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The top 5 communication mistakes made every day!

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I work on a daily basis with teams and businesses that are struggling with communication. I do this because I find it extremely rewarding to see things turn around and observe people really connecting. What I want to share with you today is the 5 most common mistakes I see people make in communication every day. Read on, you may identify with some of this information

Speaking without or before thinking

When we speak before we think it can be disastrous! I don't know about you but much of what goes on in my head is not for public viewing. I can be hard, critical, judgmental, stubborn, and that's all before breakfast!

If we can slow down and think before we speak we have time to be clear on what our intention is. Is it to teach, to share, to connect or to impose? When we aren't clear of our intention, how will our listener be clear?

As a young manager I had a team member who was making a habit of being late to team meetings. In my communication style, I read this as disrespect to me and to the team - that our "important" meetings were not a priority for her. One morning as she arrived late and disorganised again. I knew I needed to address it and fortunately had the intuition to ask her what was going on before I "tore strips off her for seemingly disrespecting me and the team".

I asked what was going on and she quickly and unexpectedly burst into tears as she divulged that her marriage was breaking apart and she was not coping at all. WOW! Not on my radar at all and how would I have felt if I had given a serve only to find out my ASSUMPTION of the INTENTION (ie disrespect and lack of priority) was no where near the reality which was that her life was in tatters and she was only just hanging on.

Lack of common ground

As humans we naturally tend to stick with what we know. As such, when we come across what we don't know the gap can be huge. This is not a problem if you are aware of it because you can ensure you identify the unknown and address it. It is when you don't know and don't address it that problems arise.

I was working with a gentleman many years ago from Africa. When we spoke he would not make eye contact with me. I interpreted this as fear, shyness or a lack of respect. However what I learned later was that in his culture for a man to look at a woman particularly a younger woman from another culture was seen as complete disrespect. So what I was interpreting as disrespect was actually him showing me the highest respect from his culture. Because we lacked common ground culturally we did not initially understand each other's perspective.

Misinterpreting the message

Misinterpretation, like all miscommunication can occur like on a slide rule from small and non life threatening to life threatening. For example the barista who mistakenly gives you a full fat latte when you asked for light; to the child crossing the road independently and hears "Go" instead of "No!!"

I heard a comedian recently talking about how does it happen that he goes to the hairdresser and asks for a particular style and somewhere between communicating that idea and the end result he leaves looking like a strange beetle – not what he had in mind.....I think I've been to that salon before!

We interpret message and communication through our own lens, a lens shaped by our genetics, our communication and personality, our past experience, our emotions and mood that day. There are quite a few filters. It's a bit like when you are in a bad mood in the car and someone toots the horn. Some of us, (not naming names) may get quite aggressive and start waving our arms and abusing the driver, thinking they were having a go at us. When in all likely hood it could have been someone saying "Hi" to someone else that they saw and knew.

Not understanding that we are different

Unfortunately the source of many of our communication problems is the gap! We automatically assume that everyone sees the world as we see it. We don't know why someone dislikes our new hairstyle, or why someone might not like our colour scheme. So if you are a bottom line kind of person who does not fluff about at all, when you come into contact with a warm fuzzy person who could think of nothing better than shooting the breeze all day you may certainly go nuts. You are different; you have different agendas, different needs, different likes and different ways of doing things. Neither is right or wrong they are just different.

If you are a person who is quick to anger, you are likely quick to recover and move on. However, if you are dealing with a person who is more slow to anger, who takes on more, for a very long time..... When they finally get to boiling point (and they will!) they will take a long time to recover also. Neither is right or wrong just different. Understanding this fundamental principle of communication will make all of the difference – we are different, we have different needs and we communicate them - you guessed it – DIFFERENTLY!

Not knowing your communications strengths

We live in a critical world where we all know far too well what we are not good at. We are told from the moment we are born, you are not good at this, you need to improve that, don't even try that, it is not a talent of yours. So what are your strengths - what strengthens you?

We all have strengths in communication – some of us are great at seeing the big picture. Some are wonderful and charming influencers, some are amazing and patient listeners and others are able to see the detail and analyse information. Either way we all have strengths. The problem is, is that many of you don't know your strengths. We actually don't even realise the truth about what strengths are. We have been fooled into thinking that a strength is something we are good at. BUT NO! A strength is something that strengthens you, a weakness is something that drains you. You may be wonderful at balancing the books but you may absolutely despise it. That is not a strength!!

When you know your strengths, you know what works for you, you realise that we are all fundamentally different, you close the gap and minimize the misinterpretations, you find common ground and you think before you speak VOILA you have GREAT CONNECTION.

If you would like to know your communication strengths, email info@teamology.com.au

To find out more go to www.teamology.com.au