

Communication in business

Faxes, teleconferences, the internet and other technological advancements guarantee that we can communicate with virtually anyone, anywhere. However, it's up to us to ensure that the messages we send are clearly understood by the recipient.

People in business typically spend over 75% of their time in an interpersonal situation. Whether it's a face-to-face meeting or an overseas transmission, communication is a complex process that requires constant attention so that intended messages are sent and received. Inadequate communication is a source of conflict and misunderstanding. It interferes with productivity and profitability. Virtually everyone in business has experienced times when they were frustrated because they just couldn't "be understood" by someone. They felt as if they were speaking an unknown language or were on a different "wave length." Communicating effectively is much more than just saying or writing the correct words. How we communicate is affected by frame of reference, emotional states, the situation, and preferred styles of communication.

How our message is interpreted by others can be broken down into three components;

- 8% Verbal or the words we actually use
- 37% Tonality or How we say what we say...
- 55%** Body language – non-verbal cues.

Often a person says one thing but communicates something totally different through vocal intonation and body language. These mixed signals force the receiver to choose between the verbal and nonverbal parts of the message. Most often, the receiver chooses the nonverbal aspects. Mixed messages create tension and distrust because the receiver senses that the communicator is hiding something or is not being candid.

As an adult, our preferred style of communicating is so instinctual that we may not be aware of its many aspects. So how do we begin to look at how we come across to others, what is working and what could be changed? There are a number of profiling systems used in the business arena that help uncover preferences and styles. The one I have found to be most valuable is the Enneagram system. (Any-a-gram). The Enneagram with its roots dating back 2500 years specifies 9 basic patterns of thinking, acting and feeling and we all have a preferred style. This preferred style acts as the lenses that we view our world through and influences all our communication activities. We can gain great insights by understanding our own natural style as well as how others view the world. It can open up a whole new aspect of relating and a strengthening of our communication skills.

In these times of doing more with less and increased use of technology, it's imperative to remember to do whatever we can to foster effective communication. By looking at the world from another's point of view, your employees, co-workers, customers, and vendors will feel that you're really listening to them. Listening and responding in a way that makes sense to them will improve relationships, enhance performance, increase productivity, and positively impact the bottom line.