



Improving Communication Skills and Presentations

Herb Rubenstein, JD, MPA, DSS, SMP

About the Presenter

- Herb Rubenstein,
 - Lawyer, Author, Public Speaker, Educator
 - Leadership and Management Consultant
 - Lecturer, Graduate School of Business of the University of Colorado Denver – Course in Strategic Management
 - Member, Corporate and Nonprofit Boards

About the Presenter (con't)

- Herb Rubenstein,
 - Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Washington and Lee University, Georgetown Law, Master of Public Affairs, LBJ School
 - Certified Strategic Management Professional by the Association for Strategic Planning
 - Author – *21st Standards and Practices for Boards of Directors* – Thomson Reuters

Overview

- Section 1 – Defining Communication
- Section 2 – Best Practices in Communication - Individual Level
- Section 3 – Best Practices in Communication - Organizational Level
- Section 4 – Best Practices in Presentations, Speeches, Workshops, etc.
- Conclusion

Section 1 – Defining Communication

- Communication is what the other person or group gets when you seek to transfer information, thoughts, ideas, instructions
- The result of communication is what others do, believe, think, reactions
- This might turn the definition of communication for you on its head

Section 1 – Defining Communication (con't)

- Communication is not what you say – that is an utterance
- Communication is not what you do – that is an action
- Communication is not what you think or believe – that is a thought or belief

Section 1 – Defining Communication (con't)

- Many forms such as:
- In person speaking
- Writing, graphs, illustrations, diagrams
- Videos
- Photographs
- Sounds, music, alerts

Section 1 – Defining Communication (con't)

- Communication is ONLY the meaning of communication
- No meaning, no communication – speak a foreign language no one understands, no communication
- Unclear meaning, ineffective communication
- Must know the meaning others give your “communication” – psychodynamic meaning of leadership

Section 1 – Defining Communication (con't)

- All communication exists in a context
- Culture (external knowledge) creates context
- Shared culture (external knowledge) promotes context
- If culture not shared, communication must be more explicit since not augmented by context created by culture

Section 1 – Defining Communication (con't)

- Culture sets limits on acceptable communication – need to know the rules of each culture – taboo – word “dictator” vs micromanager – in North America
- Culture changes very slowly
- Phrases and words change meaning – “Amazon”
- Often need to test communication and get feedback

Section 2 – Best Practices in Communication - Individual Level

- Listener's interpretation is always “right”
- Predict how listener will hear what you say
- Become a better listener because what you hear back is feedback
- Active listening – appearance of listening improves others' ability to communicate
- Be a communication facilitator

Section 2 – Best Practices in Communication - Individual Level (con't)

- Modulate your voice level, tone often
- Watch how others “receive” and process your communication
- In person almost always better than via phone, text, email
- Honor others’ preferences for how they want to be communicated with, usually

Section 2 – Best Practices in Communication - Individual Level (con't)

- Do not waste your time with others who will not hear you or listen – communicate efficiently and other party may not play
- Be precise
- Manage conversations, do not dominate them – encourage others to communicate
- Introduce a topic to promote mutual understanding of what is communicated

Section 2 – Best Practices in Communication - Individual Level (con't)

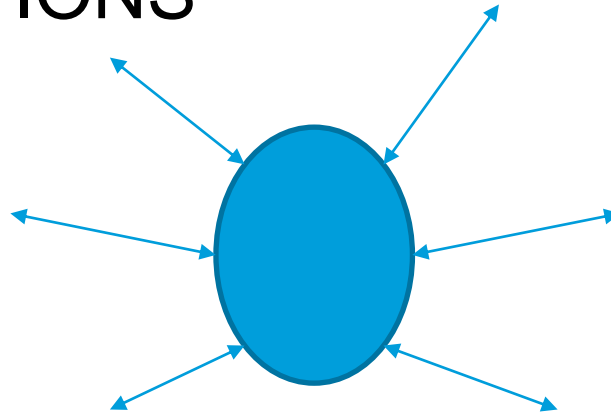
- Know the purpose of the communication from both sides – if purposes do not align, either fix this or end the communication
- Stop yourself, and others, from communicating without a purpose
- Every communication must have a clear purpose, even if it is entertainment, or promoting the relationship
- Creating rapport – how do you do this?

