

# Messenger

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## Communicating Effectively

Communication is like playing tennis. The first player serves the message; it may be in or it may be called out of bounds. The second player then either returns the message or waits for another message to be sent. No one would dare serve a tennis ball until the other was ready to receive the serve, yet we often serve up our messages to people who are not ready and do not see them coming. How can we be better players?

You must remember communication is a two-way exchange. There is a speaker and a listener; effective communication can only happen when both are doing their part.

People skills are important in sincere, effective communication. Think of yourself as a host. You will introduce yourself instantly with a big welcome. Be friendly. Be confident. Smile and make eye contact. Offer a handshake. Use head nods and smiles to encourage them to speak up. Avoid fidgeting or turning your back to others. You will make introductions to others and provide information to make sure your guests are comfortable in their surroundings.

Have a mental game plan on how to approach people. Stay current on what is happening nationally, in sports, with current events, and in areas of business. Notice personal items such as pictures, wall certificates, trophies, or figurines. Use small talk to open them up. It shows you care and will build rapport.

To be a good communicator, you must be a good listener, too. Thinking speed is faster than speaking speed, and our minds often go on ahead of us. Concentrate on what is being said to you. Avoid the outside distractions, and do not let your mind wander. Be respectful to the person speaking to you by listening. Then your response will truly reflect the information you just heard.

So, ready for some tennis or just a good conversation? Your serve.



## Perception In Communication

Perception is very important in communication. Perception is the way we see the world or understand the message. People look at information differently, and they may respond to the very same message differently. However, diversity is what makes us stronger. Realize that perception may play a vital role in your communication. The tone of voice you use, your values, your personal background, your past experiences, your emotional slant, and your behavioral style all will play a role in how your message impacts your listener.

Wrong perception causes us to make fast judgment calls. It confuses truth with fiction. It causes both the speaker and the listener to become anchored and unmovable in their decisions. Wrong perception can cause us to use words that exaggerate the circumstances. **(continued on page 2 Perception)**

## Communication Styles

There are four communication styles: hard charger, cogitator, risk taker, and feeler. Let's examine each; can you find your style?

First, there is the hard charger. This person is logical, structured, and methodical. He must carefully think through any changes. He is results oriented. The bottom line is more important than the methods.

Second, there is the cogitator. This is one who is logical and systematic. He loves to gather information and focuses all decisions on data, processes, and policies rather than people. He hates gray areas, and wants to examine data before making any changes. **(continued on page 2 Styles)**

# The Mathis Group's Messenger

*Words are chameleons which reflect the color of their environment.*

Learned Hand, Jurist

(continued from page 1 *Perception*)

You can reduce perception differences by giving and receiving details. Give data and important facts. If in doubt, check out what you thought was said. Second, avoid certain words like always, never, perfect, and worthless. Third, be open to having your perception corrected. When you mess up, be responsible. Contact those who can help, and explain what happened and why you acted the way you did. Give the details without emotion, and decide how the problem can be corrected. Establish a new plan to prevent the problem from happening again. Remember, gaining understanding is what communication is all about.

Communication which increases understanding is critical in the business world. When communicating with your employees, it is important to be clear. Give goals or expected results up front. Stay on task and don't "chase rabbits." Be descriptive in your words and details, but make your message as simple as possible. Be careful about using acronyms or abbreviations; these can easily be misunderstood. Be proactive in getting and receiving the correct message.

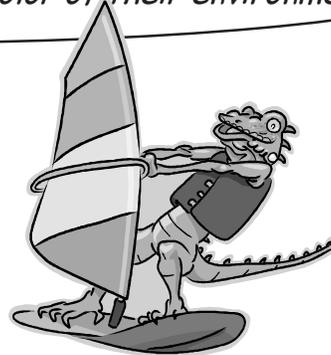
When giving instructions, make sure you have their undivided attention. Look at their faces and eyes. Explain what you are doing and why. Determine if their body language says they understand. Check for questions.

If you find miscommunication is common, ask yourself these questions. Are my words common and understandable? Are there many interferences while we are talking? Have I tried different approaches such as talking, sending a memo, or attaching notes? Have I discussed ways for better communication with my employees or co-workers?

Remember that sometimes it is not what you say but how you say it. Match your body language with your message. Don't yell and then be surprised that the person yells back. Don't violate the person's individual space. Don't call the person names. Don't make threats.

Instead, be sincere when speaking. Be respectful in tone and conduct. Be a person of integrity. Build trust by using eye contact. Be responsive by using the person's name. Be as optimistic as possible. Be selective of your words.

Yes, you can be the great communicator!



(continued from page 1 *Styles*)

Third, there is the risk taker. This person runs things by the seat of his pants. He makes decisions fast. He is willing to have trial and error, and he loves change. He leans on people rather than data.

Finally, there is the feeler. This person is very intuitive. He examines all issues by how they will make him feel. He likes ideas and is open to change if everyone else likes it, too. He loves people more than anything.

Did you see yourself in any of these?

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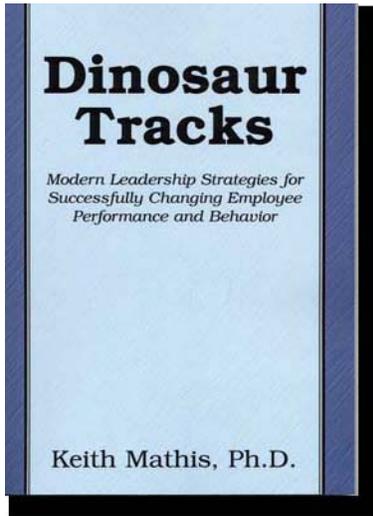
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Dr. Keith Mathis is founder of The Mathis Group, a training and consulting company based in St. Louis, Missouri. Keith also serves as an adjunct professor of business/management with Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Keith is a member of the National Speakers' Association, American Society of Training and Development, and the World Futurists' Society. Keith holds a Bachelors in Behavioral Science, a Masters in Management, and a Ph.D. in Administration Management with a specialty in Organizational Behavior and Development.

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