainstay in current beliefs toward organizational communications.

Communications networks

Networks are another aspect of direction and flow of communication. Bavelas has shown that communication patterns, or networks, influence groups in several important ways. Communication networks may affect the group's completion of the assigned task on time, the position of the de facto leader in the group, or they may affect the group members' satisfaction from occupying certain

positions in the network. Although these findings are based on laboratory experiments, they have important implications for the dynamics of communication in formal organizations.

There are several patterns of communication:

- "Chain",
- "Wheel",
- "Star",
- "All-Channel" network,
- "Circle"

The Chain can readily be seen to represent the hierarchical pattern that characterizes strictly formal information flow, "from the top down," in military and some types of business organizations. The Wheel can be compared with a typical autocratic organization, meaning one-man rule and limited employee participation. The Star is similar to the basic formal structure of many organizations. The All-Channel network, which is an elaboration of Bavelas's Circle used by Guetzkow, is analogous to the free-flow of communication in a group that encourages all of its members to become involved in group decision processes. The All-Channel network may also be compared to some of the informal communication networks.

If it's assumed that messages may move in both directions between stations in the networks, it is easy to see that some individuals occupy key positions with regard to the number of messages they handle and the degree to which they exercise control over the flow of information. For example, the person represented by the central dot in the "Star" handles all messages in the group. In contrast, individuals who occupy stations at the edges of the pattern handle fewer messages and have little or no control over the flow of information. These "peripheral" individuals can communicate with only one or two other persons and must depend entirely on others to relay their messages if they wish to extend their range.

In reporting the results of experiments involving the Circle, Wheel, and Star configurations, Bavelas came to the following tentative conclusions. In patterns with positions located centrally, such as the Wheel and the Star, an organization quickly develops around the people occupying these central positions. In such patterns, the organization is more stable and errors in performance are lower than in patterns having a lower degree of centrality, such as the Circle. However, he also found that the morale of members in high centrality patterns is relatively low. Bavelas speculated that this lower morale could, in the long run, lower the accuracy and speed of such networks.

In problem solving requiring the pooling of data and judgments, or "insight," Bavelas suggested that the ability to evaluate partial results, to look at alternatives, and to restructure problems fell off rapidly when one person was able to assume a more central (that is, more controlling) position in the information flow. For example, insight into a problem requiring change would be less in the Wheel and the Star than in the Circle or the Chain because of the "bottlenecking" effect of data control by central members.

It may be concluded from these laboratory results that the structure of communications within an organization will have a significant influence on the accuracy of decisions, the speed with which they can be reached, and the satisfaction of the people involved. Consequently, in networks in which the responsibility for initiating and passing along messages is shared more evenly among the members, the better the group's morale in the long run.

Direction of communication

If it's considered formal communications as they occur in traditional military organizations, messages have a "one-way" directional characteristic. In the military organization, the formal communication proceeds from superior to subordinate, and its content is presumably clear because it

originates at a higher level of expertise and experience. Military communications also carry the additional assumption that the superior is responsible for making his communication clear and understandable to his subordinates. This type of organization assumes that there is little need for two-way exchanges between organizational levels except as they are initiated by a higher level. Because messages from superiors are considered to be more important than those from subordinates, the implicit rule is that communication channels, except for prescribed information flows, should not be cluttered by messages from subordinates but should remain open and free for messages moving down the chain of command. "Juniors should be seen and not heard," is still an unwritten, if not explicit, law of military protocol.

Vestiges of one-way flows of communication still exist in many formal organizations outside the military, and for many of the same reasons as described above. Although management recognizes that prescribed information must flow both downward and upward, managers may not always be convinced that two-way ness should be encouraged. For example, to what extent is a subordinate free to communicate to his superior that he understands or does not understand a message? Is it possible for him to question the superior, ask for clarification, suggest modifications to instructions he has received, or transmit unsolicited messages to his superior, which are not prescribed by the rules? To what extent does the one-way rule of direction affect the efficiency of communication in the organization, in addition to the morale and motivation of subordinates?

These are not merely procedural matters but include questions about the organizational climate, psychological atmosphere in which communication takes place. Harold Leavitt has suggested a simple experiment that helps answer some of these questions. A group is assigned the task of re-creating on paper a set of rectangular figures, first as they are described by the leader under one-way conditions, and second as they are described by the leader under two-way conditions. (A different configuration of rectangles is used in the second trial.) In the one-way trial, the leader's back is turned to the group. He describes the rectangles as he sees them. No one in the group is allowed to ask questions and no one may indicate by any audible or visible sign his understanding or his frustration as he attempts to follow the leader's directions. In the two-way trial, the leader faces the group. In this case, the group may ask for clarifications on his description of the rectangles and he can not only see but also can feel and respond to the emotional reactions of group members as they try to re-create his instructions on paper.

On the basis of a number of experimental trials similar to the one described above, Leavitt formed these conclusions:

1. One-way communication is faster than two-way communication.
2. Two-way communication is more accurate than one-way communication.
3. Receivers are more sure of themselves and make more correct judgments of how right or wrong they are in the two-way system.
4. The sender feels psychologically under attack in the two-way system, because his receivers pick up his mistakes and oversights and point them out to him.
5. The two-way method is relatively noisier and looks more disorderly. The one-way method, on the other hand, appears neat and efficient to an outside observer.^[3]

Thus, if speed is necessary, if a businesslike appearance is important, if a manager does not want his mistakes recognized, and if he wants to protect his power, then one-way communication seems preferable. In contrast, if the manager wants to get his message across, or if he is concerned about his receivers' feeling that they are participating and are making a contribution, the two-way system is better.

Interpersonal communication

: Interpersonal communication

Another facet of communication in the organization is the process of face-to-face, **interpersonal communication**, between individuals. Such communication may take several forms. Messages may be verbal (that is, expressed in words), or they may not involve words at all but consist of gestures, facial expressions, and certain postures ("body language"). Nonverbal messages may even stem from silence.

Ideally, the meanings sent are the meanings received. This is most often the case when the messages concern something that can be verified objectively. For example, "This piece of pipe fits the threads on the coupling." In this case, the receiver of the message can check the sender's words by actual trial, if necessary. However, when the sender's words describe a feeling or an opinion about something that cannot be checked objectively, meanings can be very unclear. "This work is too hard" or "Watergate was politically justified" are examples of opinions or feelings that cannot be verified. Thus they are subject to interpretation and hence to distorted meanings. The receiver's background of experience and learning may differ enough from that of the sender to cause significantly different perceptions and evaluations of the topic under discussion. As we shall see later, such differences form a basic barrier to communication.

Nonverbal content always accompanies the verbal content of messages. This is reasonably clear in the case of face-to-face communication. As Virginia Satir has pointed out, people cannot help but communicate symbolically (for example, through their clothing or possessions) or through some form of body language. In messages that are conveyed by the telephone, a messenger, or a letter, the situation or context in which the message is sent becomes part of its non-verbal content. For example, if the company has been losing money, and in a letter to the production division, the front office orders a reorganization of the shipping and receiving departments, this could be construed to mean that some people were going to lose their jobs — unless it were made explicitly clear that this would not occur.

