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Customizable Soft-Skills Courseware

The Art of Effective Communication



Instructor Guide

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Published by HRDQ

Authorized distributor Dekon Business Solutions

Phone: 0040 734 350 525

Web: www.dekon.biz

ISBN 978-1-58854-548-0

2710E1AEC

EN-01-MY-13

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Instructional Design and Learning Philosophy

We are committed to providing the best core skills content possible for Instructor-Led Training (ILT). The following principles are applied in the development of programs:

Sound Instructional Design

All course content is developed using a variety of research techniques. These include:

- Brainstorming sessions with target audience
- Library research
- Online research
- Customer research (focus groups, surveys, etc.)
- Subject Matter Experts (SME)
- Interviews with trainers

Expert instructional designers create imaginative and innovative solutions for your training needs through the development of powerful instructional elements. These include:

- Learning objectives provide effective tools for managing, monitoring, and evaluating training
- Meaningful connections between the topic and students' past, present, and future
- Appropriate organization of essential ideas helps students to focus on what they need to know in order to learn
- Modeling techniques demonstrate useful behaviors and problem-solving skills
- Active application, the cornerstone to learning, helps students immediately apply what they have learned to a real-life situation
- Consistent instructions and design help students learn and retain new information
- Accelerated learning techniques create interactive, hands-on involvement to accommodate different learning styles

Application of Adult Learning Styles

Adults learn best by incorporating their personal experiences with training and by applying what they learn to real-life situations. Our experienced instructional designers incorporate a variety of accelerated learning techniques, role-plays, simulations, discussions and lectures within each course. This ensures that the learning will appeal to all learning styles and will be retained.

Customizing Your Program

There are two ways you can customize this program: 1) Customize the content and 2) Customize the format.

Customizing the content is easy. The Instructor Guide and Participant Guide are created in Word, so you can simply modify the content just as you would any Word document. Some common reasons for customizing content include:

- Changing examples to fit your industry or work environment
- Modifying content to match work rules and procedures
- Adding, deleting or rearranging content to meet training time constraints

The other way to customize the program is to change the formatting. Typically, organizations will do this to add their corporate logo and/or colors, or it may just be an issue of personal preference. Again, treat the Instructor Guide and/or Participant Guide as you would any Word document. For help using Word, consult the Microsoft website.

Preparing for the Training

As you know, preparation is the key to conducting an effective training. Here are some issues to consider:

Logistics

- Advertise the training with enough advance notice that participants can block it out on their calendar. Consider contacting potential participants' managers to encourage their attendance.
- Send a confirmation notice before the training, reminding participants of the date, time and location.
- Room setup: Ideally, use round tables to facilitate partner and small group interaction.

Equipment and Supplies

In order for the training to go smoothly, have these supplies and equipment on hand:

- Name tags
- Flip chart and markers, tape
- Laptop with projector (for the PowerPoint)
- Blank paper and pens/pencils, sticky notes
- Timer or watch
- Water for yourself and the participants
- Beverages and snacks (optional)

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PREVIEW

Course objectives

Successful completion of this course will increase your knowledge and ability to:

- ◇ Establish a working definition of communication
- ◇ Review communication models and their key elements
- ◇ Apply personality assessments to develop effective communication skills
- ◇ Investigate different styles for communicating and aspects each employs
- ◇ Establish how tolerance for disagreement affects effective communication
- ◇ Devise strategies to avoid unnecessary conflict
- ◇ Identify common communication filters and their potential impact
- ◇ Analyze how authority shapes communication
- ◇ Adopt tools for effective communication
- ◇ Develop a personal communication action plan

Course objectives

- Establish a working definition of communication.
- Review communication models and their key elements.
- Apply personality assessments to develop effective communication skills.
- Investigate different styles for communicating and aspects each employs.
- Establish how tolerance for disagreement affects effective communication.

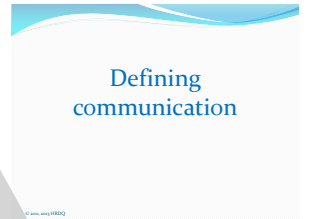
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- Establish how tolerance for disagreement affects effective communication.

Chapter One



DEFINING COMMUNICATION



Different levels of meaning

- If I speak and you don't understand, is it communication?
- My definition of communication is:
- What are the main components of communication?



Begin a general discussion about why people are here, what they expect and successes and challenges of communication for them. Ask them to write their thoughts and then discuss the questions on this page.

Definition of communication:
Shared understanding or meeting of meanings.