Section 2 – Section 2 – Best Practices in Communication - Individual Level (con't)

- Always know the result you want to achieve from each communication
- Ask clarifying questions of others, especially their purpose for their communication is unclear
- Probe when there is an ambiguity
- “Listen” for the emotions, feelings, level of importance behind others’ communication

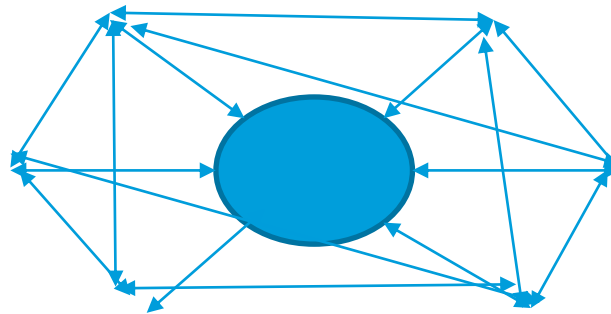
Section 3 – Best Practices in Communication - Organizational Level

- Aggregator model – one person or group in the middle, then spokes, but no connection between the spokes - ONLY 12 POSSIBLE CONVERSATIONS



Section 3 – Best Practices in Communication - Organizational Level (con't)

- Leadership model – one person or group in the middle, then spokes, all connected – 36 POSSIBLE CONVERSATIONS



Section 3 – Best Practices in Communication - Organizational Level

- Promote conversations among others
- Help form groups to communicate about an issue before it becomes a crisis
- Proactive communications
- Be sure facts predominate and researched
- Secure communication in numerous forms – written, oral in person, by phone, videos, graphs, charts, pictures, etc.

Section 3 – Best Practices in Communication-Organizational Level (con't)

- What you say, write now is permanent
- Include context in your communication
- Know your reputation influences how others “hear” what you say in orgs
- Know others’ viewpoints, opinions, beliefs, interests will influence what they hear
- If going out to a large group, use test or focus groups to get feedback on comm

Section 3 – Best Practices in Communication - Organizational Level (con't)

- Give enough history to help listener understand where you are coming from
- Give credit freely to those whose ideas, facts, photos, data you are using
- Can use authoritative references
- Speak, write, communicate in order to change behaviors as key purpose

Section 3 – Best Practices in Communication - Organizational Level (con't)

- Document what is said at meetings, phone calls, etc.
- Seek to have “no report” meetings where “reports” are given in advance, in writing, and responded to before the meetings
- All meetings have agendas
- Purpose of meetings-not to communicate, but to improve action/results/planning

Section 3 – Best Practices in Communication-Organizational Level (con't)

- Promote those who are introverted to speak up by asking leading questions
- Know the audience, participants in all organizational communications
- Engage the participants and make specific requests of the participants if you lead
- Do not interrupt, unless it is essential

Section 3 – Best Practices in Communication-Organizational Level (con't)

- Make sure communication motivates and inspires, creates buy-in, generates action
- Communicate accountability
- Chronological sequencing is most useful
- Be sure you know how each communication will end, last paragraph
- Be very, very efficient, but not robotic

Section 3 – Best Practices in Communication-Organizational Level (con't)

- Understand your audience's fears, concerns, history, goals, opinions
- Show people you care
- Seek to build relationships, teams with every communication
- Use of punitive anger in communication is no longer acceptable – consequences

Section 4 – Best Practices In Presentations

- Be prepared
- Be authentic
- Be comfortable as you can
- First goal – connect with your audience and build a relationship
- Second goal – deliver communication

Section 4 – Best Practices in Presentations (con't)

- Humor is great, but not at someone or their culture's expense
- Acknowledgements are important
- Be very organized and do not read slides
- Have clear goals for your presentation
- Build trust in presentations/communication

Section 4 – Best Practices in Presentations (con't)

- A presentation is a conversation
- Always allow for questions from audience if possible
- Do surveys or other means to know audience in advance of presentation
- Pauses are perfectly fine, be patient
- Speak as if everyone is listening

Section 4 – Best Practices in Presentations (con't)

- If using slides, graphs, charts – colors, size, format are all critical
- Hire graphic artist if necessary to look professional and eye catching
- Dress the part, look the part, act the part
- The higher the stakes the better; the larger the audience, the easier

Section 4 – Best Practices in Presentations (con't)

- Vary style for different venues, audience size and preferences
- Start off every presentation by
 - saying something only you can say
 - say something that can only be said that day
 - say something that connects you with the audience, shows commitment, makes a request

Section 4 – Best Practices in Presentations (con't)

- Worst criticism – Could have given that same presentation to a different audience
- Be original, yourself, authentic
- No attention on yourself
- Perceive no judgment by others, just getting or not getting your communication

Section 4 – Best Practices in Presentations (con't)

- Know your location by visiting it
- Know your technology to testing it
- Be flexible and be willing to change things during your presentation – not a robot
- Be timely, use very, very current examples
- Research your topic deeply

Conclusion

- Communication is a science and an art
- Presentations should be about changing or promoting behavior or entertainment; more than just educating – that can be done faster by other means than speaking
- No report meetings
- Use videos, proper graphics

Conclusion (con't)

- Really know your audience and how it interprets your communication
- Use leadership model not just aggregator
- Speaking is what you give; Communication is what others get
- Seek feedback & common understanding
- Looks matter in presentations – graphics, colors, font size, clarity, readability

Contact Information:

Herb Rubenstein, JD, MPA, DSS, SMP

herb@sbizgroup.com

herbrubenstein.com

Videos on YouTube and Vimeo

303.910.7961