

Messenger

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Jumping the Communication Hurdles

Having effective people skills is necessary each and every day of our lives. This is how we deal with the upset customer, make sure all aspects of the project are hit, and know who is going to pick the kids up from school. When we learn to listen, conflicts will be resolved faster, miscommunication will be reduced, and subtle hints won't be missed. Because of the importance of communication, we are going to begin a four part series on the subject. In the next several Messenger's we will be going over Barriers to Communication, Listening Skills, Assertion Skills, and Conflict Management Skills.

There are many barriers to communication which will lead to messages being blocked, distorted, or the meaning being changed considerably. We face communication roadblocks each and every day. The following barriers can be broken up into three categories: judging, sending solutions, and avoiding the other's concerns

Judging

While most of us wouldn't consider ourselves as judgmental, most of our responses to people are based on our approval or disapproval of what has been said to us.

Criticizing - making a negative assessment of another person. This may be because of their attitude or behavior. It is important that we do a self-evaluation of our conversations throughout the day to determine how critical we actually are toward others.

Name-calling - putting down or stereotyping an individual. Quickly putting a negative label on a person prevents us from really getting to know him or her. I should mention that there are some positive "name calling". Using words such as "hard worker", "dedicated", "trustworthy" can improve morale and production out of a person.



Diagnosing - trying to analyze why someone is acting a certain way. Once you tell the other person you "know" why he or she is behaving in a certain manner, that person will immediately put up their defenses. Very rarely can we know, let alone guess, what motivates a person, and we should never assume we do.

Sending Solutions

While some solutions may be given nicely, sending an unsolicited solution often compounds a problem or creates new problems without resolving the original dilemma.

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Opportunities are often missed because we are broadcasting when we should be listening.
E.C. McKenzie

The Mathis Group's Messenger

Merry
Christmas!

The Mathis
Group would
like to wish you
a very merry
and blessed
Christmas
season!



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Ordering - commanding someone to do what you want. An order is usually sent coercively and backed with a threat. People will often become resentful and offended. If you use the phrase “because I said so”, you may need to rethink your tactic.

Excessive/Inappropriate Questioning - close-ended questions lead to long, drawn out conversations. I find that I’m guilty of this, especially with my kids. How often do we ask our kids, “How was school today?” and get the standard response, “Fine.” It is like pulling teeth to find out anything about their day, until I changed the questions I asked. I started asking, “What was the best/worst thing about school today?” This opened up a dialogue that wasn’t forced. This same principle can be applied in the workplace.

Avoiding the Other’s Concerns

These roadblocks tend to get the conversation off the original track and on to another topic.

Diverting - changing the topic by distraction. This may be done because of lack of listening skills,

trying to focus the attention on themselves, or if they are uncomfortable with the present topic.

Reassuring - trying to stop the other person from feeling negative emotions. Reassurance only attempts to make the other person feel good instead of getting to the root of the problem and attacking it. It doesn’t address the “why” of the problem.

We’ve all been guilty of at least one of the these roadblocks. Throughout this series we need to examine our daily conversations, notice the roadblocks we are using, and strive to correct them.

Adapted from *People Skills* by Robert Bolton, Ph.D.



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