A number of variables influence the effectiveness of communication. Some are found in the environment in which communication takes place, some in the personalities of the sender and the receiver, and some in the relationship that exists between sender and receiver. These different variables suggest some of the difficulties of communicating with understanding between two people. The sender wants to formulate an idea and communicate it to the receiver. This desire to communicate may arise from his thoughts or feelings or it may have been triggered by something in the environment. The communication may also be influenced or distorted by the relationship between the sender and the receiver, such as status differences, a staff-line relationship, or a learner-teacher relationship.

Whatever its origin, information travels through a series of filters, both in the sender and in the receiver, before the idea can be transmitted and re-created in the receiver's mind. Physical capacities to see, hear, smell, taste, and touch vary between people, so that the image of reality may be distorted even before the mind goes to work. In addition to physical or sense filters, cognitive filters, or the way in which an individual's mind interprets the world around him, will influence his assumptions and feelings. These filters will determine what the sender of a message says, how he says it, and with what purpose. Filters are present also in the receiver, creating a double complexity that once led Robert Louis Stevenson to say that human communication is "doubly relative". It takes one person to say something and another to decide what he said.

Physical and cognitive, including semantic filters (which decide the meaning of words) combine to form a part of our memory system that helps us respond to reality. In this sense, March and Simon compare a person to a data processing system. Behavior results from an interaction between a person's internal state and environmental stimuli. What we have learned through past experience becomes an inventory, or data bank, consisting of values or goals, sets of expectations and preconceptions about the consequences of acting one way or another, and a variety of possible ways of responding to the situation. This memory system determines what things we will notice and respond to in the environment. At the same time, stimuli in the environment help to determine what

parts of the memory system will be activated. Hence, the memory and the environment form an interactive system that causes our behavior. As this interactive system responds to new experiences, new learnings occur which feed back into memory and gradually change its content. This process is how people adapt to a changing world.

Communication Approaches in an Organization

Informal and Formal Communication are used in an organization. Informal communication: Informal communication, generally associated with interpersonal, horizontal communication, was primarily seen as a potential hindrance to effective organizational performance. This is no longer the case. Informal communication has become more important to ensuring the effective conduct of work in modern organizations.

Top-down approach: This is also known as downward communication. This approach is used by the Top Level Management to communicate to the lower levels. This is used to implement policies, guidelines, etc. In this type of organizational communication, distortion of the actual information occurs. This could be made effective by feedbacks.

Category: Organizational theory

Communication bloopers: funny, but no joke!

When management recruitment ads call for excellent communications skills, do they mean the ability to use language in a clear and unambiguous way? Judging by the statements of many executive personnel, one might well be excused for believing just the opposite, **as these amusing examples show.**

What makes a communicator *great*?

Why do some speakers stand out as charismatic, charming, approachable or likable, while others are easily overlooked or forgotten? A close examination of the speeches and presentations of the most successful communicators reveals that the speakers have three traits in common. **What are they and why are they so important?**

How to say *no*! the right way

Saying no to a request can be difficult. Perhaps we don't want to feel as though we are insulting the person or even just letting them down. However, when you believe "no" is the appropriate response, you should be able to do it so that you get your point across kindly and politely. **Here's how to do it.**

Are rude people irritating you?

When the impudence, thoughtlessness or sheer bad manners of people around you begins to weigh you down, **these five key points** will make sure you don't fall into the same trap.

We all know people who have masses of academic qualifications yet somehow just don't get it right in the world of work. To succeed, you need to manage your own emotions, and be aware of and sensitive to those of others. A simple exercise will help test your preparedness for both tasks

Warning signs of an unhealthy workplace

If some of these **sickly and counterproductive behaviors** are taking place in your organization, you're probably not very happy at work. And your workplace is in need of renewal and rejuvenation.

Enjoyable conversations: learn the basic steps

Conversation can sometimes seem infinitely complex with all of its nuances. But its basic steps are pretty simple. Those who aren't competent in conversing usually lack skills in at least one of these steps, and usually more than one.

How to impress your boss

"Great job!" or *Well done!*" are words that any employee with an eye on a raise or promotion (or even one with just a strong work ethic) loves to hear. Of course, every supervisor is different and will be impressed by different actions. But here are **three things you can do** that are likely to give any boss a favorable impression of you.

How to improve communication during a conflict

Don't let adrenaline put your brain on auto-pilot when you feel threatened by another's words or actions! Stay calm and **focus on these seven tips** to resolve your conflict quickly by communicating effectively.

Easy ways to bring fun back to work

Especially in these trying times, a little fun can go a long way - even in the workplace! When we lighten up, we reduce stress, break down barriers, open the way to more dialogue, and gain a renewed sense of hope. **Try some of these fun ideas**

Reading body language: 5 mistakes people make

Human beings are genetically programmed to look for facial and behavioral cues. We see someone gesture and automatically make a judgment about the intention of that gesture. Indeed, the ability to 'read' nonverbal signals can provide you with crucial information about other people, which will give you a significant advantage in judging how to interact with them in all kinds of situations. But you have to avoid these five common mistakes that lead people right off the track when they attempt to read body language.

HOW TO ENSURE THAT YOUR WRITTEN MESSAGE GETS A REPLY

Funny thing about voicemail. We love it when it's our own - we hate it when it belongs to someone else.

I don't know about you, but when someone doesn't return my messages, I imagine they are gloating behind my back, laughing demonically as they push the delete button to send me to oblivion.

Actually, I doubt if most people are this cold. But what's so frustrating about voicemail is it gives the decision-maker the opportunity to reject you before you even get a chance to talk to them! If you're starting to feel like a failure because people won't return your messages, here's what to do.

I believe most messages do not get returned because people are overwhelmed. Many of us move through our workday in a state that ranges from mild panic to deep despair.

To get returned, a message must be so compelling that it wins out over the 23 other urgent things vying for the recipient's attention. Yet, many messages do not even come close to addressing the specific needs, desires, wants, and concerns of the person being called.

There's the sales rep who leaves a message saying she would like to stop by and talk with you about advertising in her paper. Yeah right. Like you've got nothing better to do. The copier company calling to sell you toner. Toner? There are six boxes stacked in the closet. Or the person you've never heard of asking you to call him back.

You don't mean to be rude but apparently these people assume you're just sitting around with nothing else to do!

On a busy day, something's got to give and lame, ineffective messages are the first to go.

To help solve this problem, I asked successful friends and sales people to share their best voice-mail techniques. I cannot guarantee that any of these methods will give you a 100% call back ratio, but they will definitely help improve your odds. Test them out and you'll quickly discover the ones that work best for you.