The main components of communication are: Speaker, receiver, filter, message, feedback, and background noise.

Ask the group to share as appropriate. Typical answers include: To link, form connections, socialize, hold thoughts in common, generate social exchange, sustain life, develop relationships, facilitate tasks, jobs, families, and knowledge.

Different levels of communication

It is not unusual to hear people in companies say, "We have a communication problem here." This program will provide methods and information to analyze and improve your own communication and help you help others. We communicate in many ways: with our words, tone, eyes, and bodies to name a few. These are levels of communication called subtext.

If I speak and you do not understand, is it communication?

My definition of communication is:

What are the main components of communication?

What is the purpose of communication?

Encoding, decoding and sending

Communication is comprised of three simple steps. Someone puts a message together (encoding), sends it out (sending), and a listener receives it (decoding). As with much of technology, a lot can go awry.

Exercise

Instructions: In a small group, draw a communication model by developing a flow chart. Include the following components:

- ◇ Sender
- ◇ The message
- ◇ The receiver
- ◇ Internal and external filters (what are the hindrances to understanding another person?)
- ◇ Background interference

Write each filter item (be specific) on a sticky note, and build the communication model on a flip chart. If other participants list the same or similar elements, place them together. What part of our model represents encoding (putting the message together), and what part represents decoding (understanding it)? An example is at the end of this chapter.

“Most of the time we don’t communicate, we just take turns talking.”

-Anonymous

Communication is accomplished on different levels, sometimes called text and subtext. The obvious meaning of the words makes up the text: “Step in here.” The subtext is the underlying part of the message that makes you wonder if you’re in trouble, going to receive a reward, or should hide. What are examples of text and subtext you either use or have heard?

Text:

Subtext:



Leave the notes on the wall, and reference them throughout the workshop. Coach participation to expand the numbers and the types of filters. Participants will see that sender is the principal encoder and receiver is the principal decoder. Model how in any face-to-face communication this encoding and decoding process cycles through thousands of times in a few seconds when facial expressions, dress, gestures, smells, vocal characteristics, verbiage and context are considered. This model is depicted a couple of pages following. Honor the unique contributions of all of the groups, but stretch them to form a thoughtful model.

Use some examples such as: “What have you done all day?” That can be said with many different tones and meanings.

The text is information similar to the thinking aspect of a message. Frequently, the subtext is supplied by nonverbal communication. Feelings or emotional content is usually communicated in the subtext. Threats, appreciation, joking, patience and eagerness may all be communicated through non-verbal subtext. Sometimes the subtext of a statement is misread because of the listener’s underlying assumptions about the speaker or the message.

Defining filters

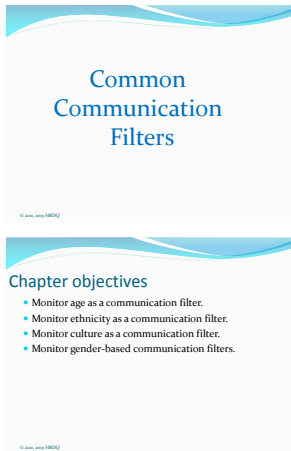
Filters, by definition, separate. They are present in everyone's communication system and have a profound impact on how messages are encoded and decoded.

"A great many people think they are thinking when they are really rearranging their prejudices."

—Edward R. Murrow

Exercise

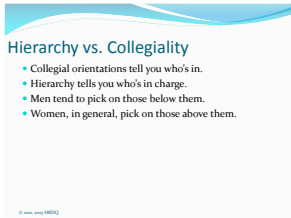
Draw a circle in the space below to represent yourself. Now draw circles representing the groups to which you belong and label them based on type of group. For example, spiritual, age, race, culture, gender, education, politics, clubs, income, etc. These represent some of the filters through which you send and receive information.



Discuss with the group that the purpose of this chapter is to make and verify useful generalizations. It is not to limit people, make stereotypes or judgments about them or label them. This information is to be used as a beginning, not the final description of any person.

People may respond defensively to this information because they may be uncomfortable looking at what appears to be their own prejudices. It helps to explain that most people have prejudices and that it is the purpose of this program to identify them so they will have less influence on communication. Remind participants of this at each session.

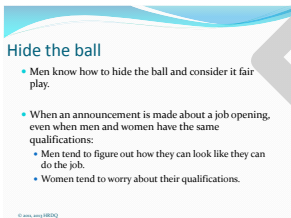
Look for examples from the group. Be careful as this may be an emotionally charged discussion.



When you talk about teamwork, what kind of team are you referring to?

Football, where everyone's effort is interrelated; or rugby, where everyone does anything to score?

