

Communicating With Tact, Candor & Credibility



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Table of Contents

The Program	1
Summary	1
Communication Roles.....	2
Interactive Element.....	3
Questions For Discussion	3
Role Playing.....	4
Question And Fix.....	6
Evaluation/Testing.....	7
Multiple Choice.....	7
Multiple Choice Answer Key.....	8
Additional Information	9
Ways To Communicate With Tact And Candor.....	9
For More Information.....	10

The Program

Summary

Learn to communicate successfully with co-workers, team members, and supervisors. Countless work groups suffer chronic communication breakdowns. Why? People assume conversational roles that are indirect, over-authoritative, or jargon-filled. Others use light-weight speech patterns. Workers can master a strong conversational style that is honest, considerate and credible.

Viewers see humorous, realistic work situations and learn memorable, practical ways to communicate with tact, candor and, credibility. The program teaches a four point method to communicate “on the level.” It suggests how workers can respond to vague criticism and maintain their competency.

The program illustrates common patterns people use to communicate: the judge, beggar, scientist, escape artist and commander. These characters illustrate important patterns of interaction. The program emphasizes these “negative” styles of communication because the first step to communicating “on the level” is to recognize your own style. If the program serves only to alert people to their communication patterns, it is a considerable success. Learning to level is a lifelong struggle.

Key Training Points

- How to communicate “on the level” with co-workers, team members, and supervisors.
- A four step method to present your point of view with tact and candor.
- How to make a request using tact and candor.
- Five roles people play at work: the beggar, judge, commander, scientist, escape artist.
- Rephrasing: make “talking points” candidly and tactfully.
- Lightweight speech patterns.
- Jargon-filled corporate speak.
- Saying “no” to a supervisor while minimizing conflict.
- Turning vague, angry criticism into positive feedback.
- Maintaining composure with the co-worker who’s “in your face.”
- How using tact and candor maintains good relations and avoids giving offense.
- Maintaining composure with the co-worker who’s “in your face.”

Communication Roles

Beggar

Beggars make a habit of apologizing. They try hard to please. They avoid disturbing the peace and often sound sweet and ingratiating. Favorite phrases include "Whatever you want is fine with me." "I don't care... what do you want?" It is very hard to know exactly what a beggar wants other than to avoid disturbing the peace.

Judge

Judges often tell others what they SHOULD do. Other favorite words include, never, always, nothing and everything. These words aren't factual; they are exaggerations. When describing others behavior, it's easy to make judgments. Judgmental comments usually stir up anger, defensiveness and resentment.

Commander

Commanders solve problems by giving orders, threatening, bribing, and offering payoffs. Commanders can use emotional threats effectively; the threats don't have to be physical. Commanders sometimes play the bully. Such generals are fairly obvious; others are more subtle, using deals and schemes to manipulate instead of direct commands.

Scientist

Scientists analyze situations using logic and reason. They often use a vocabulary chosen to impress. They give the appearance of being calm, cool and unaffected by messy emotions. Favorite phrases include "I think," and sentences filled with abstract words. Scientists appear superior and make others feel inferior. The scientist may speak in a measured, reasonable voice. They may look over someone's head or look down, which means they are not taking the listener into account.

Escape Artist

Escape artists handle confrontations and emotions by avoiding situations. They believe problems might solve themselves if ignored. Avoidance is a common response to conflicts within organizations. Escape artists say nothing at all, perhaps because they don't want to offend others and provoke their anger and disapproval. Escape artists rarely talk. In group meetings, they sit apart and contribute only when specifically asked, even though they have great ideas.

Leveler

The leveler communicates with tact and candor, on the level. The leveler comes across as honest, considerate, and trustworthy. The leveler follows a four point communication process that spells TACT.

- Talking points
- Acknowledge feelings
- Compromise
- Terminate positively

Interactive Element

Questions For Discussion

1. What roles do you identify with?

Everyone has an instinctive way of communicating. Maybe you're split between two roles. It's a challenge to break out of your defining role. Becoming aware of your own communication patterns is the first step toward changing them.

