

Communication The Critical Factor

By Ric Harry

When we consider the common cause of business challenges in most circumstances, it often comes down to communication—or the lack thereof. The failure of many business relationships or initiatives is the result of poor communication. Whether one is selling or managing, good communication skills are critical.

Having Influence

Being academically accomplished or having superior intelligence is not enough to communicate well with others. All too often, the sender, speaker or writer presents in a manner that to them is dazzling and impressive; however, the communication does not always achieve its objective. Persuasion is done through effective communication, which is a complex process of transmitting, sending and receiving information, ideas, thoughts, knowledge and facts.

Powerful Words

Although words seem to be the most widely used form of communication, they also can be the least effective. Many words sound the same, yet have different meanings or intents. Words alone may not be the best way to articulate a message. Granted, there are powerful words and phrases that sell, but there is always a risk of subjectivity and misinterpretation.

Understand that the real communication is the message others receive, not the message intended. The intent of a message often is sensed and not heard, so select words and symbolism purposefully. It is important to communicate with words and phrases that inspire emotion.

To do so, knowledge of the current interpretation of words, phrases and gestures is necessary. For example, some commonly used words conflict with traditionally understood meanings, making communication unnecessarily complex. “Sick” can mean “cool” or indicate illness, “cool” can indicate

a temperature or describe something of favor, and “favor” can have any number of meanings. You get the idea, but more importantly, so does your audience.

Using words or phrases that people do not commonly understand is an error in verbal or literal communication. The audience is whom the communication is for and the message will be interpreted based on its set of definitions, so communicate in a language it understands and use commonly understood terms. A dictionary is a good resource.

Senses and Emotion

Physical communication is the most effective, and is generally more easily understood, than verbal or literal communication. Symbols or pictures, as they say, are worth a thousand words. When words or phrases are supported by symbols, gestures, movements or expressions, the possible ambiguity of communication is minimal.

Simple things like a smile, a glare, raised eyebrows or other body language are generally understood, and the audience is moved or influenced by the message. For example, the word “hey” could be interpreted in many ways, but when it is supported by an enthusiastic tone, welcoming gestures and body language of familiarity, the message is understood.

Furthermore, this combination of communication forms affects multiple senses and stirs emotion. What is said, how it is said and why it is said can communicate the message on an emotional level and inspire action: a reason to buy now, a desire to perform or a reason to panic and run out of a burning building.

The ABCs

There are many factors that impact the effectiveness of

communication. Good communication can be referred to by the “ABCs:” accuracy, brevity and clarity.

Accuracy is crucial to earning the trust and confidence of the audience. Know the audience, be prepared and communicate the right message to the correct audience. It must be relevant and all about them—dog people may not want to hear about a cat.

Brevity means sticking to the point and keeping the audience’s attention. Long-winded messages or belabored points quickly sound like static on a stereo and the audience will tune out. Make the point and be done.

Clarity is essential to achieving the objective of the message. The audience should know who is speaking, who the audience is, what the point is and most importantly, what is in it for them, leaving nothing to misunderstanding.

Taking Action

There are other factors that can cause communication to be misinterpreted, but when the above are followed, cultural, emotional, language and motivation barriers are generally addressed.

As salespeople and managers, our core skill is communication, which is multi-dimensional, consisting of a known language made up of commonly understood words and phrases that inspire, supported by symbolism that stirs the audience’s emotion to take action.

Perspective and commitment to the accuracy, brevity and clarity of messages is the key to good selling and good management. Remember that your message is not only to the audience, but for the audience. *wqp*

Ric Harry is a sales, management and technical consultant for the water treatment industry. Harry can be reached at richarry@cogeco.ca or 905.734.7756.

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with a message
that inspires