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EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Communication can be defined as the process of meaningful interaction. It is the act of passing and receiving information and the process by which meanings are exchanged so as to produce an understanding. Effective communication will establish rapport between individuals and work to build interpersonal relationships.

3 Main Forms of Communication:

- Verbal
- Non-verbal
- Written

Whether it be verbal, non-verbal or written communication, it is essential to acknowledge that there are two main components to any form of communication. There is the sender of the message and the receiver of the message.

Verbal Communication

When someone is talking what do you hear? Words comprise only 7% of what is communicated! The rest is communicated through tone of voice and body language!

In order to be an effective communicator and improve verbal communication you must be a good listener! You need to be an *actively engaged* listener in order to understand what the other person is saying before you can send a meaningful message in return.

Ways to be an effective listener:

- Seek first to understand, then to be understood!
- Be actively engaged with the person. Fully focus on the individual, maintaining good eye contact, etc. Don't be multi-tasking.
- Be cognoscente of your body- language!
- Don't interrupt. Let the other person finish their statement before you respond.
- Repeat what the person said back to him/her to ensure that what you *heard* was what the individual *meant*. Remember everyone uses words differently.
- Ask questions as needed for clarification.
- If necessary, ask what is most important to that person?

Establish yourself as an assertive communicator:

- Be a good listener.
- Maintain good eye contact to show you are focused on the individual/situation.
- Use I statements.
- Keep responses short, and be specific.
- Speak clearly.
- Slow down verbally.
- Be cognoscente of the words you use.
- Check your tone and vocal volume!
- Check your body language.
- Be aware of your emotions.
- Respect the other person's position
- Be careful of assumptions.

Non-verbal Communication

Everything about you communicates something to the outside world and others around you. Personal appearance counts! A smile can send the message of friendliness and approachability where as a frown with arms crossed can send a message of being closed off and unapproachable. Be aware of your energy and enthusiasm as others can easily sense that. Ask yourself "What is my body language saying?" and "Is that the message I want to send?"

Written Communication

Establish yourself as a good communicator in your written communications:

- Establish a goal. What is the purpose of what is being written, what do you want to happen regarding this written document?
- Who is your target audience? Make sure you write to your audience in terms they will understand.
- Organize your thoughts and the order in which you want to present the information. Remember written communication is "one sided", there is no immediate give and take.
- Choose your words carefully. Watch for ambiguous words, and cultural differences
- Use correct grammar and check spelling!
- If you are asking for something in return, be specific.
- Make sure the written communication is conveying the *tone* you want to convey.
- If applicable, thank the individual before closing.
- Close the letter respectfully.
- Keep a copy for future reference.

