

A MANAGER'S GUIDE TO



COMMUNICATION

***Developed by United Way's AmeriCorps
Training & Technical Assistance Project
in cooperation with CIGNA Corporation.***



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INTRODUCTION

This guide is funded by United Way's training and technical assistance cooperative agreement with the Corporation for National Service to serve the needs of AmeriCorps grantees. Originally a handbook designed for CIGNA Corporation managers, it has been adapted to meet the needs of AmeriCorps programs. Since AmeriCorps programs are in a variety of non-profit, federal, state and academic settings, the guide's language is meant to be general. But the message is very specific: A critical link in the communication chain is how well management—team leaders, supervisors, coordinators, directors, managers—and their staff or members communicate with each other.

As a manager, you are on the front line of communication—about your organization, goals, strategy, personnel, national issues, and how your people turn their mission and strategy into practice every day. You are the person staff and members turn to in order to find out how the organization is doing, what the game plan is, and to get feedback on their own performance. A manager creates an environment in which communication either flourishes or dries up. In the most successful and effective organizations, communication flourishes—at all levels.

Having worked with several AmeriCorps programs over the past year, I have noted that they are marked by rapid change. As organizations change, their approach to communication must evolve to keep pace with that change. This means creating and encouraging new ways to communicate, cultivating an environment where people feel free to share ideas, and making sure the flow of information is coming from all directions.

This guide was created to help you keep up with the changes in your AmeriCorps program and communicate effectively in the midst of it. It is also meant to be a road map for achieving your communication potential.

Good Luck!

Eileen A. Cronin

United Way of Chicago



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Thank You!

MANAGERS ARE THE BEST COMMUNICATORS



YOU'RE THE ONE

National surveys of the American workplace

consistently document a resounding preference for face to face communication.

As a manager, you are the vital link which reaches from top management to all levels, both inside and outside your agency. Of all the responsibilities you carry, good communication is one of the most important.

Good communication adapts to many styles and forms. At its core there are three elements:

✓ Clarity

It conveys clear and honest messages in a timely manner, and answers the who, what, where, when and why.

✓ Listening

It encourages information to

flow up the channel as well as down, and sideways too, if that's appropriate.

✓ Relevance

Good communication provides not only the vision but also the logistics so people know what needs to be accomplished... and their individual roles in attaining that success.



Each of these elements contributes to a stronger, healthier organization. Good communication supports the vision statement and gets you closer to the kind of commitment you're trying to build.

THE CASE FOR COMMUNICATION

Organizations known for their commitment to and support of excellent communication discovered that when communication flows in all directions, people tend to like their jobs better. And there is strong evidence of morale being highest in organizations that listen to people and act on what they hear.

Good communication establishes, over time, a climate in which people can raise issues freely and ask the kind of questions that clear the air. It paves the way for building confidence and trust. When an organization enjoys this free-flowing environment, people may not agree with changes or decisions, but with a track record of understanding the "why" behind events, they are more likely to accept them.

MANAGERS ARE THE BEST COMMUNICATORS

CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON...

Whether the means are formal or informal—it's all communication. Looking past the obvious traditional channels of newsletters, press releases, and memos, good communication practices encompass routine activities. Subtle yet strong messages that are conveyed every time you:

- ✓ Ask someone to help solve a problem
- ✓ Leave (or don't leave) your office to meet with someone
- ✓ Invite questions
- ✓ Recognize people for good work
- ✓ Encourage people to tackle a problem
- ✓ Acknowledge questions and comments
- ✓ Evaluate job performance
- ✓ Deal with (or ignore) a problem

Information is like eggs, the fresher the better. Keep troops informed. Use every means before and after combat to tell the troops what they are going to do and what they have done.

—General George S. Patton

MANAGERS ARE THE BEST COMMUNICATORS



Each of these actions (or omissions) solicits or gives feedback—the essence of two-way communication.

Good leaders communicate well. They share information and in doing so, create that thing called spirit, *esprit de corps*, motivation, enthusiasm, ownership, empowerment.

Excellent communication creates a climate of trust and mutual respect.