2. What roles do people use with a supervisor?

People don't usually use the commander role to talk to a boss. They may use sarcastic humor, or body language (rolling eyes, a silent gaze.)

3. How do you think it would feel to be on the receiving end of each of the roles?

4. What is tact? What is candor?

Tact involves being sensitive to what is proper and appropriate when dealing with others. Tact includes not offending the other. Candor means being frank, sincere and open.

5. Do you think tact and candor are important when dealing with people in the workplace?

5. Do you think using prompt and paraphrase is an effective way to take criticism and maintain your competency?

6. The scientist uses words chosen to impress. Do you think words with many syllables are signs of intelligence?

Big words enrich language when they communicate exactly what no other word can. Learn and use big words when necessary. Follow Winston Churchill's observation that short words are best. Choose the shortest word that says exactly what you mean.

Here is a list of big words. Suggest the shortest word that will communicate the idea.

Big Word

Facilitate

Dollarize

Endpoint

Conceptualization

Customize

Short and Accurate

Role Playing

Role playing is a valuable way to try the various communication roles. Role playing will help you recognize them and explore how each influences feelings. We suggest forming groups of six and randomly assigning each person one of the roles. At the end of this guide is a template you can copy and cut to produce six cards, each describing one of the communication modes. Each person should receive one card and should not reveal it to others in the group.

Here is a list of situations. If you pick your own situations, keep them simple enough to avoid controversial or highly emotional issues. Such situations might produce lively discussion, but tend to obscure the communication analysis.

Have each group role play the selected situations and the assigned roles. Make the situations as “true to life” as possible. Also discuss how it feels to be on the receiving end of the various roles.

Situations for Role Playing

Your group has just won three million dollars in a state lottery. The tallest person in the group actually made the purchase and had the idea to buy the tickets, but everyone put in an equal amount of money. Make plans to divide the jackpot.

Each member of the group takes the role of an employee asked by a fellow worker to cover up the fact that he or she will sneak out of work three hours early tomorrow.

You are an office manager and your supervisor has announced, “We have to cut our expenses in this office by 20% next quarter.”

You have been contacted by a head hunter to interview for a position that is an incredible opportunity. You need to ask your current supervisor to act as a reference.

Your boss has imposed an unrealistic deadline for completing a project.

A co-worker frequently interrupts you at work. She e-mails you with trivial details about her life and comes to your desk to check on you if you don't respond immediately. She forwards e-mails you have no interest in reading. She will stand and read your computer screen from over your shoulder. She even talks to you loudly from across the room. She questions you about your personal life.

Communication Roles – Cut-Outs

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Commanders solve problems by giving orders, threatening, bribing, and offering payoffs. Commanders can use emotional threats effectively; the threats don’t have to be physical. Commanders sometimes play the bully. Such generals are fairly obvious; others are more subtle, using deals and schemes to manipulate instead of direct commands.

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- Terminate positively

Question And Fix

What It Is

Question And Fix is a powerful technique for handling valid or vague criticism. Focus on the ideas and content of the criticism. Request specific feedback, focusing on how you can improve your behavior. Summarize the critic's comments.

When to Use It

- When criticism is valid, but vague.
- When accuracy is important.
- When strong feelings of the critics or listener make mutual understanding difficult.

Goal

- Increase understanding and accuracy between the critic and the person being criticized.
- Show interest in the critic's comments.

Responses

“What exactly didn't you like?”

“I hear you saying that I...”

“Is this what you're saying?”

How to Role Play

1. Form pairs. Person A is the critic; Person B is the person criticized who uses Question And Fix.
2. Person A will criticize Person B.
Person B will question the critic three times, asking for specifics.
Person B will then summarize the critic after questioning and understanding the criticism.
At this point Person B can agree with the critic or present an explanation.

