Communication

“The single biggest problem with communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”
~George Bernard Shaw

Why?

*Communication establishes relationships and makes organizing possible. By the same token, miscommunication can lead to a breakdown in an organization’s effectiveness and makes it difficult to accomplish the group’s purpose.*

**Communication Acronyms**

**Saying No—USA:**
- U—understand
- S—the situation
- A—an alternative

Example: “I understand what you are asking me to do. Here is the situation (explain the policy, etc.). Here is what I can do instead...”

**Responding to Criticism—AAA:**
- A—address
- A—apologize
- A—accept

Example: “You’re right...I apologize for the misunderstanding. It won’t happen again.”

**Showing Appreciation—ART**
- A—appreciate
- R—reason
- T—thank you

Example: “I really appreciate the fact that you stayed late to finish this project. Thank you.”
How?

The 7 C’s of Communication:

1. Clear
   a. Always be sure to address exactly what you are talking about. If you think you are being too obvious, you’re not. The more clarity, the better.

2. Concise
   a. Take out the fillers like “for instance”, “literally”, “definitely” and any other words that serve no purpose. Keep sentences simple and direct. No one wants to read a long email that could have just been a few sentences.

3. Concrete
   a. Create a solid message. Whatever you are describing or discussing, make sure that all of the details are understood so each member can visualize the plan.

4. Correct
   a. Don’t be too technical. Make sure the vocabulary being used is appropriate for the audience. You would address a peer like a professor and vice-versa. Also, check for the grammatical errors in your written communication like on your agendas or emails.

5. Coherent
   a. Create logical points that connect to a rational main idea. Don’t skip around, follow the order. Stay consistent in the tone and the substance of the message.

6. Complete
   a. Do not leave out any details. Don’t assume anything. Include everything that is needed to take action or complete a task.

7. Courteous
   a. Keep your reader’s perspective in mind and do not communicate in a passive aggressive or harsh way.

Email Etiquette

 Formatting:

- Keep your email address professional. Just use your Elon email address or a different one.
- Use proper grammar and spelling
- Use emoticons and abbreviations sparingly. Use only when the relationship with the recipient is friendly and casual.
- Make sure your relationship with the person you are emailing matches the tone and language used in your email.
- Avoid using all capital letters. It can be perceived as shouting.
- Use the subject line effectively.
- Fill in the “To:” line last. This prevents emails being sent to the wrong people.
- Address the recipient appropriately. If you are on a first name basis, be consistent with that. If not, make it more formal.
Assertiveness: How to get people to do what you want without bossing them or controlling them.

- Use I statements
  - This prevents accusatory language
  - I feel that, etc.
- Empathy
  - Think about how the other person is feeling and let them know that
    - I realize that you and Shannon don’t work well together; however, this needs to be done by Friday so let’s meet and come up with a plan.
- Repetition
  - When people do not take action after the initial conversation
    - Use increasing firmness each time you ask them to do something
- Avoid Aggression
  - Careful of taking too much of yourself into account versus the other person

Active Listening

1. Pay Attention
2. Show That You’re Listening
   a. Put your phone down
   b. Use body language that looks engaged
3. Provide Feedback
4. Avoid Interruptions
5. Respond Appropriately

References:

- http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/student_dev/docs/Downloads/Professional%20Skills/Professional%20Etiquette/Email%20Etiquette_index.pdf
- http://libraryasp.tamu.edu/tds/int/Newsletters/Online_Newsletters/v18n2/Communications.htm

Want more great tips and org development resources? Stop by the Center for Leadership or visit http://www.elon.edu/e-web/students/leadership/orgdevelopment.xhtml