

How to Master the Art of Verbal Communication

By Della Menechella

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When we communicate verbally with others, either in a conversation or in a presentation, our usual goal is to have people understand what we are trying to say. In order to accomplish this, we should remember the acronym KISS (Keep It Short and Simple). When we talk to others, we assume they will understand us. We know what we are trying to say, so obviously our message will get through. Right? Not necessarily. People bring their own attitudes, opinions, emotions and experiences to an encounter and this often clouds their perception of our message.

IT'S UP TO US

When we speak, only approximately 10% of the words we use get through to others. Spoken words are unlike written words where a person can go over a passage several times to ensure understanding. It is our responsibility to make sure our message gets across to our audience. Therefore, if we want our message to be understood, we must be careful of the words we use.

When we communicate, we need to put ourselves in our listeners' shoes. Put yourself on the other side of the table. How would the message sound if you were not fully versed in the topic? Would you understand the message or would its meaning be lost on you?

CHOOSE WORDS CAREFULLY

Very often when individuals are extremely well versed in a particular field, they might have a tendency to use industry jargon in conversations or presentations. While this might be comfortable for the expert, it often causes confusion on the part of the listener. If, for example, you are discussing computers, you might be talking about bits, bytes, CPU's and controllers. However, unless you are speaking to someone who is equally well informed about computers, that person will have no idea what you are saying.

Other people believe they are like Charles Dickens who got paid for every word he used to tell his stories. They think the more words they use to describe an idea or concept, the more effective they will be in getting their message across to others. It might have been advantageous for Dickens to use many words to express his ideas, but for most of us keeping our words succinct and to the point allows our listeners to understand what we mean.

Still other people believe that using long or difficult words will impress their audiences. While using an extended vocabulary is impressive, if someone needs a dictionary to decipher your meaning your message will be lost. If people have to work hard at trying to understand what you are saying, they probably will not put forth the effort.

Once again, our objective in verbal communication is to have our message understood by our listeners. In order to achieve this goal when you are speaking with others, always remember to...KISS.

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