

Communication Styles: The Secret of Flexible Behavior

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Why Is This Topic So Important?

- We spend a staggering amount of time communicating.
- We can all benefit from learning to communicate more effectively.
- This time together gives an opportunity to take a new look at a familiar topic.

Considerations Regarding Communication

- Current theory views communication as a transactional process.
 - We often send and receive messages simultaneously.
 - It is difficult to isolate a single discrete "act" of communication from events that precede and follow it.
 - A degree of mutual influence occurs when we interact.

Principles of Communication

- Communication proceeds from intent.
- All messages have content and a relational component.
 - Relational component explains how you feel about the other person; whether you like or dislike them, feel in control or subordinate, feel comfortable or anxious, etc.
- Communication is irreversible
- Communication is unrepeatable

Misconceptions About Communication

- All communication seeks understanding.
- More communication is always better.
- Effective communication is a natural ability.
 - Develops without the need for formal training.

Communication Competence

- Not easy to define and presumes that:
 - There is no single or ideal way to communicate. A variety of communication styles can be effective.
 - Competence is situational. Not a trait that a person either possesses or lacks.
 - Competence can be learned. In fact, this is one of the purposes of this workshop.

Interpersonal Communication: Quantitative & Qualitative Definitions

- Quantitative – any interaction between two people.
 - Usually described as a “dyadic” type of communication.
- Qualitative – interpersonal communication that occurs when people treat one another as individuals regardless of the context in which the interaction occurs.

Challenges to Interpersonal Communication

- There are many:
 - Gender differences
 - Role of speaker vs. listener
 - Cultural differences
 - Most common – we do not really understand each other!
- Research confirms that typical dyads can interpret & explain only 25 to 50 percent of each other’s behavior accurately.

Let’s Focus on Interpretation

- Interpretation plays a role in virtually every interpersonal act.
- What influences our interpretation:
 - Degree of involvement with our partner
 - Relational satisfaction
 - Past Experience
 - Assumptions about human behavior
 - Expectations
 - Perceptions about the other person

What Does All This Mean?

- Such evidence shows that our judgments often say more about our own attitudes than about the other people involved.
- Our attitudes impact our communication behaviors, and often prevent us from understanding the other’s persons world view.

So, can we change things for the better?

- I think we can do something that helps us alter our attitude and favorably influence our interpretations.
- In order to do this, we must:
 - Understand how we come across to others.
 - Learn to understand the behavioral styles of others.
 - Learn to communicate more effectively.

THESE ARE THE OBJECTIVES FOR TODAY’S PRESENTATION

- Once again:
 - We must learn to look at our own behaviors and understand how we come across to others.
 - We must learn to understand the behavioral styles of others.
 - We must learn to communicate more effectively with others.

Review of Basic Assumptions about Communication

- Communicative actions proceed from intent.
- Communicative acts have a relational component.
- Communication is irreversible and unrepeatable.
- Interpretation plays a role in virtually every interpersonal act.

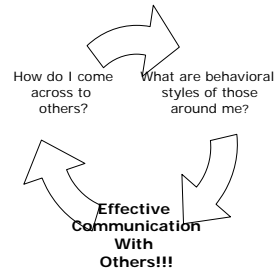
AND one more!

- There are choices or options about how to communicate, but we do not often exercise these options.
- Variation in style is critical to effective communication.
 - Good communicators do not use the same approach in every situation

- PONDER THESE ASSUMPTIONS AS WE TAKE A SHORT BREAK.

Communication Styles

Secret of Flexible Behavior



- PLEASE NOW REFER TO YOUR HANDOUT STARTING ON PAGE 7

I will be reviewing information provided in detail in this section of the handout.

Communication Behaviors Contribute to Our Style

- Using material adapted from Walt Disney Publications, you will notice that behaviors are operationalized as either "Responsive" or "Assertive" (Walt Disney Publications, 1981)
- Degree of one behavior or the other (e.g. high vs. low) is measured by verbal and non verbal behaviors demonstrated.