1. Be brief

Try leaving messages with nothing more than your name and number. Do not say why you are calling. Curiosity is a powerful motivator. My sales staff found that this one simple technique increased their call back ratio by 40%! Busy people calling in for messages from the road will also appreciate the fact that your message is brief.

2. The "pains" technique

This is an excellent technique to use as a follow up to a sales presentation. In your initial meeting with the prospect ask probing questions to determine where it "hurts". Make a list of these "pains" and how your product or service can provide specific relief for each concern. Each time you leave a follow up message, mention one of your prospect's "pains" and hint at how you can provide relief. Refer to a different problem each time you call. For example:

- **Message #1:** >"Ms. Jones, this is Susan Berkley from Berkley Productions at 201-541-8595. I'm calling to offer some solutions as to how our voice recording services can give you a more professional sounding voice mail system and get rid of that annoying recorded voice that was bothering the company president. My number again is 201-541-8595."
- **Message #2:** >"Ms. Jones, this is Susan Berkley from Berkley Productions at 201-541-8595. I'm calling with a few solutions to help you reduce those customer complaints about getting lost in your voice mail system that you spoke about in our last meeting. My number again is 201-541-8595."
- **Message #3:** "Ms. Jones, this is Susan Berkley from Berkley Productions at 201-541-8595. I'm calling with an easy, cost effective way to help you provide information to your Spanish and Vietnamese speaking customers. You seemed concerned about this in our last meeting and I wanted to discuss some of the ways we help our customers meet this challenge. My number again is 201-541-8595."

3. Tell them you are calling from corporate headquarters

It adds credibility, especially if you are a small or home based business!

"Hello, this is Susan Berkley with Berkley Productions corporate headquarters. The reason for the call is..."

4. Leave your first and last name

Using only your first name creates confusion- "Steve who? I know five guys named Steve!" It also brings to mind service and repair people, delivery drivers, and heavy breathing obscene phone callers.

5. Eliminate the word "just" or other minimizers from your speech.

Examples:

- *"I'm just calling to follow up on yesterday's meeting."*
- *"Nothing important. Just a follow up call to yesterday's meeting."*
- *"Just a little reminder about how our widget can help build your business."*

6. Don't sell anything in the message

Because we are constantly bombarded with advertising, most people have developed a strong sales resistance. The people you are calling will reject you unless you happen to catch them at a moment when they have a passionate desire or need for your product.

7. Make the benefits contingent on speaking with you

"This is Susan Berkley from XYZ distributors. We have just purchased a number of widgets from a company that went out of business and have priced the stock at a deep discount for fast liquidation. To determine if they are the right size and color for your needs, we need to talk. Call me at 201-541-8595."

8. Speak more slowly and clearly than normal

Don't slur or run your words together. The person you are calling is not as familiar with the material as you are and will quickly become annoyed if you make them replay the message because they did not understand it.

9. Spell your name if it is difficult, unusual or of foreign origin

Sometimes unusual names are easier to remember than names that are more common. The listener has to work harder to understand it and is more likely to remember you because he made that extra effort. Reinforce this phenomenon by saying your name clearly and spelling it slowly when you leave your first message. An unusual name can make you stand out from the crowd and invites ice-breaking chit chat about the name's origin.

10. Sound like a winner by speaking with energy, enthusiasm and confidence

Sit up straight or stand when you leave the message. Smile as you speak. Visualize yourself as confident and strong. Use hand gestures and powerful body language. If possible, check your energy level by listening back to your message before sending it.

11. Leave your phone number twice: once at the beginning of your message and once at the end

If the person you are calling missed your number at the beginning they will not have to listen through to the entire message again to get it.

12. Call again and offer some useful information

"I've been thinking about your situation and have a solution that might work. I'd like to share it with you. Please call me at ..."

Do not leave the solution in the message. Use it as bait to get them to call you back.

Caution: do not use this technique unless you actually have something useful to share with the prospect when they call!

13. Fax your prospect a giant message slip

Take a standard "While you were out" phone message slip, fill it out with your message, enlarge it on the copier and fax it to your prospect. *"While You Were Out ... Melissa Smith called Re: A few ideas to help you save big on your taxes."*

14. When all else fails, politely threaten to "close their file"

Making sure there is nothing hostile or impatient in your tone of voice, leave a polite message that goes something like this:

"Mr. Smith, I've been attempting to reach you for several weeks now regarding the proposal you asked us to send on January 24th, but I have not received a call back. I don't want to bug you or clog your voice mail with unwanted messages, so would you please call me back and let me know if you would like me to close your file?"

It is almost humorous how quickly this message has gotten people to call us back. People like to leave their options open and nobody likes to be "terminated".

15. Make sure YOUR outgoing voicemail message sounds as professional as possible

When people call your voicemail do you sound welcoming, honest, energetic and sincere or do you sound angry, bored or half asleep? Here are several steps to follow to put your "best voice" forward.

- **Script your message.** Writing it out will help you say exactly what you need to say: nothing more, nothing less. You'll also be less likely to flub when reading from a script. And you'll find it easier to control your pacing and tone when you've got something written to practice.
- **Practice your message before you record it.** Say it over and over again out loud to make yourself familiar with the words.
- **Stand while recording your message.** This will add energy and vitality to your voice.
- **Smile while recording your message.** A smile makes your voice sound warm and friendly.
- **Get feedback from at least 3 friends or colleagues.** Does your message sound as good as it could? If not, re-record!
- **Don't leave flubs on your outgoing message.** I am amazed at how many people leave flubs and stumbles on their outgoing message, especially when re-recording is so easy to do!
- **Customize your message daily.** If possible, let people know if you are in or out of the office and when you will be likely to call them back.
- **Include your USP in your message.** Your USP is your unique selling proposition, a phrase that articulates a key benefit to your customer. Boil it down to a brief phrase and use it in your outgoing message. For example:
"Thank you for calling XYZ language school. We guarantee that you'll start speaking the language of your choice in 30 days or less or your money back. Leave your name and number at the tone and we'll get back to you as soon as we get your message."

How to Respond to Angry Customers

1. Assume that the customer has a right to be angry

Nobody makes mistakes on purpose, but they do happen. If you are working in a call center, behind a counter or in any capacity that directly interfaces with customers, then you are going to encounter an irate customer at some time.

The most common response is to evaluate the merit of the complaint while you are listening to it. Try to curb that common response and replace it with the assumption that the customer has a right to be angry, even before you know the details.

Perhaps the customer feels betrayed because the product or services did not meet expectations. The customer may be angry because he or she made incorrect assumptions that led to improper expectations. The customer may be angry because of previous experiences, previous contacts with your company or simply because the problem occurred at a very inconvenient time in the customer schedule.

Regardless of the circumstances, acknowledge the customer has the privilege to be irate. Listen carefully to how the anger is expressed so you can find the root cause of the emotion.

2. Listen to emotion without emotion

Listen to the inflections and emphasis that the customer places on specific topics to identify the emotional catalyst. Listen to the emotion as well as the words. This will help you to identify the specific item or items that need primary attention.

