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Essentials of Effective Communication

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It's no secret that people are the most important element of any effective organization, and any collaboration within that organization or with others. In fact, people ARE the Organization. In some sense it does not matter how hot your technology or skill is because in order to deliver the full potential of what you think you can do you must create the context and terms around which that will happen. If you do not build that bridge effectively within and without your organization you will not get the opportunity to deliver on your technical Skills. Effective communication is not just a necessary skill you need to play the game well. Effective communication IS the game!

Many of you reading this column are already saying to yourself "I'm a lawyer, I know how to communicate!" You're right. But we all can use an occasional tune-up, a reminder of key principles, tools and tactics that will help you get the results you. So as you move through this column please do your best to catch yourself. For each communication topic I introduce catch yourself saying "I know that!" and before you just move on ask yourself "how and where do I need to apply that in my everyday interactions with others." That is the best way you can serve yourself. Please let these reminders guide your engagements with others.

1. **Building Bridges:** Please remember that the object of any communication is building a bridge to the other. It's not just about speaking, it's making sure you provide the verbal links that join you with the object of the influence you want to have.
2. **What They Hear:** *It's not what you say, it's what they hear! It's not what you say, it's what they hear!* It's not what you say, it's what they hear! And always remember it's your responsibility to make sure they hear what you want them to.
3. **Kindergarten:** Everything you need to know about communication you learned in kindergarten. The simple courtesies make such a big difference. Please, thank you, and I'm sorry can have a huge impact.
4. **Education:** Think of the process of communication as an educational experience. You are teaching others what you see and want them to do, and they are doing the same. Educating is much more important than winning
5. **Differences:** We often get into trouble when we forget that the people we are dealing with are very different from who we are. There are a number of great instruments that measure personal style difference: Meyers Briggs; Personal Style Inventory; DISC to name a few. These instruments serve the purpose of showing us how we are different, and, more important, how critical it is to FLEX your own style to build that bridge if you want your communication to be effective.
6. **Listening:** I'm not alone in saying that the most important communication skill we have is our ability to listen to others and to hear what they are saying - not just the words, but a full understanding of the impact our communication is having on them. Most of us are just impatiently waiting for them to finish before we start speaking and we end up talking at each other, not talking too and with each other. If you want to find out how critical listening is hang a sign around your neck and say: I'm not speaking today, just listening. Then go about your regular day and notice how much of your environment you routinely miss because most of the time we are listening to ourselves, waiting for the other to stop speaking so we can get our words in.
7. **Slow Down:** We're all moving along at about 800 MPH. At that speed it's really very difficult to take in new information and hear what someone is saying. Perhaps even

- more important, we can't hear ourselves speaking.
8. **Clarity:** Think of speaking as an opportunity for clarity. Before you begin communicating, weather it's spoken or written, ask yourself what do you want them to know, do, and feel as a result of your message? Then put yourself in their shoes and ask what you would need if you were them and design your communication accordingly. Make sure the what, where, how, why and when is satisfied.
 9. **Jargon:** Be careful of the way you use jargon. Unless you know do not assume they know your jargon, so make sure you define the terms you use.
 10. **Win/Win:** When negotiating always make sure THEY have incentive to continue performing. Make sure they are motivated to keep promises otherwise they won't perform When I say Win / Win I mean Win/Win, not win/win as long as I win a bit more.
 11. **SOFTEN your communication:**
 - o *Smile* - people naturally smile back. It relaxes people and takes away their need to defend
 - o *Open Posture* - demonstrate you have nothing to hide
 - o *Forward Lean* - show you are interested by moving closer
 - o *Territory* - as you move forward be respectful of their territory
 - o *Eye contact* - about seven seconds other wise people will think you are staring
 - o *Nod* - show you are engaged, even on the telephone by saying yes, ahha and the like
 12. **Platinum Rule:** The Golden Rule is great, and very powerful to treat others as you would like to be treated. But I have discovered that it's even more powerful to use the Platinum Rule: Treat others as they would treat themselves. Find out what motivates them and honor that Platinum is more valuable than Gold.
 13. **Character:** The Chinese Character for communication consists of three separate symbols.
 - o Eyes
 - o Ears
 - o Heart

Please remember all three elements when communicating with others!

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