

Communication...a big word with many interpretations

By Wendy Hue, Partners in Progress

At Partners in Progress we hear the word communication very often when we ask our clients what they would like to improve in their business.

Our question is "If communication was perfect in your business, what would be different?"

You can imagine the many answers we receive. Here are a few:

- Customer service would improve
- People would be more productive
- Managers would delegate better
- Misunderstanding and conflict would disappear
- They would speak to me in my language
- I would understand their language

And there are many more.

So what really is communication all about?

It is mainly about perception. Your perception is your reality. My perception is my reality.

We filter what we read and hear from backgrounds of many experiences. We apply those experiences to our understanding of what is being communicated. The communication provokes an emotion – positive or negative.

Often, rather than pausing for a moment and thinking about what we are feeling we automatically react to what's being said. If the emotion is negative our reaction can create conflict and stress.

What creates our problems is a lack of checking for understanding. Did you really listen to what was said and then check that you understood what was said.

Simply stating "If I understood you correctly (*your perception*) is what you want, is that correct?"

Paraphrasing what you heard and asking a simple question can clarify the intention of the person delivering the communication. There is now an opportunity to clarify and correct any misunderstanding.

People communicate with words and we process information in pictures and images connected to an emotional impact.

So if I tell you not to think about something you'll get an automatic image of what that looks like for you. If I were to tell you not to think about a pink elephant you would automatically picture one in your mind.

Was it a baby pink elephant or a very big full grown one? Was it pastel pink or hot pink? Did it have very large ears and a very long trunk or the opposite?

Did the elephant feel cute and playful or overwhelming and scary?

I think you get the picture. 😊

In communicating the perceptions of the giver can be quite different from the perceptions of the receiver.

Here's a statistic:

Communication is:

- 7% words
- 38% tone of delivery
- 55% body language

The next time you send an email think of the fact that the receiver is only getting 7% of you during this communication.

The next time you are on the telephone think not only of your words but also of how you sound to the receiver.

The next time you are communicating face to face what is your body language telling the receiver?

It takes a bit of practice to be aware of not only what we're communicating but also how we're communicating.

I can guarantee however that if you work at it much conflict, stress and chaos can be eliminated.

Happy communicating!!

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