Resolving a technical issue may be only partially effective if it does not also address the customer emotional concerns. It may not be possible to completely resolve the emotional distress, but it is appropriate to acknowledge it.

Imagine that a customer experienced a technical malfunction when downloading digital images of a special event, wedding or family vacation. The technical issue may be related to hardware or software, but the emotional distress is related to the risk of losing precious memories.

While it is necessary to correct the technical issue, it is also appropriate to acknowledge the risks that create the emotional response. Try to preserve the precious memories or at least explain why they can not be retrieved, but do not ignore the emotional catalyst.

Do not respond with emotion. Remember that the customer anger is not directed at you personally, even if the customer language is directed at you.

If the customer language is attacking and borderline abusive, it is because the customer is looking for acknowledgement and response to the emotional distress as well as the technical or administrative issues. It may be necessary to repeatedly acknowledge the customer emotion to diffuse the situation and reassure the customer that you are attentive to the importance of the emotional distress as well as the technical issue.

3. Be patient

Customer conversations come in waves. When the customer is at the peak of expressing anger, sorrow or distress, be patient and listen. It is not effective to interrupt the customer when he or she is venting combustible sentiments. It is like pouring gasoline on a raging fire. Rather, wait for the waves of emotion to recede and then use that opportunity to interject with reassuring comments.

Sometime the customer anger will erupt and return like another set of waves. When that happens, be patient and wait for the customer to run out of gas before you approach the fire again. Reiterate your compassion, acknowledge the customer right to be angry and the catalyst for the emotional distress. Takes quiet deep breaths and wait patiently for your turn to speak.

4. Speak softly

If you encounter a loud and abusive customer, respond by speaking softly and with a very steady tone. If you try to shout over the customer or interrupt, then the customer will concentrate on the verbal battle for attention and will not pay attention to the importance of your message.

If you want your message to be heard, wait for a pause in the customer tirade. Silence is your golden cue that it is time to speak your important message in a soft voice. Eventually the customer will have to lower his or her voice to hear what you are saying.

Even though it may seem that the customer does not care about what you have to say at first, remember that the customer approached you for resolution. The customer may have built up a considerable amount of emotion before reaching you, but ultimately the customer does want your advice and assistance to resolve the problem. Once the customer remembers why he or she contacted you, the customer will be receptive to your soft spoken conversation.

5. Reiterate

Make sure that you are addressing the technical, administrative and emotional aspects of the customer concerns. After you have listened carefully to the customer, reiterate the priorities that you believe that you heard from the customer perspective. This will assure that you are focused on the appropriate issues and reassure the customer that you are concentrating on the proper priorities.

Use a soft, firm and inquisitive voice. Ask the customer to confirm that you have restated the facts and priorities accurately, then write them down.

6. Own the problem

It does not matter who created the problem or what transpired before the customer got to you. Tell the customer that you own the problem and will apply your personal effort to achieve results.

Sometimes it may be tempting to distance yourself from the problem by stating that you are not responsible for it, that another department will need to handle it, or that you are just a messenger. Put that temptation in a can and put a lid on it.

Expressing that you do not have ownership of the problem or the potential resolution gives the customer a feeling of being adrift and powerless. If the customer senses that he or she is communicating with someone who is powerless, it will create yet another reason to be frustrated and angry.

Even if you do need to work with other departments, get manager approval or coordinate some other type of response, inform the customer that you will personally take the matter into your own hands and follow-up on the issues. The customer does not know your company, your policies or your procedures. The customer will never be able to navigate the requirements, restrictions or resolution with the same knowledge and experience as you.

Reassure the customer that you will use your knowledge and experience to coordinate the best possible resolution, even if you need to get the assistance of other parties to achieve it.

7. Place the customer first, problem second

In most cases there are two conflicting issues that occur simultaneously when dealing with irate customers. The first issue is the customer emotional distress. The second is the technical or administrative issue that caused the emotional distress. While it may seem logical to focus first on the technical or administrative issue that cause the emotional distress, it is important to acknowledge the customer anger first and the technical issue second.

Resolving the technical issue may or may not fully resolve the root cause of the customer distress. Acknowledge the customer concerns first and try to calm down the customer enough to help you concentrate on the technical or administrative problems.

Sometimes the technical problem may require much more attention because it may impact other customers. Acknowledge the individual customer emotion first, resolve the specific customer technical issue second and reserve addressing any bigger issues as independent activity.

8. Triage

Once you have an opportunity to focus on technical and administrative issues, triage the root cause of the problems to determine what went wrong. Analyze the problem and provide corrective measures or detailed information in an effort to avoid duplicating the problem with other customers.

It may be necessary to obtain some additional information from your customer to accurately analyze the root cause of the problem.

9. Correct the issue

Correct the issue for the specific customer and also look for long term corrective measures. It may not be feasible to give your customer a guarantee that the correction will resolve all problems permanently, but it may be appropriate to reassure the customer that you will be available to assist in the event that another different problem should occur again. Demonstrate your confidence that this specific problem is resolved and is not expected to reoccur. Demonstrate your attention to the specific customer by reiterating original concerns and actions that you took to correct the issue.

10. Follow up

When possible, follow-up with the customer after sufficient time has elapsed to demonstrate that the corrective action has been effective. A phone call or a personalized postcard demonstrates individual attention and acknowledgement.

Demonstrating compassion and attentiveness thirty days after a problem has been resolved is a powerful message to show that you really do care about the individual customer. This follow-up after the anger has subsided and the corrective action has been demonstrated as effective may be enough to retain loyal customers and earn a few new ones.

How soon is "as soon as possible"?

Somewhere on what seems like page 666 you will find the following:

"We recommend that you check the popular topics below prior to contacting Technical Support. If you could not find your desired answer, please contact our Technical Support team and we will do our best to help you as soon as possible."

Finally! But no, not yet. Now we had to find sales receipts and enter a bunch of information to prove we'd purchased the product.

Now before I give the zinger, allow me to call your attention again to their wording, *"We will do our best to help you as soon as possible."*

Are you ready? "As soon as possible" for our urgent situation was seven days.

Seven Days.

I don't know about you, but I don't have time to read page after page of tech-speak trying to find an answer to my question. Besides, if I had wanted to become an expert in AVG, I would have gone to school for it.

But apparently I made a mistake. It seems I'm not only supposed to be an expert in my own profession, I now have to read up and become an expert in anti-virus software, too.

How long would I stay in business?

In considering this lunacy, I wondered what it would look like if I did customer service the same way as these companies do.

Let's say a software company buys my online learning modules for "the Manager as Trainer." Someone has a question about how to apply the material. They go to my website but find no phone number, only page after page of text describing hundreds of scenarios in which the training might apply. At the top of each page it says,

"We recommend that you check the FAQ section prior to contacting Training Support, as you will often find that your question has already been addressed."

