




Management Concepts Series – 2010

* *Common-Sense Guidelines for Successful Organizations* *

	Management Concept #11 Communication: It's a Lousy Way to Stay in Touch <i>. . .but it's all we've got</i>
<p>Active Management Pillar Applicability</p> 	<p>“What we have here is a failure to communicate”</p> <p>When Strother Martin uttered those nine words in <i>Cool Hand Luke</i>, he said a cotton-pickin’ mouthful. The failure to communicate is at the root of a BHH of management problems and failures. (BHH: a technical management term meaning: we don’t know exactly how big, but it’s a lot. Origin: the Latin: <i>big humongous hunk</i>)</p> <p>Is this a “Key Management Concept”?</p> <p>Communication is the act of transferring thoughts, feelings, ideas, or concepts from one person to another. It sounds easy. In reality it is so hard. Movies and novels notwithstanding, human beings do not have the ability to interact telepathically. That means all you do with other humans (and if you are a manager or coach of any type it’s the major part of your job) will be done via communication with them. If you don’t get it right, at least part of the time, you will fail.</p> <p>The Basics</p> <p>Human communication comes in all shapes and sizes. Here are a few:</p> <p>Direct Person to Person (Direction/Information). You’ve probably heard that face to face communication is 55% body language, 38% tone, and 7% verbal. These numbers came from a UCLA study published in 1971. Although this is probably a misinterpretation of the actual study, you can count on the fact that at least half of what people are taking in about your message is not in the words.</p> <p>Non-Direct Person to Person (Direction/Information). This is anything that allows you to communicate without a physical or direct contact. It covers a lot of ground. It ranges from letters to email to instant messaging to voice-mail. Usually asynchronous.</p> <p>One to Many (Direction/Information). This type of communication is used to get information to a large number of people. It includes memos, directives, web-sites, social networks, advertising, procedure manuals, public address systems, and other methods.</p> <p>Message-Based (interpretive). This communication comes through interpretation. It is often unintentional. It happens when you intentionally or inadvertently send a message hidden in the action or as a subtext hidden beneath the words:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ If you involve your staff in planning rather than handing them a completed <i>PLAN</i>, you have communicated your respect and trust. ❖ If you consistently advertize your life-style, vacations, and new cars, you have communicated that you make a lot more money than they do and your focus is somewhere other than the enterprise. ❖ If you clip finger-nails or consistently answer phone calls in meetings, you have communicated your belief about your relative position in the corporate hierarchy.

Outcome Based Communication

As a leader, you need to manage your communications as actively as you manage your enterprise. Manage to your desired outcome:

1. **What are you trying to do?** Figure this out first. What is your communication to achieve? Is it intended to:
 - ❖ Direct
 - ❖ Inform
 - ❖ Convince, sell, create buy-in
 - ❖ Mitigate, comfort, apologize
 - ❖ Encourage
 - ❖ Interact, converse, exchange ideas
2. **What is the best method?** Remember, it might require more than one method of communication and they must be consistent. Written or spoken communication will need reinforcement via message-based communications. An all-company memo about high performance expectations and dedication to organizational success will be negated quickly by executives and managers with lavish toys and who manage to disappear every Friday at noon.
3. **Feedback and re-communication.** Remember, communication is the act of transferring concepts, etc. It is not a memo, speech or device. Those are simply mechanisms. If the connection or internalization has not occurred, you haven't communicated. You were just talking.

Communication Failures

There are as many ways to fail to communicate effectively as there are ways to communicate. Here are a few of the common ones to avoid:

1. **Failure to communicate at all.** Usually, this is the result of a lack of thinking through how actions will affect others: "Oh, we probably should have said something before we closed the parking lot." **Subtext:** "You were not important enough for me to think to communicate with you ahead of time." **Take-away message:** "You don't respect me enough to think about how this impacts me."
2. **Inadequate or inappropriate communication.** This is usually the result of inadequate feedback and input. Try to use the right medium and approach. And then, when you get it wrong (we all do) take another run at it with humor and determination.
3. **Parsing words.** If there is an elephant in the room and you are not mentioning it, your credibility suffers and people don't take what you are saying seriously. Worse, you become an object of ridicule. People are highly attuned to business-speak and word-crafted executive statements. Effective leaders reach to the root of issues, speak about them openly, and solve them. They don't dance around them.

Examples of miscommunication

Seattle neighborhood lunch restaurant: "Due to recent law eliminating Styrofoam boxes, we now charge \$0.25 for boxed food. Sorry for the incontinence." – *It's okay, really.* . .

American manufacturer: Produced shirts for Spanish market to promote the Pope's visit. Instead of "I Saw the Pope" (el Papa), the shirts read "I Saw the Potato" (la papa). – *Not a big seller, I'd guess.*

Small town news: "Miss Dinah Jones sang 'I will not pass this way again,' giving obvious pleasure to the congregation." – *Someone's in the kitchen with Dinah.*

Church bulletin: "Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered." – *I can't think of anything to say.*

About Agovia Consulting

Agovia is your partner in crafting common-sense plans, execution governance, and management practices that are laser-focused and, by design, create your results and your success. We help you solve your problems today and help assure your success tomorrow through management practices built on outcomes, results, and achievement.

Managing to Success

Success requires the alignment and coordination of many factors. Enterprises must be competent at, not only the elements of their core mission, they must also have the ability to create and maintain the infrastructure that surrounds and supports that mission.

What We Do

Agovia is a management consulting firm. It's what we do. Picture us a management fitness coach. We help you develop and strengthen the skills you need to succeed. We have provided consultation and solutions to multiple industries including: Information Technology, Insurance, Universities, and Homeless Services. We bring you the support, advice, and driving facilitation that allow you to stop "planning" and start getting results.

Services

- ❖ **Positioning for the Win**
- ❖ **Identity Development (Mission & Vision)**
- ❖ **Team Effectiveness Coaching**
- ❖ **Strategic and Tactical Planning**
- ❖ **Planning and Governance Training**
- ❖ **Organization Turn-Around**
- ❖ **Retreat Facilitation**
- ❖ **Runaway Project Services**
- ❖ **Problem Solving – A Cultural Effective Approach**
- ❖ **Conflict Mediation**
- ❖ **Team/Function Start-Up**

Trust yourself

Experience tells us that most of the time you do know what you are doing. You are the expert in your core domain area. The challenges businesses often encounter are nuts & bolts issues: organization, clear vision, discipline, management infrastructure, and communication. Sometimes you just need a catalyst.

We can help.

We listen.

We pay attention.

We work with you

