

The Pacesetter Way

It is everyone's individual responsibility to appropriately encourage and help all associates consistently follow these behaviors.

16. Be a Communication Master: Say what you mean by being clear with direct requests. Write and speak in a way that your audience can understand. Make sure you address issues only with those who have the ability to help you solve them. Use "I" statements not "we". Only speak on behalf of yourself.

You will notice that I switched this week's fundamental and next week's. We have an all day workshop on Friday, September 9 for the leadership team that is on effective communication and discusses confronting reality. We will be integrating our Pacesetter Way huddle from the week of the 6th (it would've taken place with zero people on Labor Day) into that workshop to give the rest of our corporate office an understanding of how we are defining confronting reality, so we can be on the same page as a team.

So, what does it mean to be a communication master? First off, it's a tall order. Nobody is a communication master and we should all strive to be, in every communication that we have, be it written or oral. We can all improve in our communication and this fundamental touches on a few key reminders to guide us in that journey.

1 Be clear and direct

- This relates back to #3 Set and Ask for Expectations. It is important to be clear about what you need and what you are looking for. This is important not only when setting expectations though, it is also equally important when discussing your feelings. We often soften our communications out of fear that being direct will hurt someone. Taking the path around the truth while being truthful often creates confusion and does not create the end result desired. There are ways to be direct and compassionate. Aim for this combination rather than softening the blow. Awhile back, I was told when giving feedback DO NOT give the Oreo sandwich because it's ineffective. What's the Oreo sandwich, other than an excellent cookie, you may be asking? It's giving someone a compliment before providing them with constructive criticism and then ending with a compliment. I always thought that by telling someone something good at the beginning and end of a difficult conversation, it reassured them and they could hear the feedback easier. I have since learned that the opposite happens. It leads to confusion and the true feedback gets lost and likely not heard in the mix. Since its never truly heard, the Oreo method accomplishes very little.

2 Use AND not BUT

- Often, we can replace the word "but" with "and" in our communications. This sounds silly on face and it makes a difference. The word "but" denotes conflict when often we are really mentioning two ideas that are both true and do not conflict. When writing your next email try to refrain from using "but" and see how the tone changes. Since we aren't creating conflict where it does not truly exist, the tone comes across friendlier and it does not create unintentional conflict.

3 Communicate TO the AUDIENCE

- When speaking or writing to someone, think first about where they are coming from and speak to them in that space. Use words that s/he can understand. This sounds so simple and yet it is often skipped. Think about the last time you were in a meeting with someone from another area of the organization and they were using terminology that you were unfamiliar with. They may have assumed

you knew it. I would guess that it was frustrating because you didn't truly understand what it is they wanted. It is important to remember who you are talking to or writing. It is also our responsibility to ask questions when we don't understand.

4 Communicate only with those WHO CAN CREATE A SOLUTION

- It is so easy to want to talk to those who will listen to us even when they have no ability to help us. Some call it complaining, others sharing frustrations. A quote I really love that I think can be applied here is "Worrying is like a rocking chair. It will give you something to do, but it won't get you anywhere." - Proverb. Speaking to someone who has no authority to help resolve things is just like worrying. It gets you nowhere fast. Next time something is bothering you, I challenge you to go directly to that person and have the conversation. Speaking with your friends or coworkers just fuels your frustrations unless you are using them to help you practice having a more effective conversation. The other place to go in the work world is your manager. As your manager, they should have the authority and ability to help you resolve the issue at hand. Next time you are about to have a discussion about a problem, ask yourself, "Am I talking to someone who can help me resolve this?"

5 Speak only for yourself

- Think about how you feel when someone comes and says to you "we've been having a difficult time lately with how you..." Automatically this puts an individual on the defense because they know that people have been talking about them behind their back or that two or more people have already decided on a solution so your opinion likely does not count. It is important that we only speak for ourselves even if there are others that agree in the room. We all have a voice and can share it. It is important that we share only our voice because people are much more likely to hear what we are saying and listen rather than shut down. Follow your own interactions this week from 2 perspectives. Try using I statements rather than speaking for others. See how much farther your conversations go. Second, listen for when someone uses the proverbial "we." How does it make you feel?



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