After spending hours sifting through my well-thought out scenarios, they finally give up and send an e-mail. About a week later, I send them a generic message saying I've received their inquiry, and I'll get back to them soon.

How long do you think I'd stay in business?

Exactly.

So why do we keep tolerating this low level of service from others? Well, like I said, no longer will I do so. From this point forward, if I cannot reach a vendor or supplier by phone, or if I do not get a solutions-focused, actually helpful response within one business day, I will find another company for that product or service and I will do business with them instead.

It is high time we stop tolerating such poor customer service and start The Great Boycott of e-mail-only customer service.

Ways to Prevent Customer From Hell Experiences

While customers present the issues and challenges, it is most often the way we respond to these issues and challenges that causes customers to become "difficult." This is good news and bad news.

As much as we'd like to point a finger at our customers, the fingers often end up pointing back at us

The bad news is that, as much as we would like to point our fingers at our customers, the fingers often end up pointing back at us. The good news is that it means a lot, if not most, customer conflict is avoidable.

Here are three things you can do to prevent situations from escalating into conflict:

1. Set expectations

Gerard King and Gus Geursen, in their research (*A System Dynamics Investigation Of The Linkage Between Customer Satisfaction And Firm Profitability*), illustrated how important it is to manage the expectations of your customers. They found that managing and meeting customers' expectations is more important to customer satisfaction than the actual quantity and quality we deliver.

This means, for example, that you shouldn't say to a customer, *"I'll get this done right away,"* because your customer and you may have different expectations of what 'right away' means.

Instead, set your customer's expectations by being specific; ie: *"I'll have this done for you by the end of the day."* Then make sure you deliver!

2. Listen

A couple of issues ago, *Winning at Work* focused on "The Art of Listening." Nowhere is this more important than when trying to prevent conflict.

A huge hot button for customers is when they perceive they aren't being listened to.

3. Communicate how important they are

One of the most common triggers for conflict is when a customer begins to believe that you just don't care about them.

It's important that you verbalize how important they are with statements such as, *"I want to get this right for you," "You're an important customer for us," "Let's figure out how to make this work,"* etc.

There are, of course, many other conflict prevention strategies available to us, but these are three of the most powerful. Good luck with them!

How to lose a customer in two Steps or less

It's a universal given that when we shop somewhere we'd like to be treated with respect. When our shopping experience is negative, statistics show it takes only two such incidents and we're likely to shop elsewhere.

The real question is how many customers have you lost due to customer service blunders?

In a survey of more than 2,000 consumers in the U.S and the U.K., nearly half (49 percent) said poor service led them to change service providers in at least one industry over the past year. This according to 2005 survey results appearing in CRM Today.

If the experiences listed below seem familiar, you can see why people make changes.

Poor customer service: case

The dry cleaner near my house advertises that if you bring your clothes in by 9:00 AM they can have them ready for you by 5:00 PM that same day. But when I arrive at 8:30 in the morning and ask for my clothes to be ready that evening, I'm often the recipient of a prolonged sigh, followed by an obligatory "okay."

Heck, if same day service is such a burden, don't advertise it.

Poor customer service: case

A well-known bulk-discount chain store offers special buys on clothing and electronics and stocks large-size containers of food for bargain prices. You have to pay to become a member. A friend of mine says the person signing up new members is friendly enough, but after you're a member, 95% of the employees appear burdened to have to serve you.

Poor customer service: case

A colleague tells about visiting a computer / peripheral equipment store, and that when he's made purchases there (always spending more than \$200 per visit), the help behind the counter acts like it's a huge chore to take his money and put his purchases in a bag—if they even bother to offer to bag his purchase at all.

During one visit he even commented: "Hey, I just spent \$260 here, could you at least show a little appreciation?"

The result of these experiences? I now drive two miles out of my way to a different dry cleaner, my friend never renewed her membership at that club store, and my colleague has found a different place to shop for computer and printer needs.

Each place of business was given at least two chances, but repeated failures in the customer service arena resulted in losing us as customers.

The fed-up consumer

In another survey, this one conducted in the U.S. by am docs, a provider of customer relationship software, 1,000 U.S. consumers were asked about shopping experiences across a wide variety of industries. Results indicate that consumers “will not take it anymore” when it comes to receiving poor service:

- More than 75 percent said they would hang up after waiting on hold for longer than five minutes.
- More than 80 percent would rather visit the dentist, pay their taxes, or sit in a traffic jam than deal with an unhelpful representative.
- 75 percent said that they tell friends and family about their negative experiences.
- 85 percent reported that negative customer service experiences drive them to switch providers.

With stats like this, it’s crucial that anyone having contact with customers (and this goes for internal customers, too) be trained to bathe their patrons with good service and an attitude of appreciation.

Furthermore, treating customers adequately may no longer be enough. Recent research appearing in the *California Management Review* indicates that satisfied customers will return to do business with you 28 percent of the time—but that delighted customers will return 85 percent of the time.

With those numbers, it only makes sense to provide outstanding customer service!

Step 1 for losing a customer

The first step toward losing customers is placing people in customer service positions without providing much in the way of training. These people represent your company! If they don’t do it well, whatever money you think you’re saving by not training them is being lost many times over with dissatisfied customers slipping away—and taking their money with them.

To prevent losing customers, train service reps on listening to customers and identifying needs as well as acceptable solutions. Think how frustrating it is to deal with a customer service rep who knows very little about the products or service he or she is representing, let alone display an attitude that they don’t care about your problem.

Step 2 for losing a customer

Another way to lose customers is provide no feedback to employees on how they’re perceived by customers.

One way to raise awareness of good (or bad) customer service in your company is by using a “mystery shopper.” The trick here is not to rely on face-to-face shopping. These days, good mystery shopper programs can also evaluate customer service provided on phone calls and through email.

Bottom line: Poor service can quickly lead to lost business. Raising awareness of good customer service among all employees helps keep the customers coming back.

What to do when you can't say yes

As much as you want to please your customers, there will be occasions when it's just not possible - or practical - to accede to their requests. But just as saying "yes" won't always, of itself, keep your clients happy, a refusal doesn't have to mean that they're lost to your business either. It all depends on your creativity and flexibility.

One of the most negative situations one can create with a customer is to say "no." In general, people hate to be told "no." It starts when we are little kids and our parents constantly scream "NO!" at us.

But sometimes saying "no" is unavoidable. In Karen Leland & Keith Bailey's excellent book, *Customer Service for Dummies*, they cover a number of reasons you would have to say "no."

Let's cover some major reasons why we would have to say "no," and what we can or cannot do about them.

It is the law

Sometimes you are asked to do something and agreeing to do it would break a law. This one is simple. Most customers should be comfortable with the reason.

It is company policy

I hate being told someone can't do something because of "company policy."

One Saturday evening my wife and I ventured to a restaurant known for great food at reasonable prices. I decided to try the pork special, which included potatoes and vegetables. I asked what the vegetables were. The waitress told me string beans and corn. Well, I love corn, but hate string beans, and I asked if I could have extra corn instead of the string beans. The waitress said they do not substitute.