Boys let other boys play with them because they are good players. Girls let girls who are friends play. How does this affect team composition and working relationships? Both women and men know as much and learn as quickly. Men think full disclosure is unnecessary; women feel compelled to confess their shortcomings.



Depending on who is doing the hiring and who is applying for a job, under-qualified men may receive a promotion over a qualified woman because of the communication during the interview.

Gender

Gender is a group membership that combines culture, age, race, family life, and experience to create unique individuals. Though these factors exist, individuality must also be taken into account. In other words, don't make assumptions about people based on generalities; find out if they are true for the particular individual with whom you are working.

Hierarchy versus collegiality

Generally, women grow up in a world in which relationships are collegial rather than hierarchical. Collegial orientations tell you who is in; hierarchy tells you who is in charge. Men tend to pick on those below them; women, in general, pick on those above them.

Is this true for you? How does this affect your workplace?

Hide the ball

Men know how to hide the ball and think it is fair play. It is acceptable in some sports to "fake." This is similar to exaggeration in other cultures. This means that when an announcement is made about a job opening, even when men and women have the same qualifications, men tend to figure out how they can look like they can do the job, rather than figure out if they are qualified. Women tend to worry about their qualifications.

Is this true for you? How does this affect your workplace?

Have you seen this in the workplace?

Possible assumptions include: I'd get fired, embarrassed, hassled, or might find out they don't really care about me.

Leave time for people to reflect and make notes.

Debrief: How do you compensate for your undiscussable items? What assumptions do you make? What is the impact of these assumptions?

In the long run, overcompensating puts stress on other areas, and eventually the stress will manifest there.

Exercise

Instructions: Answer the following questions based on situations in your workplace.

Undiscussable	Assumption
<i>I couldn't talk about</i>	<i>Because I assumed:</i>

Think about what embarrasses or threatens you. Can you turn this vulnerability into strength? By being aware of our sensitive places, we understand how we work around them. We compensate for a sensitive ankle by using crutches, a walking stick or some other means of support that allows us to give the ankle time to heal. By resting the ankle, the muscles and tendons usually regain their strength, and we are able to get around again. How does compensating for your vulnerabilities affect your communication?

Some things are best left private, but some things can be brought up and addressed. If they cannot be changed, at least you will have the satisfaction of knowing you tried. Use your best communication analysis to plan how to address the issue.

Organizational constructs

The message we send and the message we hear are influenced by the position and power relationships of the sender and the receiver. Positional authority is one of many types of power.

Organizations, like individuals, have ideas or constructs about themselves, their characteristics, values and preferences. Learning to read the organization as we have learned to read the individual will benefit you in encoding and decoding messages.

“The best part of our knowledge is that which teaches us where knowledge leaves off and ignorance begins.”

–Oliver Wendell Holmes

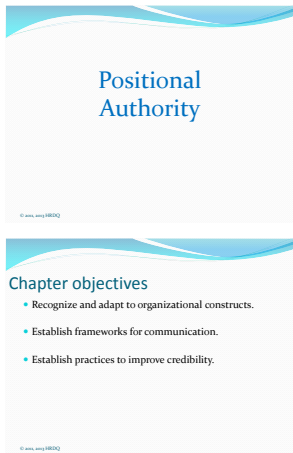
Briefly describe your organization’s or division’s:

Purpose:

Mission/Vision:

Values:

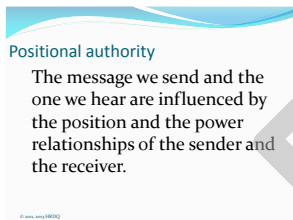
If the overt values are different from the covert values, this may or may not be due to a perception problem. Does the company walk its talk? Does the company promote people who embody the values?



This exercise can be completed individually or in small groups. The answers to Purpose should describe what the company is “about,” e.g., providing commercial software.

Mission/Vision answers should describe who you are and what you do, e.g., enhance the technological capability of small companies by selling and servicing phone systems.

Possible answers to the Values question include: Lowest cost, customer satisfaction at any cost, low turnover, etc.



Example: A company preaches “we value quality,” but then when the end of the month comes we “just ship it!” This mismatch of values demoralizes staff.

Positional power

Power is the capacity to get something done. Positional power comes from the position or the job title. Other types of power come from associations, influence (who listens to whom), credibility or reputation, knowledge and resources (staff, equipment and funds). With each type of power comes certain culturally defined status, perks and treatment. With expectations about what will be said and how it will be said, particularly to a person with a different status level, the potential for a negative outcome is increased. Frequently, there are unspoken rules about positional power communication. Your success depends on learning them.