Without such an environment, it's unlikely that most people will speak up or participate freely. The one element you won't find where communication flows freely is fear. When people develop confidence in their

immediate supervisor, they become comfortable enough to ask questions, take risks and share information.

How does that affect your mission? When fear prevails, people will concentrate on avoiding mistakes rather than achieving goals.

That's why managers play such a crucial role in effective communication. Whether intentionally or not, managers set communication policy. Make it intentional and go for the results you want.

DEVisING THE GAME PLAN

Creating an annual communications plan helps to apply some structure to the varied communication tasks that fall on a busy manager. The following guidelines are suggestions to give your ideas some focus.

- ✓ Define your communications objectives
These can involve improving your own communication skills, improving knowledge, creating an environment in which people communicate freely in all directions, or generating feedback.
- ✓ Define your role as the critical link in the communications chain
Some examples are experimenting with new methods or channels, recognizing successes, removing roadblocks, bringing information in and out of your department, soliciting feedback on your style and your actions.
- ✓ Create an action plan for implementation
This may involve identifying internal (people and departments within your organization) and external targets (people, community ties, organizations, vendors, funders, clients, etc.), critical issues, and modes of communicating.

MANAGERS ARE THE BEST COMMUNICATORS



- ✓ Set measurement criteria: How will you know if you have achieved your communications objectives... and to what degree?

Has work performance improved?

Are you getting more questions?

Are people making fewer mistakes?

Are people spotting potential problems before they arise?

Has morale improved?

Are people taking more initiative ?

One manager tracks a direct correlation between changes in morale and how actions follow words. "When you tell people these are the types of things we're doing as part of a plan, and people can see the results, there's a tremendous improvement in morale. It dramatically affects work. If we talk about it and don't do it, we've damaged morale and we lose credibility."

ARE GOOD COMMUNICATORS BORN... OR CAN YOU LEARN THIS STUFF?

Creating a communications-friendly environment is largely up to you.

Your personal style sets the tone for your department. The basic requirements are:

- ✓ The ability to articulate an idea. If you can explain it, that's the primary tool you need.
- ✓ The ability to listen without judgment.

There are probably as many different styles of communicating as there are types of people. One resource for

better understanding styles is the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). The MBTI focuses on the differences in people resulting from where they direct their attention, the way they like to take in information, the way they prefer to make decisions and the kind of lifestyle they adopt.

In short, MBTI defines how we are different. Make the most of your own unique style. Even if you don't feel comfortable in front of a group, or worry that your style could be better, remember that people are hungry for information. They're not expecting Walter Cronkite or Barbara Walters.

The good communicator is the person who can make himself clear to himself first.

—Anonymous



LISTEN UP

Research shows that most people spend 80 percent of their waking hours communicating—speaking, writing, reading, or listening. The largest segment—some 45 percent of the time—is spent listening. Yet when you think about communicating, listening is probably the last aspect that comes to mind. It may well be the most important.



SETTING THE STAGE

KEYS TO EFFECTIVE LISTENING.

These keys are guides to better listening.
They can develop better listening habits that can last a lifetime.

| Keys to Effective Listening | What the Poor Listener Does | What the Good Listener Does |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Find areas of interest. | Tunes out dry subjects. | Finds opportunities; asks "What's in it for me?" |
| 2. Judge content, not delivery | Tunes out if delivery is poor. | Judges content, skips over delivery errors. |
| 3. Hold your fire. | Tends to enter into argument. | Doesn't judge until comprehension is complete. |
| 4. Listen for ideas. | Listens for facts. | Listens for central themes. |
| 5. Work at listening | Shows no energy output. Attention is faked. | Works hard, exhibits active body state. |
| 6. Resist distractions. | Distracted easily. | Fights or avoids distractions, tolerates others bad speaking habits, knows how to concentrate. |
| 7. Exercise your mind. | Resists difficult expository material; seeks light, recreational material. | Uses heavier material as an exercise for the mind. |
| 8. Keep your mind open. | Reacts to emotional words. | Interprets color words; does not get hung up on them. |
| 9. Capitalize on the fact that thought is faster than speech. | Tends to daydream with slow speakers. | Challenges, anticipates, mentally summarizes, weighs the evidence, listens between the lines to the tone of voice. |

***Listening, not imitation,
may be the sincerest form of flattery.***

—Dr. Joyce Brothers

ENCOURAGING FEEDBACK

Since exchanging information face to face is the most preferred form of communications, regularly scheduled meetings are one of the most critical components in how managers communicate with their people. Nothing quite replaces people talking directly to people. Meetings don't have to be lengthy or every week, as long as they are *regular*.

