

Communication Tips from Next Level Leadership

Communication is one of those skills that we all have to varying degrees of efficiency. Here are some reminder tips and techniques to enhance your communication.

1 Frame of Mind • What is your frame of mind – what is the “listening space” you hold in conversations? Before beginning a conversation, notice the frame of mind that you are holding. Are you judging? Are you rushed and would rather not have this conversation? Effective communication begins with being present. Listen with an open mind, setting aside judgments and negative thinking. Be curious – be appreciative and be present. And notice how your conversations shift!

2 Quality Questions • What kind of questions are you asking? Whether we do it intentionally or not, we often ask closed questions – questions that can be answered with a yes or no. If you would like to invite a more engaging conversation, shift your questions to “open” questions – ones that can’t be answered with a yes or no. Be surprised how much more information you receive AND the depth to which the conversations go!

3 Watch your tone • The tone of voice that we use in conversation is extremely powerful. You can ask the same question or make the same statement in two different tones and get a totally different response. Notice what happens when you intentionally manage your tone. If you ask a question with a “wondering” tone versus a “commanding” tone, you will get different responses. What tone of voice are you using - the tone of a friend, of a wise elder, of a “warrior” or of a “wizard?” What tones do you respond to?

4 The Powerful Paraphrase • Did you really hear what was said? Does the other person know what you heard? We all have filters when it comes to communication. So often what you say isn’t what the other person hears! A paraphrase is a statement you make of what the other person has just said. Be careful not to “parrot.” Use key words as well as your own language to confirm what has been said. This simple technique can create deep understanding and engagement in communications!

5 Listen For Values • Create deep connection by tapping into what matters! Deep engagement and connection in conversation happen when you listen for what matters to the other person. Listen for “values.” Values drive us – they are hard wired into each of us. Include a value in your powerful paraphrase referring to what matters to the person. This technique is especially effective when emotions such as anger are present. Behind anger you will usually find a value that has been violated. Notice the reaction you get when connect with what matters.

6 Those unspoken messages • We all do it – the question is – do we know we are doing it? When in conversation, what is your body language saying? Are you fidgeting? Are you looking at your Blackberry? Where are your eyes focusing? What tone of voice are you using? One study states that only 7% of a communication is based on words – 38% is based on tonality and 55% on physiology! Intentionally create your communication – on all fronts!

7 Listen for what is not being said • Sometimes in communication there are big messages given by what is not said. Use your powerful questions and an intentional tone to inquire as to what else is going on behind the words spoken. Also, listen for what else is going on in the other person’s world. Digging below the surface creates depth in communication.

8 Assumptions and beliefs • We all have them! When you are in a conversation, notice what assumptions you are making as you hear another speak. How are you filtering information you are hearing through your belief systems? What impact are these filters having on the information? If we can begin to notice our assumptions and beliefs, we can position ourselves to be better listeners.

9 Listen with appreciation • When in communication, notice what you appreciate about that person and hold those thoughts. The communication deepens instantly! This technique is even more effective in a less than positive situation. Even in conflict, if you find even one thing that you appreciate about the person, it changes your perspective. Try it! Notice the transformation, especially in conflict!

10 Practice, Practice, Practice • In my communication workshops, participants often comment that implementing these skills is harder than they thought. And well worth the effort. Communication is the currency of life’s interactions. What is your next level in communication? What is your commitment towards communication mastery?