

Beyond the Horizons Consulting

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Communication Skills, Part V

This is the fifth article in a series about communications in the workplace. In our April Newsletter we offered readers a “Communication Skills Checkup” and began looking at how to resolve conflict. This month we continue with more tools to help in conflict resolution and take a look at personality type and its role in communication. If you are new to our Newsletters, feel free to send along comments or questions to info@beyondthehorizonsconsulting.com.

Honesty and Conflict Resolution

It is the most human thing to tell ourselves a story about some event we have just perceived. In fact, in most cases our perception of an event is inseparable from the



story we tell ourselves about it. *The process of telling ourselves a story is almost like a hypnotic trance that we must break.* It begins innocently enough when we perceive an event by seeing, hearing, or experiencing something. Our mind then goes on to generalize about this event in terms of similar experiences we have had in the past. In other words, it creates a story. This story may make us feel good about ourselves, as when we connote that the boss’ smiling at us means that s/he is pleased with some recent work we have completed. However, many stories tend to result in defensive or negative responses. Some common ones are:

- **WE ARE A VICTIM** — of circumstances, of a boss who is out to get us, of callous coworkers, and so on. With this story we need not assume responsibility for our own part in creating a conflict.
- **WE ARE HELPLESS** — to change our point of view, to turn a frown into a smile, to ask for behavior change from others, in short, to influence the situation either within ourselves or externally. With this story, we again escape any responsibility. We also feel no guilt, only apathy, and we can remain in our depressed state without any consequences, because we usually will manipulate others into feeling sorry for us.
- **THE OTHER PERSON IS A VILLAIN.** This is a variation of the other two, except that we have personified “the other side.” This story allows us to project our anger and other unresolved feelings onto the other person.

In *Crucial Conversations*, Patterson and his co-authors move us beyond these distortions and hidden scripts to a safety zone where we can begin to dialog. We start with heart, avoiding both silence and violence (see May’s Newsletter), and ask the question, “What do I *really* want — for me, for the other person, for the relationship?” Identifying a common purpose — of a team, for example — goes a long way toward creating the atmosphere for teamwork to occur. Then we move into dialog, and finally action, with the following three steps:

- 1 I state how I see things and what I would envision for the future.
- 2 You state your point of view and what options seem feasible to you.
- 3 We decide on a decision-making process, in which both sets of opinions are honored.

This material is adapted from *Crucial Conversations* by Kerry Patterson et al. New York: McGraw Hill, 2002.

Step 3 may be an immediate compromise, or it may be an agreement to try your way first and my way later. We also agree on how we will assess the outcome of decisions and adjust for even better results.

Personality Type and Communication

We have already introduced the idea of personality type, specifically using the well-known instrument, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (see our November 2004 Newsletter). Now our objective is to give you, the reader, some idea of how inborn differences in personality can affect communication between two individuals.

Much research has been done on personality type, given impetus by the work of the ingenious psychologist, Carl Gustav Jung. Jung developed three sets of opposites to define

- 1 Where a person derives his/her energy
- 2 How a person perceives "reality"
- 3 Upon what basic values a person makes his/her decisions

To these, the mother-daughter team of Myers and Briggs added a fourth category:

- 4 How a person chooses to live his/her daily life

Looking briefly at these categories, we notice the following opposites pairs. (Note that you can use these lists to create your own communication profile.)

EXTROVERT VS. INTROVERT

The extrovert will

- Think out loud
- Share personal information easily
- Prefer face-to-face verbal communication over written communication
- Respond quickly to questions and external events
- Need to share experiences with others shortly after they occur

The introvert will

- Reflect a while before sharing information
- Hesitate to share personal information
- Prefer written communication over verbal communication
- Take time to think things over before responding to questions and external events

- Need to reflect on experiences before sharing them with anyone

SENSOR VS. INTUITIVE

The sensor will

- Present facts, details, statistics, and examples first
- Want others' suggestions to be straightforward, feasible, and practical



- Follow the agenda and time frames in meetings
- Use a step-by-step approach in presentations
- Rely on concrete experience to clarify key points

The intuitive will

- Present concepts, insights, and ideas first
- Want others' suggestions to be novel, unusual, and challenging
- Frequently digress from the agenda
- Use a gestalt approach which eventually ties things together
- Rely on hunches and imagination to illustrate key points

FEELING VS. THINKING PERSONS

The feeling person will

- Prefer sociable, friendly, even leisurely communication
- Note the value of any suggestion and how it will affect people
- Begin with pleasantries and then note points of agreement
- Voice appreciation and empathy for people
- See others' strengths

The thinking person will

- Prefer concise, to-the-point communication
- Note the pros and cons of each alternative
- Present goals and objectives first
- Demonstrate objectivity and readily critique ideas and people
- See others' flaws

JUDGING VERSUS PERCEPTION

The judging person will

- Set realistic deadlines and work to them
- Dislike surprises and want advance warning
- Orient communication toward results and achievement
- Want the discussion to end in some useful conclusions
- Talk with purpose and direction

The perceptive person will

- Feel very uncomfortable with too many deadlines
- Enjoy the challenge of adapting to a last-minute change
- Orient communication toward possibilities and contingencies
- Readily accept the fact that a discussion may not reach a conclusion
- Base any conversation on flexibility and change

We suggest that you begin by identifying your own style within each of the areas. You can also “type watch” to identify other persons’ styles. Next month we will show you how misunderstandings in communication can occur between different types and how to correct them!

Stay tuned to Beyond the Horizons Consulting Newsletters for timely information to solve your management challenges! Please feel free to write us at

info@beyondthehorizonsconsulting.com

or to call us at 505-466-4990 to schedule a free, complimentary coaching session or consultation for your business needs.

Beyond the Horizons Consulting offers a variety of services for individuals, teams, and organizations.

- ♦ **Individual coaching for managers is a process that begins by identifying your style, what you want to retain and strengthen, and what you want to modify. Objective assessments are part of the process, as are also a mutual give-and-take process of creative problem solving and supportive guidance.**
- ♦ **We offer group seminars on identifying and dealing with stress in a relaxing and supportive envi-**

ronment.

- ♦ **Our team building seminars will help your team or department run more smoothly, whether it is a brand-new team or one that has been put together after a reorganization.**
- ♦ **Our communication seminars identify crucial parts of the communication equation and help you put them all together using role play and other hands-on experiences.**
- ♦ **We also offer group seminars utilizing excellent tools, including the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or the DISC.**
- ♦ **Our conflict resolution services help opposing parties identify mutual purpose(s) and restore harmony to your workplace environment.**
- ♦ **It is our pleasure to tailor a seminar to your company’s, department’s, or team’s needs!**

Take a look at our May and June, 2005, Newsletters to see our new, serene home, a place we invite you to take advantage of!

Call us to schedule a complimentary consultation for yourself or your business!

Our helpful Office Administrator, Stan, will work with you to schedule a meeting time that fits your schedule.

**Stan and Jean Eva can be reached at
(505) 466-4990**