Developing an environment in which people feel comfortable asking questions boils down to convincing people that you welcome their participation. If your



group is reticent and doesn't speak up naturally, include a question and answer session as a routine part of any meeting. It will help make the open exchange of information the norm rather than a forced or awkward occurrence.

Feedback is critical to helping you reach your goals. It might help to review, with your staff, the two types of feedback:

- ✓ Negative feedback closes the gap between where you are, and where you want to be.
- ✓ Positive feedback confirms that you're moving in the right direction.

If people understand that feedback helps them and the organization reach its goals, the Q & A sessions, meetings and individual evaluations become more productive.

SETTING THE STAGE

About three months after starting a regular question and answer routine as the final agenda item at every weekly staff meeting, one manager remarked that her staff meetings had become relaxed and open exchanges.

“It took a while, but now everyone feels comfortable asking questions as we go along. It’s become a very natural process, and the need for the formal Q&A has all but disappeared—the tension has gone out of the meetings.”

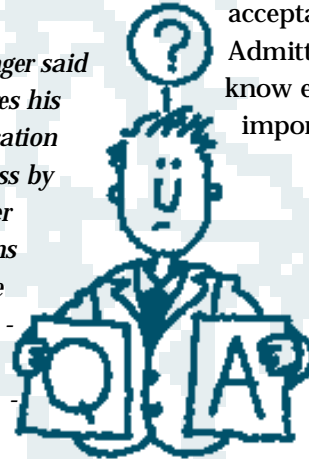
The smaller the group, the more likely you are to get questions. Managers who meet regularly with large groups often encourage people to send in questions in advance.

One manager said he measures his communication effectiveness by the number of questions asked. The more questions, the better communications are flowing, in his opinion.

But, what if you encounter tough questions and don’t have all the answers? Well, nobody does.

One of the best trust builders—and communication builders—is how you answer such a question. “I don’t know... but I’ll find out and get back to you,” is perfectly acceptable.

Admitting you don’t know everything is important.



SETTING THE STAGE



Following up earns you credibility for doing what you said you would do, acknowledges the validity of the question, and tells the individual he or she is worthy of a response. If you can't or don't want to follow up, don't bother asking in the first place. It will probably do more harm than if you had ignored the question.

SAY IT AGAIN, SAM

When is it enough information or too much? Should employees be presented with the same information more than once? It depends on the issue, of course. But in dealing with complex information such as financial management or a shift in goals, it's a good idea not to assume that everyone understands the issue on the first hearing.

Advertisers hire the brightest minds to strategize how to hit their targeted audience with the same message as many times as possible. So, even though a message has been delivered once, say, as a press release or in a memo, chances are everyone will benefit from a discussion.

The greatest problem in communication is the illusion that it has been accomplished.

—George Bernard Shaw

SETTING THE STAGE

Often an issue bears repeating so that people can fully comprehend it. For example, if meeting program objectives is an issue, then posting a quarterly report on the bulletin board might be the

most sure way to get it out there. Many may read it but almost everyone will benefit from a discussion in a meeting or other appropriate setting.

Most often people want to know:

- ✓ What are we doing right?
- ✓ What are we doing wrong?
- ✓ Where are we really going?

A discussion also gives them a chance to air questions and concerns that would otherwise turn into speculation and rumor. And you can bet your discussion will find its way in some form to the grapevine.

One manager affirmed, "There's a big benefit to having someone stand up in front. The more you communicate, the more people feel part of the organization because they are more informed, encouraged to participate and encouraged to give feedback."



SETTING THE STAGE

HITTING THE MARK

Having been designated the “source of choice” for information, how do you decide what to pass on? As a manager, you probably have a policy of passing along most of what comes across your desk because of your position.

But how do you know if people have enough of the information they want? Here are some ways to find out:

- ✓ Be available. Make it easy for people to approach you.