What types of power are you aware of in your organization?

How do others use their power?

How do you use power?

“Nothing more impairs authority than a too frequent or indiscreet use of it. If thunder itself was to be continual, it would excite no more terror than the noise of a mill.”

— A. Kingston

Siblings can say things to each other that outsiders couldn't get away with.

Positional power

- Positional power comes from the position or job title.
- There are unspoken rules about positional power communication.
- Your success depends on learning them.



Ask participants to include power over vs. power with.

To get things done, to get perks, to get...etc.

Personal gain, to help the organization, to help others, etc.

Lead a discussion about how people appreciate being encouraged. Some ways are: Praise, honorable mention, more money, or more responsibility... Some will appreciate what others do not. Part of the learning is to figure out how you can do the "right" thing with each person. Venting may be involved when participants do not feel appreciated or encouraged at work. Help them figure out how they can be more encouraged.

This exercise helps people identify when they have felt encouraged. Complete this exercise in small groups. Frequently, this exercise results in a blank stare. Help participants think this through. Examples of encouragement include specific comments about work, helping someone rearrange a schedule, bringing someone lunch, picking up a child at day care, anything that makes it easier for a person to do their work or see the importance of their work.

Discuss the usefulness of temperament and personality preferences in rapport building. Remind the group that compliments and appreciation are used to build rapport; they should compliment the quality inherent in the person's temperament, not something they do not value.

Encouragement

Encouragement is the other factor in rapport building. It can be accomplished through verbal or written messages, or by making a job easier for another. The more specific the expressions of encouragement, the more meaningful they are.

Think of several people with whom you communicate regularly. How do they like to be encouraged?

Name:	Method:

Are people in your group encouraged if you are silent after you ask a question? Some people are so uncomfortable with silence they do not leave space for thinking and speaking by the other. They ask one question, and when a response is not forthcoming, they ask another. The other wonders which question to answer, lengthening the quiet thinking process and frustrating both parties.

Think of someone you wish would encourage you. How do you like to be encouraged?

Name:	Method:

Sources of conflict

The following are common reasons for disagreements:

- ◇ Discrepancy in facts (verifiable information)
- ◇ Difference in values (personal beliefs)
- ◇ Difference in methods (how to do it)
- ◇ Difference in goals (what should be done)
- ◇ Other: _____

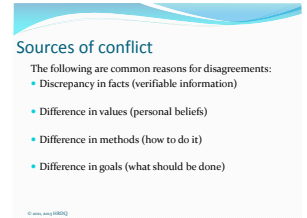
The most difficult conflicts to resolve involve values. Some choose to negotiate methods and leave another's values unchallenged, hoping to work around them.

If your disagreement is with a person or group you will encounter periodically throughout your career (in another company, the same company, the same community), the resolution becomes more important than if the relationship is unimportant.

We all have an idea about what is fair and sometimes this idea interferes with our effectiveness at work. Fairness is usually defined from the perspectives of those involved in a disagreement. It will help you decide how to handle a disagreement if you look at the situation from the other's point of view.

How might someone for whom competence is most important conflict or disagree with someone for whom belonging is most important?

Some people put their energy into "getting even" or being "passive aggressive" instead of "getting on." In high-stress situations people are tempted to sabotage or blow up. Relationships are like credit cards. If you don't have credit with another person, you'll pay back with interest. Getting even, badmouthing and blowing up are all charges. Controlling your disagreement debt gives you more personal and professional flexibility.



Examples:

The Sears building is the largest building in the world (wrong).

Work is more important than pleasure.

E-mail does not require punctuation.

My first priority is...and yours is...

Ask the group why two people with the same personality types might have conflict? Two Judges, for example, might each reach a decision and not want to do all the planning involved with a different decision.

NTs value competence, while SJs value belonging.

Discussion — for those who are convinced they are right, disagreements may be particularly difficult. You may want to have a discussion about this if time allows.

Course review

1. What are the key components in how communication occurs?

2. The personality preference that contrasts most with Thinking is:

- a. Sensing
- b. Perceiving
- c. Judging
- d. Feeling

3. Modality refers to the typical ways people present themselves.

- a. True
- b. False

4. Being direct and seeking eye contact is an example of what type of filter?

5. Assumptions are filters.

- a. True
- b. False

Sender, receiver, message and filters are common elements of communication models.

Feeling

True

This is an ethnic filter. Caucasians typically admire this, while Indian and East Asian cultures consider it disrespectful.

True

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