

“In This Issue: **“3 Ways To Cut Off Communication”**”

Test for Success
Tools, Tips, & Techniques for Avoiding
Hiring Mistakes and Developing People
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3 Ways To Cut Off Communication

Have you ever been working with a group of people, or working on a group project, and find that you keep having problems getting the job done? Could it be that you were “misunderstood?” Communicating effectively is difficult and, when we feel pressed for time or under any sort of pressure, we can too easily fall into any one of the following bad communication habits:

1. Be unapproachable. In particular, when you are busy focusing on the details of a project, or thinking your way through a problem, you are concentrating and focused. Concentrating means you are probably wearing your serious face, but your serious face may not look “serious” to others. Instead, it may look like you are angry, upset or are “having a bad day.” As a result, your coworkers may prefer not to share your bad day by simply avoiding you.
2. Interrupt others while they are talking if you have a better idea! Cut them off in mid-sentence because what you have to say just won’t wait. If they don’t stop talking, just talk louder until you have their undivided attention. Arrogant? Over-bearing? Surely they don’t mean you. Interrupting others can make you look arrogant and over-bearing, even if that wasn’t your intention.

3. Ignore the Platinum Rule, which says, “Do unto others as THEY would have you do unto them.” In other words, explain things your way, the way you like to understand things. If you are a big picture thinker, start the conversation talking about the overview of the issue, its implications and opportunities. Never mind that the person you are talking to is a detail person who thinks facts and specifics are more important than all that “blue sky” stuff. You probably didn’t mean to come across as an airhead who doesn’t know “what is really important” about the issue, did you? Alas, that was the impression Mr. Facts and Specifics came away with.

We all see ourselves as good people who would never intentionally make any of these mistakes with our coworkers. But when we are tired, working under stress, or distracted, the danger is great that we may unintentionally fall into one or more of these bad habits. Let’s remind ourselves about how we can avoid them.

Here are three better rules than the ones at the beginning of this article. These rules will make it likelier that your co-workers will actually share information with you in a timely way that will help your work group make better decisions and be more productive:

1. If you are inclined to say, “My door is always open,” then accept that sometimes someone will walk through it at a time that is inconvenient for you. Reward people for keeping you in the loop. Smile and listen calmly, focusing on what needs to be done. Avoid punishing the messenger. Thank the person(s) for their input.
2. When you ask people for their input, listen respectfully to what they have to say. (Don’t interrupt people.) It sometimes helps to designate certain parts of a conversation as a “brainstorming time,” in which everyone can throw ideas out for consideration but there is no critiquing or discussion of the individual ideas at that time. Enforce a “No Interruptions” rule during the brainstorming. Then, follow up with a discussion period in which each idea is analyzed. Acknowledge each person’s idea and evaluate its upsides before criticizing its downsides. (Keep a notepad by your side, if you must, to capture ideas that occur to you while another person has the floor.)
3. Self-monitor. Be aware of when you are under time pressure or stress, hungry, or tired, because any one of those conditions can make you irritable and short with people, sometimes without your being aware of it. This is the time to take a deep breath and remind yourself that you are at risk of coming across as impatient and

demanding. Focus on how you are going to be able to express yourself in a calm and respectful manner.

Your company floats on a sea of information. Its success depends on you and your coworkers conveying that information to one another clearly, unambiguously, and in a timely manner. Accordingly, it is important to always be aware of who you are talking to and of how you are saying what you want to say. The better we are at communicating with one another, the greater the likelihood that we will be able to convey the important information our coworkers need, in a clear and straightforward way.

Remember, People ARE your most important asset!

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