So, I asked her just to leave the string beans off. She told me she couldn't do that either. I asked why. She said it was their policy. I told her that at McDonalds if I don't want a pickle, they leave off the pickle.

She looked at me like I was nuts! The dinner came with the string beans and we never went back.

We're out of it!

A company can be out of a part. The book store can be out of a best selling book. A movie theater can be sold out of seats. It is all the same. You have to tell the customer you don't have any more.

So, what do we do? Let's take a lesson from Nordstrom's.

Legend has it that a customer wanted something that Nordstrom's was out of. The employee asked the customer to come back in fifteen minutes. Meanwhile the employee ran to another store in the mall, paid retail for the item and brought it back to Nordstrom's where it was sold to the customer as if Nordstrom's had the item all along.

Great solution when you can do it, but sometimes it is not that easy. One of my retail clients will actually send the customer to the competition, but not before they call the store and have it held in their customers name.

Most of the time the customers are appreciative, seeing that the store is more interested in taking care of the customer than making sale. In the long term, the store gains the customer's loyalty and trust.

Sometimes you just have to resort to telling the customer when the item will be back in stock. Just make sure you honor your promise. If you say it will be in next Tuesday, it had better be in.

It just can't be done!

Sometimes a customer wants something that just can't be done or is impossible to get. It is that simple.

Your goal should be to educate the customer why you can't get them what they want. However, if you are really good, you could try to help find it somewhere else, or maybe find a replacement.

Yes isn't good enough...

Sometimes giving the customer what he/she wants doesn't ensure the customer will be happy with you.

I remember pulling into a parking lot which had some open spaces I could see from the street only to be told they were full. I argued that I saw open spots. The attendant argued that there weren't any. He refused to look, even though I told them exactly where they were.

After five minutes of arguing, he finally agreed to look. Sure enough he saw the spaces I had seen from the street.

He angrily waved me in. Even though I got my parking space, I was mad. He "gave in", but he did it too late.

Saying "no isn't so bad..."

No, it *might* not be so bad. One day I went into one of my favorite places, Baskin Robbins, the well known ice cream parlor. I was excited to order my favorite flavor, Quarterback Crunch. To my disappointment, they were out of that flavor.

The girl dishing out the ice cream told me what her favorite flavor was and asked if I wanted to try it. I did and guess what? I now have a new favorite flavor!

Substitution is a viable alternative to many situations. Sometimes it may be obvious, while other times you may have to take a creative approach. With the right attitude, you may find that saying "no" is an opportunity to show how good you are.

So the next time you are forced to say "no" to a customer or client, think of the above. Delivering great service and creating Moments of Magic have always included common sense thinking and flexibility.

The Dangerous Customer

What is a dangerous customer? It is not necessarily a customer that is threatening you with a knife or a gun. (That is not just a dangerous customer, but a dangerous person.) What we are discussing in this article is the customer that puts you into the "danger zone" of lost business.

We aren't talking about customers who have a complaint about you and choose to tell everyone they know. We are talking about that potentially very dangerous type of customer, a *satisfied* customer.

First words make (or break) first impressions

If your job is to receive customers, you only have second or two to work with before an irrevocable impression is registered on the client's mind. The right choice of words will ensure that it's a great one.

Isn't it frustrating when those are the first words that come out of a front line employee's mouth? As if they didn't want to take the time, or couldn't care less about offering a friendly, approachable greeting to the customer.

Meanwhile, the next guy waiting in line thinks to himself, "*Gee, thanks for the warm welcome. Nice first impression.*"

Customer service skills that make a big difference

How to build the rapport that leads to success in any business relationship

People part with their money for two reasons. One, you can solve a problem for them. Two, because you make them feel good in the process.

Look at it this way. It's hard to quickly evaluate the expertise of a new dentist. But you immediately know which one makes you feel more comfortable.

You can take lessons from a highly qualified ski instructor. But if his silence makes you feel awkward while riding the chair lift together, you'll switch instructors.

When Super K-Mart and Target carry the same items at about the same prices and they're located close together, where do you buy? You choose the store where the returns are simpler, the people are friendlier, and the appearance is cleaner where you are made to feel more welcome.

The "feel good" factor underlies every aspect of life. Even in the area of parent-teacher conferences, if your child's teacher delivers negative feedback in a way that shows empathy, not harshness, you're more likely to support the next vote to increase taxes for schools.

In June 2003 story, *USA Today* reported that basketball legend Kareem Abdul Jabbar struggles to be considered for NBA and college coaching positions.

Apparently, he's perceived as aloof. A problem because coaching is a combination of building rapport with players, the community, alumni, athletic directors, sponsors and business executives. My best guess is that Mr. Abdul Jabbar is shy or ill at ease with people he does not know well.

Similarly, in the corporate world, if you want a promotion but come across as aloof or reserved, you'll be overlooked in favor of someone who has warm "people skills" - someone who makes others feel good about being around them.

Here's how to build rapport that leads to success in every business relationship.

Use small talk as a picture frame around business conversations

Begin and end with small talk before and after making a presentation to a client, selling a widget, negotiating a contract, providing a service or conferencing with your child's teacher. A study conducted with physicians showed those who spend a few minutes asking patients about their family, their work or what summer plans they have before and/or after an examination are less likely to be sued than those who don't.

Let's face it. People don't sue people they care about. And we care about people who show they care about us.

Express empathy

Everyone is entitled to be listened to, even when in the wrong.

Consider the client who sees the stock market rise 30% but not his own portfolio. The stockbroker knows the client insisted on picking the stocks himself, but it would be a mistake to make the client "wrong".

It's better to say, "I realize it's frustrating to experience this. What can we do from here?" That goes a long way to diffusing negative emotions and helping the client feel better about this relationship -- rather than be tempted to move on to another stockbroker.

Greet people warmly, give eye contact and smile

Be the first to say hello. Be careful, you might be viewed as a snob if you are not the first to say hello.

People often go back to their favorite restaurants because the host greets them with a sincere smile, looks at them directly, and welcomes them with warmth. My husband and I go to our favorite restaurant Carmine's on Penn--and bring our friends there, too--because the wait staff, the host/hostess and the door and even the owner take the time to make us feel extra special.

Use the person's name in conversation

You are more likely to get special treatment by using the person's name you are talking with. When you call to clarify a credit card billing, for example, say, "Joe, thanks for taking the time to help me with this question." That makes Joe feel his role is important.

If you don't know someone's name, take a moment to ask, and then repeat it. Be sure to pronounce it correctly. And never presume your conversation partner has a nickname. My name is Debra, not Debbie. I don't feel good when people call me Debbie. It's a little thing that has big importance.

Show an interest in others

In response to our high tech environment filled with e-mail and fax broadcasts, we need high touch more than ever. That's what you create when you show an interest in the lives of your customers/clients/patients every chance you get.

