

Basic Communication Skills

Introduction

You are a human being. (If not - please contact me immediately) You communicate with other human beings. Effective communication skills are some of the most powerful tools you can have.

Opening Exercise

Your best friend works in your warehouse and has turned out to be a totally incompetent employee. You must write a letter telling him his services will no longer be required - you are firing him.

Write this letter to your best friend now...

- Do it before you carry on with the seminar.
- Put it aside for later.
- eMail it to me if you would like my comments.

Topics

- Know your audience
- Determine what you want to say
- Use the 'Pyramid Technique'
- Minimize Negatives
- Maximize Style

Know Your Audience

There is obviously a huge difference between writing a novel, sending an email to the family, selling your product or services, or writing a business letter.

The points that follow must be applied with your audience in mind. If you write it - you want them to read it. Effective communications will maximise that happening.

Grandma will probably read whatever you send - no matter how good or bad the writing is. A business man will likely throw your letter in the garbage if he reads the first few lines and still has no idea why you are writing him.

Determine What You Want To Say

Writing a novel ? - You are on your own:)

For just about anything else you need to think it through to the point where you can write down your message in 1 line. The first paragraph can then be used to expand on your message and introduce the organization of your supporting information.

If you can't say it in one line - You are not ready to write.

The Pyramid Technique

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Your message

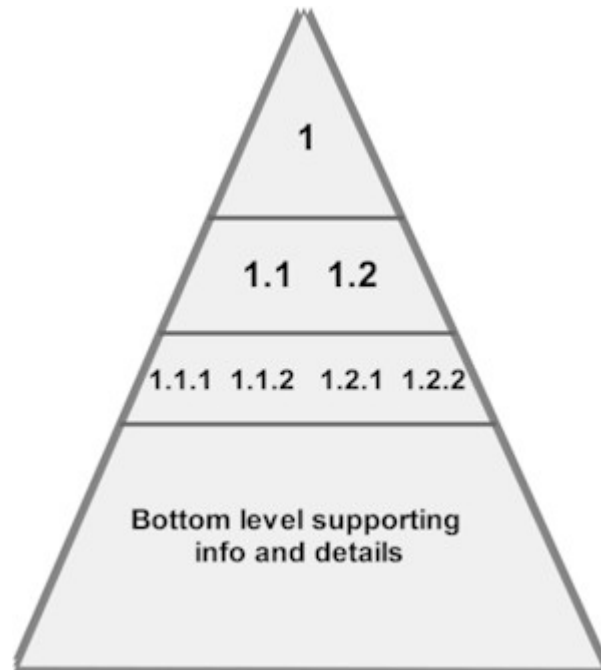
1.1 - 1.2

The summary points supporting your message

1.1.1 - 1.2.2

The detail supporting your summary points.

The lowest level is additional information required to support your message plus any miscellaneous info you want to include.



A well organized communication will follow the above structure.

Note: The bulk of your document is much easier to write once you have completed the first two levels. The rest of the info tends to fall into place naturally.

You are not ready to write if you cannot fill in the top two levels.

Minimize Negatives

If what you have to say is negative and it does not support your message - don't say it.

If a negative must be made try to make it in a positive way.

NB ... If your main message is negative (like firing your friend) say it right up front and then carry on explaining the details. You will find the document much easier to put together.

A very intelligent boss was always telling our staff at business meetings

"If it is negative and does not have to be said ... don't say it"

Best advice I have recieved in a long time :)

Maximize Style

Some suggestions to make your message much more effective.

- Be personal
- Be Positive
- Keep it Short
- Proof Read

Be personal

Use "I think you should ...".instead of "We think you should ...". Use "It has come to my attention that ..." instead of "We have noticed that ..." It makes a much stronger statement.

Be positive.

Nobody wants a downer when reading your message.

For example ...

"The team played really well today. We did not win but we learned some great techniques to ..."

- instead of -

"The team lost today. Oh well there is always next week's game."

Keep it short.

We have a tendency to equate "Verbose" with good writing. This can be true in a novel, or a high school paper where they want 1500 words. It is not a great way to get your message accross when you are trying to send a specific message.

Proof Read.

Proof read your writing and remove words that do not contribute to the main thought you are sending. You can pare it down drastically (business letter) or just part way so it does not come across as cold. (Know your audience)

Use Your Spell Checker!!!

Final Excersize.

Now edit your opening letter using the ideas covered here.

You should see a big difference in the final document - unless of course you are already a very effective communicator :))

Thank you