Behavioral Styles:

Responsiveness

High vs. Low

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ■ High Responsive | ■ Low Responsive |
| ■ Animated facial expressions | ■ Somewhat expressionless |
| ■ Much hand/body movements | ■ Controlled hand/body movements |
| ■ Flexible time perspective | ■ Conversation focused on issues |
| ■ Tells stories/anecdotes | ■ Facts and details |
| ■ Little emphasis on facts/details | ■ Little personal sharing of feelings |
| ■ Shares personal feelings | ■ NOT contact-oriented! |
| ■ Contact-oriented | ■ Slow or no non-verbals |
| ■ Immediate non-verbal feedback | |

Behavioral Styles: Assertiveness

High vs. Low

- | | |
|--|---|
| ■ High Assertive | ■ Low Assertive |
| ■ Firm handshake | ■ Soft handshake |
| ■ Steady eye contact | ■ Intermittent eye contact |
| ■ Much verbal communication | ■ Little verbal communication |
| ■ Rhetorical questions to emphasize points | ■ Questions for clarification, support, information |
| ■ Emphatic statements | ■ Tentative statements |
| ■ Gestures to emphasize points | ■ Gesture to support conversation |
| ■ High vocal volume | ■ Low vocal volume |
| ■ Rapid speech rate | ■ Slow speech rate |
| ■ Intonation | ■ Little intonation |
| ■ Ready communicator | ■ More hesitant communicator |
| ■ Fast moving | ■ Slow moving |

- When examining the dimensions of these behavioral characteristics, and the extent to which they influence behavior, the authors came up with four different behavioral styles:

The Expressive

The Amiable

The Driver

The Analytical

Impact of These Behaviors on Communicative Interactions

- | | |
|---|--|
| ■ The Expressive – high responsive/ high assertive | ■ The Driver – low responsive/high assertive |
| ■ The Amiable – high responsive/low assertive | ■ The Analytical – low responsive/low assertive |

Are These Complimentary or Oppositional

- Depends on communicative interaction and the relationship of the partners involved in the communicative act.
- One style may hinder your dealing with a different behavioral style.
 - Example: The “expressive” likes spontaneous actions and decisions. Works quickly and excitedly with others. The “Amiable” likes to make decisions carefully. Works slowly and cohesively with others.

What is Your Style?

- Walt Disney Publications developed a tool to facilitate identification of style. It is a self-assessment tool that is easy to use. You can find this tool on page 12 of the handout, and we are now going to take a few minutes for you to complete this assessment.

Questions to Consider

- What is your dominant behavior at home?
- What is your dominant behavior at work?
- Which type of behavioral style creates the greatest difficulty for you?
- How could you respond in a way that would increase the chances of gaining the positive cooperation of the person who demonstrates this style?

Dealing with Different Behavioral Styles

- Pages 10 and 11 of your handout provide excellent strategies for dealing with the four different behavioral styles.
- Experiment with these, and see how they can improve your interactions with others who demonstrate opposite or conflicting behavioral styles.

Intent of Message vs. Perception of Listener

- When we communicate we intend to convey a certain message, but is that what the listener perceives?
- Intent also has a lot to do with the language used and the communicative behavior demonstrated

When communicating, perception -- including self-perception -- is extremely important!



Ways to Improve Your Communication Competence.

- Develop a large repertoire of skills.
 - Good communicators do not use the same approach in every situation.
 - Chances of behaving competently increase with the number of options you have about how to communicate.
- Adaptability – choosing the right style for a particular situation.
 - Large repertoire important, but you have to choose the right behavior for a particular situation.

More on Improving Your Communication Competence

- Empathy/Perspective Taking – need to try to understand the other person's point of view.
 - Best chance of conveying an effective message when you understand the other person's point of view or behavioral style.
- Self monitoring
 - Paying close attention to one's behavior and using these observations to shape the way you behave.

One Final Thought

- Communicative competence is the ability to get desired results from others in a manner that maintains the relationship on terms that are acceptable to everyone.