

Getting Your Ideas Heard—8 Steps for Better Communication

Are you getting your ideas across? Whether we're at home, at work, or at play, our ability to communicate can be a key differentiator in our success. Ironically, with all of the modes of communication available to us today, we may be doing a poorer job of communicating than ever.

Here are 8 steps you can take to improve your communication:

- 1) Consider the audience. Who are you talking to and how will they hear what you're saying? If you're working with someone who is highly analytical, be sure to include data and facts to support your position. If you are working with someone who is very expressive, be sure to include emotional angles to reinforce your point.
- 2) Consider the venue. What is appropriate in one venue is not appropriate in another. It can be completely appropriate to share an elaborate, detailed story when you're in front of an audience, but keep the information to a minimum if you're writing a memo.
- 3) Communicate at an appropriate level. Street-slang is no more appropriate in an office-setting than flip-flops. And remember that just because your company understands its own acronyms, doesn't mean that your customers or suppliers do. Be explicit.
- 4) Consider the communication vehicle. An instant message can be filled with acronyms such as LOL and OMG, but that is entirely inappropriate for business emails. When writing business email, attention to grammar and punctuation are required to maintain respect from the receiver.
- 5) Consider how many translations are occurring. If your audience includes people where English is a second language, make sure your sentences are short, clear, and have a low probability of misinterpretation. Hint: it may be useful to ask someone who has spent time in the U.S. to share with you how your communication is being received in another country.
- 6) Maintain emotional control. Anger is rarely useful in a business setting. Although it can initially be viewed as a quick wake-up call, it is often remembered poorly and creates a potentially hostile environment for future interactions.
- 7) Anticipate the timing. Not all information needs to be conveyed immediately. Of course if there is danger or an emergency, then the timing is now. But

often times, the best time to share information is when people are cool and receptive, particularly if you are going to share controversial information.

- 8) Remember that communication is a two-way street. You are responsible for whether the person on the receiving end “gets it.” Your work isn’t complete “just because you conveyed your thought.” It has to be received to complete the communication.

We continue to work and play at an extremely fast pace. Pausing a moment to remember these tips will greatly enhance your success in effectively expressing your ideas, and getting them accepted.