

The Six Rules of Effective Communication

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Effective communication is vital if you wish people to understand your viewpoint. It becomes even more crucial in professional settings, as fierce competition means that customers must be convinced that your products are superior to your rival's. Unless you effectively communicate the features and advantages of your product, your customers are likely to walk out the door. Communication is equally important in your interactions with suppliers, coworkers, managers, and investors.

The following six rules will help you communicate more effectively, reduce conflict in your organization, and become a better leader.

Rule #1: Organize your thoughts.

Jumbled thoughts lead to incoherent speech. Organizing your thoughts systematically is the first step to effective communication. You should be clear about the message that you want to convey, and it is helpful to have a framework for the conversation. Communication is a dynamic process, so you need to organize and re-organize your thoughts accordingly as the conversation progresses. This presence of mind is essential.

Rule #2: Plan the conversation ahead of time.

When you think through a subject, try to envision what sort of reaction you will evoke. Plan out the different directions that the conversation may go, and prepare your ground accordingly. It helps to consider the personality and behavior of the person with whom you are dealing. How does s/he prefer to work, what is his/her behavioral style? Answering these questions allows you to tailor your approach accordingly.

Rule #3: Be aware of your nonverbal signals.

Did you know much of our communication happens through nonverbal signals? The message you convey through your gestures, body language, and facial expressions will play a huge role in the response you elicit. For this reason, your verbal and nonverbal message need to be consistent; otherwise, you will send mixed signals and not achieve the outcome you desire.

Rule #4: Be succinct.

As they say, less is more. This holds true for communication as well. Your goal in communication is to convey a message and create a certain response. Emphasize your key points simply, and respond to questions directly. Repeating yourself and reiterating your points will only detract from your message.

Rule #5: Demonstrate how the other person will benefit.

When you show how the other person will directly benefit from your offer, you are very close to convincing him/her. To do this, you must highlight the rewards of your offer, and explain how they will improve his or her life. For example, instead of explaining that a new product is more efficient, you might emphasize how much time or money the customer will save. This is the fifth great rule for becoming a good communicator.

Rule #6: Be a good listener.

The importance of listening to the other party and understanding his/her viewpoint is often overlooked. Effective communication is two-way process; if you adopt a one-way attitude, you will fail to create a rapport with your counterpart. By making the other person feel that you value their participation in the conversation, and that you are addressing his/her needs, you make him/her much more willing to accommodate your position. In practice, this means that you must listen patiently and converse accordingly.