- ✓ Take more time with people. Ask more questions. Get their opinions and reactions to changes.

- ✓ Maintain more visibility by circulating and making it clear that you are an accessible manager.

- ✓ Check in regularly with the grapevine. It will have information probably before you do. Chances are it won't be entirely accurate, which gives you the opportunity to set the record straight...and if you don't know, find out.

- ✓ Talk to everyone, formally or informally. It's surprising what people will tell you in the

There is a profound difference between information and meaning.

—Warren Bennis

SETTING THE STAGE

elevator or the parking lot.

- ✓ Listen to people who do not directly report to you.

Some managers find informal breakfasts or lunches, all voluntarily attended, excellent opportunities to find out what people are thinking.

- ✓ Share successes from your group as well as other groups in the organization. Nothing sells like success. When the news is often less than positive, people start to get the



feeling that “we can’t do anything right.” The truth is, we are doing a lot of things right. Pass it on.

- ✓ Conduct your own communications survey (see Resource Section for “How To”). Give people a chance to tell you

anonymously what they need.

Often, managers voice concerns that by being more accessible and candid, they may be creating unrealistic expectations or opening them-

selves up to unfulfillable employee needs. But listening and communicating don’t always mean agreeing or doing something you don’t want to do. It simply means clearing the air.

Good communication has tremendous potential to help you

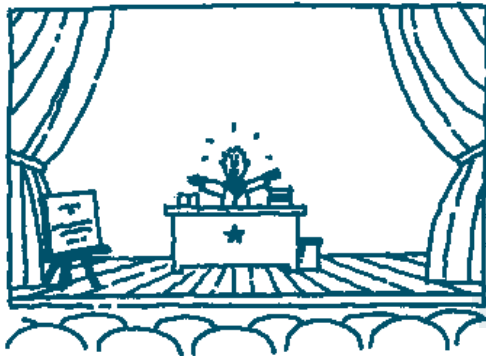
SETTING THE STAGE

manage people effectively. When employees are aboard in a team-oriented way, you get better team effort and results, along with happier employees.

One manager affirmed, *“There’s a big benefit to having someone stand up in front. The more you communicate, the more people feel part of the organization because they are more informed, encouraged to participate and encouraged to give feedback.”*

SHARING THE LOAD

Life at your organization is probably fast paced. The thought probably has crossed your mind that the



last thing you need is to take time away from the already heavy load of responsibilities you shoulder. You can ask others to help you. Here are a few ways:

- ✓ Invite guest speakers to your staff meetings. Especially if there is a subject that needs addressing outside of your own realm of expertise, call in an expert. Your

staff will feel important, and you won’t have to do extra prep work.

- ✓ Organize lunch time brown bag meetings with speakers around topics your staff want more information about. You don’t even have to attend.

- ✓ Build two-way systems that encourage communication throughout your agency. This may include surveying your staff (see section “For A Start”), comment or idea boxes, or encouraging and modeling an open-door policy.

WHEN SILENCE ISN'T GOLDEN

Sometimes your best efforts to stimulate the open exchange of information come to nothing.



Have you ever led a meeting and looked around the table at people who had nothing to say, and, worse, wouldn't make eye contact with you?

Don't assume you're at fault. First, being aware of some of the obstacles to the free flow of information can make it easier to find ways to overcome them. Some of the most common are:

- ✓ People who are worried about potential bad news would rather do anything than call attention to themselves, especially highly visible acts like asking questions or volunteering information. Fear is the best motivator for playing it close to

the vest. Can you provide any information to alleviate that fear?

The most important thing in communications is to hear what isn't being said.

—Peter Drucker

✓ No one wants to appear stupid in front of his or her peers. Have you ever asked a question in a meeting, only to see others nodding and murmuring their collective support for the question? Remember the sense of relief at not being the only one with the question? Not everyone is courageous enough to ask questions in a group. Hooray for those who are.

✓ Some people feel too unimportant to ask questions. Over time, effective managers find ways to demonstrate that each person's input and comments are important and, indeed, essential to get the job done.

