

Interpersonal Communication: Building Effective Work Relationships (852 words)

Interpersonal communication is the face-to-face interaction between two or three people over time. Through these interactions people establish and maintain trust, resolve conflict, and build effective personal and professional relationships. To do this successfully, we need to be credible, understand the power of perception, make our messages easy to understand, and demonstrate active listening skills.

Become a Credible Person: If we summarize research, we discover, that there are six criteria of personal credibility. **1. Appear warm and friendly.** Are you always approachable? Are you consistently pleasant to be around? **2. Express your intentions and motives:** What are your short-term plans and long-term goals? What are you up to for the next couple of hours, couple days, couple of weeks, or couple of years? **3. Demonstrate trustworthiness:** Do the majority of people you associate with find you reliable? Are you consistently dependable? **4. Be an information source:** Do you know knowable information, what is pinned, pasted, or posted on the walls or web site? **5. Develop relevant expertise:** In certain areas of what you do, do you know more about that than anybody else in the organization? **6. Project dynamism:** Do you have natural enthusiasm for your work? Does it appear you actually enjoy your job?

If you model these six criteria of personal credibility, your ideas will be more easily accepted and your opinions more valued. Now that you know the list, try to recognize areas of weakness and get to work to be not only credible, but incredible.

Understand the Power of Perception: Whether you have worked with someone for years or meet someone for the very first time, there are actually six perceptions going on all at the same time. From my side of the relationship: Who I think I am. Who I believe you think I am. And really who you think I am. And from your side of the relationship: Who you think you are. Who you believe I think you are. And really who I think you are.

So, when you are a public figure, or when you are representing your organization in a public or private way, make sure you look the part. People are drawing conclusions about you quickly. It may take people as little as 100 milliseconds to form an impression of another person, to decide whether he or she is attractive, trustworthy, competent and likable. According to Princeton University, that's less time than it takes to form a rational thought.

When you anticipate meeting someone for the first time, consider what you can do to ensure that the person perceives you as you actually are. Always be at your best behavior, there is always someone that will notice.

Make Your Messages Understandable: It's great to have a large vocabulary, but it may alienate people if they don't know what the words mean. I believe people would rather feel informed rather than ignorant. Heck, I grew up ignorant, so it doesn't bother me

when people use great big long words, however, it can bother others. I simply ask, “How do you spell that?” “What does that mean?” Most people aren’t as confident with their ignorance as I am and may feel awkward.

The key to effective communication is to make sure that the words you choose are both accurate and simple. Sometimes when people use a large vocabulary, they think they're being more accurate, but they're actually being distracting. Instead of saying morose, say pessimistic. Instead of saying copacetic, say acceptable. Instead of saying macabre, say eerie or spooky.

When you use simple words, people won't wonder what you said, and they'll fully understand what you meant. In your meetings, pay attention to the vocabulary you use. If you're conscious about your word choice, you won't have five people leaving the meeting thinking and doing five different things.

Be an Active Listener: When was the last time you were complimented on your listening skills? Many researchers claim that listening is the number one most admired quality of a coworker. But you've got to look like you're listening.

I learned years ago, there are six main non-verbal cues that signal coworkers that you are, in fact, listening intently. Here is a great acronym to help us remember: STABLE nonverbal communication. **S**quarely face the other person to demonstrate undivided attention. **T**ip your head occasionally when following along, nod your head only when you agree. Provide **A**ttentive facial expressions to display agreement, confusion, or disagreement. Create a **B**arrier-free environment to help people feel comfortable and support more open disclosure and honest communication. **L**ean forward slightly to show enthusiasm. **E**ye contact demonstrates interest. People know you hear with your ears, they judge whether or not you're listening with your eyes.

Listening is free, not listening can be expensive. A minor adjustment in your listening behavior can have a major impact on your relationships. If you get into this effective listening posture, not only will people believe you're listening, but it will probably improve your listening comprehension.

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