Dig deeper

When you engage in a conversation, don't leave it too quickly.

If your customer/client/patient mentions her vacation, pick up on the cue and dig deeper. Ask where she went, what she did, what was the highlight, if she would go back.

You'll make her feel good about her life and about taking time with you. Always follow up a question like "How's work?" with "What's been going on at work since the last time we spoke?" This way they know you really want to hear about what is going on with work.

Be a good listener

That means making eye contact and responding with verbal cues to show you hear what the speaker says. Verbal cues include these phrases: tell me more; what happened first, what happened next, that must have been difficult, and so on. Using them makes people feel actively listened to.

Stop being an advisor

When you mention a problem you might be having with an employee or an associate, do people offer advice without asking any questions? Have you ever put together a resume and, as soon as you sent it out, someone told you it was too long or too short or too detailed or not detailed enough?

Jumping in with unsolicited advice happens annoyingly often. Instead of advice, give understanding with simple phrases like: "I know you can work out a solution" or "I hope the job hunt goes well for you." Offer advice only when you are specifically asked for it.

An example I experienced in my business really makes my point about the "feel good" factor. I wanted to find a good print shop near my home and walked into one near the busiest post office in our state. I was greeted with a sign that read: *"Lack of preparation on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part."* I thought how many people would zip into this shop for a few photocopies before mailing off an important package? I doubt they would feel welcome here.

I then visited a printing shop across the street. Two colorful signs posted there made my day. One featured a cactus and said, *"Stuck? We'll help you out in a prickly situation."* The other showing a pot of jam said: *"In a jam? We'll help you out of a sticky situation."*

You can guess which printer made me feel better about forming a business relationship.

Whether you want to land a new job, enhance your practice, gain listings, increase your billable hours, bring new people into your business, or make sure people remember you with referrals - pay attention to the "feel good" factor. And enjoy the success that follows.

The quality of everyday language used in business is on the decline. We are often unaware of the impact that our words have on our customers.

When we use language that is negative or abrupt, we create communication barriers that will frustrate and offend people.

Negative language can quickly destroy even the strongest business relationships.

Below are four types of phrases that most people find irritating and some guidelines for changing them from negative to positive phrases:

Giving orders to your customers

Rather than:

"You have to..."

"You must..."

Use:

"If you will _____, then I can..."

"In order to _____, we need..."

**Focusing on what you *can't* do
instead of what you *can* do**

Rather than:

"I can't do that..."

"We don't do that..."

"You can't..."

Use:

"Here is what I can do for you."

"Let's see what we can do."

"Here is what you can do..."

Criticizing or blaming your customer

Rather than:

"You should have..."

"You never..."

"You failed to..."

Use:

"Here's how we can resolve this..."

"Often..."

"We did not receive..."

Appearing not knowledgeable or unwilling to help

Rather than:

"I don't know."

Use:

"I'll be happy to check on that for you."

"Let me find out for you."

The ability to recognize and change your negative language into positive phrases will provide you with excellent tools to build lasting customer relationships.

It takes integrity and practice to master positive communication skills. But when you do, you will see immediate results in the delighted responses of your co-workers and customers.

So you also hate public speaking?

OK, we'll come straight...this one's not meant to be taken too seriously, but apart from giving you a jolly good laugh, it might put you in a more receptive mood for the more serious stuff below - especially if, somehow you recognize yourself here! ...*My stomach's not quite right...when I stand up to speak I'm paralyzed with fright.*" laments Barbara McAfee in this ditty she both wrote and sings especially for the consulting firm, Spoken Impact. So you see, you're not alone. No way!

...But your speaking skills are better than you think!

If you do see yourself in the top video, this one could be the perfect antidote, because trainer Robert Graham insists you are always better than you think! Robert offers here some fundamentals of successful public speaking. Among the topics he touches on are the importance of viewing your speech as a series of "small conversations", the correct use of the hands and gestures and how to avoid "verbal crutches" and negative body language.

Use Powerpoint, but please, *not* like this!

"Hey, what gives here?", you'll ask when you turn up the sound on this little presentation, "Isn't this also a comedy routine?" Indeed it is! But while you might find Don Macmillan (probably the only professional comedian with a background in hi-tech) hilarious, the lessons he teaches here are dead serious. In his inimitable style, Don points out and explains the all too common mistakes people make when preparing and delivering presentations with the aid of Powerpoint. If you can't stop chuckling on the way, well, why not?

How to Be Persuasive

Successfully persuading others to adopt your point of view is a matter of neither magic nor luck. It's a skill and like any skill, improvement takes know-how, opportunity, and practice. These pointers will help you strengthen your persuasion skills.

When I ask audience members who of them would like to be more persuasive, hands shoot up. Yet, many people approach persuasion in a way that undermines their chance of success; in the process, they succeed only at being unpersuasive.

I recall, for example, the project manager whose hotheadedness led customers to discount even her most astute ideas. And the developer who pooh-poohed everyone else's needs, yet wanted them to rally around his own. And the IT director who was such a relentless talkaholic that people took circuitous routes around the floor to avoid him.

Make no mistake: The starting point in being persuasive is to build trust and credibility so that when you seek to persuade, people will give you a fair hearing. You can then draw from the following suggestions to successfully prepare and present your case.

Choose your cases wisely

If you repeatedly try to gain buy-in for things that are exceedingly unlikely, blatantly unrealistic, or technically impossible, you risk creating a cry-wolf reaction in those you're trying to persuade. Once that happens, they won't take you seriously when you have a legitimate matter to put forward.

Still, sometimes it's worth a shot. One project manager, Cliff, summoned the courage to ask his boss for a three-month leave to pursue some personal goals. Cliff was so sure the answer would be "Are you out of your mind?" that he almost didn't hear his boss say, "OK, let's find a way to make this happen."

Be specific about your desired outcome

If, for example, you'd like more (of whatever), be precise. Two additional testers or twelve? Five new laptops or fifteen? An extra week or two months? And explain why. Most people want to know the "why" behind the "what."

To support your proposal, gather as much relevant data as you can. This will show you've given the matter serious thought and are not just acting on a whim. The fact that you've done your homework gives you a distinct advantage over those who demand, plead, or whine in hopes of being persuasive.

Do for others before asking them to do it for you!

According to the reciprocity principle, people feel obligated to give back when a favor—even an unrequested favor—has been done for them.

This principle has chilling implications when applied for nefarious purposes. But what could be better than providing genuine value to others as a consistent practice? Then, when you seek their support for something that's important to you, they may be more inclined to give it.

Focus on issues pertinent to those you want to persuade

How will they benefit from your desired outcome? What issues could make it difficult for them to honor your request? What objections might they have and how can you counter these objections?

Consider, also, what these people emphasize when they seek to persuade. If, for example, they stress facts and figures, strive to do the same. If they focus on how people—or productivity, deadlines, etc.—will be affected, orient your key points accordingly. The more your own case meshes with what matters to these people, the better your chances of winning them over.