Activity for Question And Fix

For each response write out:

1. A response given by the Beggar, judge, commander, scientist or escape artist.
2. The leveler's Prompt and Paraphrase response.

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Multiple Choice

Circle the best available answer for each of the following:

- 1) The communication role that avoids disturbing the peace and often says "Please, pretty please" is the:
 - a) Judge
 - b) Leveler
 - c) Beggar
 - d) Escape Artist
- 2) Candor means being:
 - a) frank
 - b) sincere
 - c) open
 - d) all of the above
- 3) As presented in the video, TACT stands for:
 - a) Trust, Acceptance, Compromise, Terminate positively
 - b) Talking points, Acceptance, Cooperation, Trust
 - c) Talking points, Acknowledge Feelings, Care, Terminate positively
 - d) None of the above
- 4) The _____ is the "put down artist" and tells others what they should do.
 - a) Judge
 - b) Scientist
 - c) Beggar
 - d) Commander
- 5) "Go home! Put on your suit coat! Look conservative! Use my car!" is an example of this communication role that gives orders to solve problems:
 - a) Scientist
 - b) Escape Artist
 - c) Commander
 - d) Leveler
- 6) The Leveler uses this technique when a critic is angry and the criticism is valid, but vague:
 - a) Question and Compromise
 - b) Discuss and Fix
 - c) Question And Fix
 - d) None of the above
- 7) A _____ uses words to impress and rarely shows feelings.
 - a) Escape Artist
 - b) Beggar
 - c) Scientist
 - d) Commander
- 8) The _____ believes problems will go away if ignored.
 - a) Escape Artist
 - b) Judge
 - c) Beggar
 - d) Scientist
- 9) A _____ speaks the truth without giving offense and uses the four-step TACT method.
 - a) Judge
 - b) Leveler
 - c) Commander
 - d) Beggar
- 10) Tact involves being sensitive to what's proper and appropriate when dealing with others.
 - a) True
 - b) False

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- b) Leveler**
- c) Commander
- d) Beggar

10) Tact involves being sensitive to what's proper and appropriate when dealing with others.

- a) True**
- b) False

Additional Information

12 Ways to Communicate with Tact, Candor and Credibility

1. **Don't raise your voice.** Shouting only puts the other person on the defensive. If you think you will explode unless you get away from your coworker, call a "time out" and reschedule the meeting for later.
2. **Listen attentively.** If you are upset, listen more than you speak. Try not to interrupt.
3. **Ask clarifying questions.** Shock someone by asking if they have anything else to say. You'll learn useful information by listening that you can increase your tact and candor.
4. **Avoid sarcasm.** Sarcasm is witty language that insults. *"Hasn't that MBA taught you anything?"*
5. **Explain how you feel without showing you are upset.** When you feel angry, tell the other person.
6. **Criticize the problem not the person.** No insulting comments about a person's intelligence, work ethic, or education. *"I don't believe you have series tickets. You lie. Hasn't that MBA of yours taught you anything? Haven't you figured out I'm on deadline and can't waste my time talking to you all afternoon?"*
7. **No vague threats.**
"You'll be sorry!"
"I wouldn't want to be in your shoes!"
"If you buck me on this one, you may win the battle, but you better watch your back. Big time."
"Don't make me take this upstairs!"
8. **Don't give "the silent treatment."**
9. **No lying.** That includes covering the truth with a technicality. Say "I can't say," rather than "I don't know."
10. **No crude, unsavory terms.**
"I say BLEEP the forecasts. I'm BLEEP that these SOB's think they can derail something we've busted our butts for for months, for BLEEP sake!"
11. **Avoid references, to ethnicity, age, gender, religion, and physical shape.**
"You're putting on a mother act in our work group. I know it's part of your culture, but even if you are old enough to be our grandmother you've got to walk the line."
12. **Don't use the word "Should."** Instead of "You shouldn't do that!" try, "Your actions create a problem for you and me both."

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