

HOW DO WE MAKE PEOPLE FEEL IMPORTANT?

Those who are unemployed or under appreciated in their work environment often feel they are lacking something, but do not know how to label it. As we move into a society that sends email “thank you” notes, communicates through voice mail, and walks right by the person cleaning their workspace without saying a word, the situation worsens.

COMMUNICATION:

1. Seven percent of communication is through words. No wonder I have encountered misunderstandings after sending an email. I once sent the man I was dating an email from afar that said, “I know the plane will be late, so I probably won’t get in until 7:00 p.m.” His response, “Kathy, you know I have to work late. I can’t possibly pick you up.” I was stunned -- there was no way I was expecting him to pick me up -- I was just informing him of my schedule. Words have different meanings according one’s life experience. For example, a big back yard to me is one that I have to mow; that’s why I live in a condominium.

2. Thirty-eight percent of communication depends on the tone in which it is delivered.

Therefore, we don’t have this when writing email. However, voice mail does allow us to use inflection and tonality. Hmmm, we’re now up to 45 percent of communication. During the final two years that my father was in a nursing home before passing away, I called and checked in with my mother every day. The minute she answered the phone I could immediately determine her state of mind. Note that this was while calling every day. Unless you are totally tuned in, and know a person really well, it’s hard for them to understand your true feelings and desires in a voice message.

3. Fifty-five percent of communication involves body language.

Years ago seminars and classes on ‘body language’ were the rage. I personally thought they were all poppycock! Yes -- have to admit it -- Kathy Condon was being judgmental. My belief partially stemmed from the fact that presenters *always* said that when your arms are folded you are closing yourself off from receiving information, or expressing disinterest in whatever was being presented. That certainly wasn’t true in my case. I was usually folding my arms because the room was cold. Therefore, to me what was being taught about body language must not be true. Boy was I wrong! Over the years, had I learned more about body language, I would have kept myself out of a heck of a lot of unpleasant situations.

Congruent (when applied to communication): The coming together of words/tone/body language.

When these three forms of communication work in concert, you are very believable to the person with whom you are speaking. You have 100 percent of communication working for you. Let me give you an example. A colleague comes back from talking with the boss. You ask her how it went. Shoulders down, with eyes averted and no smile she says, “Oh just fine”. Yah, right. Compare that to a response where she’s standing straight, with shoulders back and a big smile on her face. Which one would you believe?

This brings me back to the importance of making someone feel significant. Using words in an email or leaving a voice message is better than nothing at all. Or you can think about getting up and walking to their desk to compliment them in person. Which is more meaningful?

Many years ago when I was the Secretary to the Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin, the Public Relations Officer came into my office while the Chancellor was on assignment. He stood there, pipe in hand and asked, "Kathy, do you have any idea how much the Chancellor thinks of you and your performance?" I remember saying, "No, he doesn't ever say anything." The PR Officer went on to say, "Kathy, many years ago I learned that second hand compliments are the best -- because you know they are true." Since then I have been delighted to pass on many second-hand compliments, mostly because of the smiles they bring.

Now, as I continue studying career communication, I realize just how important "in person" communication truly is for making people feel significant. For years, I have been advocating taking the time to sit down and have a cup of coffee with someone to truly connect. Let them know they are important. Everyone from the person who cleans the windows in your office building, to the victim of a recent downsizing to the President of the company needs to know they are important in your life. Whom could you call for cup of coffee right now?

KATHY CONDON

An Executive Coach certified in Performance Coaching, Kathy Condon travels the world inspiring others as an international speaker and trainer. A published author, she is driven by a distinct purpose to motivate others to achieve their full potential. Her popular Ezine "*Weekly Wisdom*" offers insights and thought-provoking comments about current events, business communication and career issues is emailed to hundreds of people each week.

Kathy's book "*It Doesn't Hurt to Ask: It's all about Communication*" was released in March of this year. The book stresses the need for the use of simple tools to increase your ability to communicate more effectively with anyone. Even the technology inclined will learn small things that make a big difference in communicating and connecting with others.

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