Persuade professionally

Compelling though your case may be, sputtering and stammering will weaken its impact. Too many "ums" and "uhs" won't help either, nor will staring at the ceiling in hopes of sudden inspiration once you're on the spot. </P

If you'll be making your case in spoken form, practice it as if you're giving a presentation be in written form, make it articulate. A typo-laden email message may be fine for trivial communications, but if you want to be persuasive about important matters, a polished, professional-looking write-up will carry more weight.

Pay attention to timing

Teammates who slave over buggy code all weekend may be too bleary-eyed on Monday to care what you want. Your manager may not be sympathetic to your ideas after going a few rounds with a demanding, scope-expanding customer. Some people can't focus before their first (or fifth) cup of

coffee. So don't just pop into the other party's office or cubicle when the mood strikes you and assume you'll get undivided (or even fractional) attention.

I recall a fellow named Hank who was so eager to present his Great Idea to his boss, Chuck, that he confronted Chuck at 8 a.m. on Chuck's first day back from vacation. Not only did Chuck have emails overflowing his inboxes, but his own manager had graciously welcomed him back with a crisis. Did Chuck pay attention to Hank's idea? Not a chance.

Don't expect an instantaneous 'yes'

It might not be a stretch to persuade a coworker to change today's lunch date to tomorrow. But making a pitch for something big, such as the adoption of agile methods, is unlikely to get an immediate "Sure, why not?" (Wouldn't that be wonderful?)

Getting buy-in for something that entails a major change usually takes patience and quiet persistence. Let the idea seep in. Show how other organizations or teams have benefited. Find credible allies who can add clout to your case. Suggest ways to start small and with minimal risk. Give it time. Building your case slowly and steadily will improve your odds of success.

if the answer is 'no', learn from the rejection

If you get turned down, accept the decision gracefully. Arguing and "yes, but"-ing will simply peg you as a nuisance, making it even harder to succeed next time around.

Instead, request an explanation and then do your own personal retrospective. Ask yourself: Do I still think my proposal was realistic and reasonable? Did I package my idea appropriately? What should I do differently next time around?

Savor the unexpected 'Go for it!'

Back when I was an IT manager, there was some expensive hardware my staff and I yearned for that the director would need to fund. To get his go-ahead, we prepared a compellingly persuasive presentation and demo. At the appointed time, the director showed up, took one look at the product, and said, "Buy it!" We did. No complaints!

Are Women Being Heard?

What Men and Women Can Learn From Each Other About Giving Presentations

Only 8 Fortune 500 companies are run by women, and a total of 16 Fortune 1000 companies have women in the top job.

Michael Kinsman of the San Diego Union-Tribune reports that women hold just 15.7 percent of top management jobs in Fortune 500 companies.

There are many reasons, theories and opinions as to why women still lag behind men in the top jobs.

But what happens in conference rooms and at company-wide meetings? When women speak, are they being heard?

Some women don't think so.

Several women I recently spoke with are in the scientific field, a field dominated by men. They felt that their biggest challenge was being heard and that sometimes the same information presented by a man to the same audience would be heard and listened to with more respect and perceived credibility.

Well, it seems that both women and men can learn from each other when it comes to giving presentations.

Dave Zielinski in the May 2004 issue of *Presentations Magazine* explored the subject in depth in his article *From the Playground to the Podium: What Men and Women Can Learn from Each Other*.

I'd like to share with you Dave's conclusions and my thoughts on what men and women can learn from each other in the presenting arena.

What women can learn from men

1. Quash the qualifiers

Dave: Women often soften their statements by qualifiers such as *I sort of thought*, or *in my opinion* or *this might be a better way*. Compare these statements: *In my opinion, the project will work better if we bid separately* versus *The project will work better if we bid separately*. The latter is more powerful.

Dana: Please remove the word *like* from your vocabulary in inappropriate places. For example: *The real estate market in this area has appreciated like 25 percent in the last year* versus *The real estate market in this area has appreciated 25 percent in the last year*.

2. Go by the numbers

Dave: When organizing a message, many men like to announce a number before each point: *Point 1 is X, Point 2 is Y, Point 3 is Z*. This isn't always good in personal conversation, but it works well in presentation settings where audiences have less patience for rambling or digression.

Dana: This is a great tactic for keeping both the presenter and the audience on track. It also helps in the development of a presentation to prioritize and organize your information.

3. Accessorize minimally

Dave: Because women have more clothing options than men, the odds are greater they'll make apparel decisions that distract an audience. Presentation coaches suggest simple but classy attire and the minimal accessorizing.

Dana: Remember you want to keep your apparel a step up from your audience. If you are being brought in as a subject matter expert, be sure to look the part. Audiences make very quick judgments on your credibility from your appearance alone.

4. Grab authority and keep it

Dave: Whether it's true or not, many men seem more comfortable with authority than women. Women who want to be perceived as more authoritative should minimize the factors that undermine authority—digression, indecisiveness, equivocation—and learn to be assertive in a way that radiates confidence.

Dana: Speak clearly, directly and project confidence with your voice. If you believe and know that what you have to say is important, your audience will too.

What Men Can Learn From Women

1. Temper the talking head

Dave: Replace the monologue with dialogue. Energize the audience by asking questions, getting feedback, have a conversation with the audience; don't lecture.

Dana: Change the dynamic every few minutes – go from telling a story, to having interaction, to showing visuals – keep it moving.

2. Use inclusive language

Dave: Women tend to use words such as *we*, *our* and *us*, while men tend to say *I*, *me* and *mine* more often. Check your ego at the door and get better results!

Dana: Also remember to be inclusive by making eye contact around the room, one person at a time.

3. Cater to the audience

Dave: Men more often present from their own perspective of what they think the audience should know, rather than thoroughly researching what the audience wants to learn or hear. Men are also slower to shift gears if they sense they are losing an audience.

Women, it seems, are better at accurately gauging the emotional temperature and interest level of a room.

4. Emote every now and then

Dave: No matter how the genders evolve, females will probably always be more comfortable expressing their emotions than males. But times have changed for men. Crybabies aren't exactly in vogue, but displaying honest emotions is now associated more with inner strength than with weakness.

Some of the important qualities for a leader are If you can tap into the emotions of your audience you will always have a better connection – speak to their hearts and minds.

5. Don't drone

Dave: Whether it's to avoid showing emotion or seeming too enthusiastic about something, men are the champions of vocal monotony in the presentation world. The answer isn't to talk more like a woman, but the least you can do is be a less boring man.

Dana: We all want to hear speakers who are passionate and enthusiastic about what they present. I'm not suggesting that men become cheerleaders, but a little enthusiasm, a smile and some energy in the voice will do wonders.

See if this helps: Imagine a recent sports game you attended and think about what you would tell your best friend about the game. I bet you'd have some enthusiasm and energy in your voice.

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