GOOD NEWS/ BAD NEWS

Good communication would be easy if the news were always positive. But most organizational climates are frequently changing, which by definition means a fair share of both good and bad news. The only way to build credibility in this climate is to make sure you talk about the bad news along with the good.

The time when you can convey negative information the same way you pass on the good stuff, is the time you begin to build credibility. The minute you don't discuss the negative

I am never afraid of what I know.

—Anna Sewell

DEALING WITH BAD NEWS

news, people become suspicious, and you've lost the game. You can bet it's already on the grapevine, so you might as well get it on the table.

One manager said his style has been to put all the information on the table. "Good, bad, or indifferent, just be honest. I give everyone the information, but I don't necessarily tell them whether it's good or bad. I let them come to their own conclusions."

Bad news can be almost anything. These days, one almost automatically assumes bad news is



in some way related to loss of one's job, and it frequently is. But bad news also encompasses the following scenarios:

- ✓ Your organization is changing its goals and objectives.
- ✓ Due to organizational changes, you're taking on additional responsibilities without additional people.
- ✓ Funding sources are cutting back or changing and you need to look for new resources.

Silence is also speech.

—African proverb

ANTICIPATING REACTIONS

Delivering bad news is somewhat less uncomfortable if you know what to expect from your people. The following four reactions usually occur when discussing bad news:

1. Constructive/Realistic:
This is the most “normal” reaction to bad news. It is characterized by:

- ✓ expressing anger, hurt, or disappointment,
- ✓ listening to your message,
- ✓ and probing for answers to questions.

It is the most rational of the four reactions.

2. Anger:

People sometimes allow their emotions to take over and they become angry and aggressive, which can lead to a verbal attack on you or the organization.

When dealing with this reaction, the temptation is to become defensive or argumentative; neither one diffuses the person’s reaction. It’s important to allow the person to express his or her anger while you acknowledge that you hear him or her, and yet continue to remain calm.

In time, the person

The worse the news, the more effort should go into communicating it.

—Andrew Grove

DEALING WITH BAD NEWS

will calm down and start asking questions like, “What are my options?” Once the person starts asking these questions, you know you have turned the corner and can deal with the individual in a rational way.



3. Shock:

Some people show evidence of shock, confusion, uncertainty, or passivity by not appearing to react at all.

In this situation, it's important to ask questions to make sure the person heard the message. Don't be afraid to use silence to allow the person time to understand what you have said.

4. Denial/ Control:

Some people react with a “smooth” or unemotional response. They may imply that they have anticipated the bad news and seem almost relieved. By avoiding dealing with the situation, these people are often the ones in the most danger. They don't express their emotions, but lie to themselves for as long as they can. Eventually, they may become extremely distraught.

Ask questions to make sure the message was heard, provide structure, and clarify next steps.

DEALING WITH BAD NEWS



YOU'RE IN CHARGE

How you deliver bad news means a lot. Probably the most difficult information to convey is news about staff or funding reductions. If the decision is made to trim staff, it's human nature to want to soften the news as much as possible.

However, part of a manager's credibility involves honestly communicating the news that no one wants to hear. If, when making the announcement, you align yourself with your staff and

away from the decision-making process to create an "us versus them" environment, it will do little in the long run to enhance your own credibility.

Even if you have had no influence on the decision, blaming an anonymous "they" for an unpopular decision will do little to keep your organization's momentum going forward or to build confidence in the mission.

GETTING RID OF ROADBLOCKS

Of course, good communication sounds like good common sense.

But human nature can so easily get in the way. Here are a few common roadblocks and some solutions:



Impediment:

Perhaps some of the information deals with issues or areas about which you don't feel fully informed. The last thing you want to do is put yourself on the spot in front of everybody.

Solution:

Seek out the people who can brief you on what you're not sure of. Most managers who feel fairly well informed have good informal networks throughout their organization and among agency partners and community members. They talk to each other regularly without waiting for formal meetings. If you don't have a good network, develop one.

Cultivate as many relationships to

keep yourself informed about what's going on at all levels of your organization, as well as throughout your community.

Remember, you don't have to have all the answers. Telling people that this is what you know about an issue or circumstance—and now they know everything you know—means you're human. Follow-up on questions you promised to get answers for.

ACHIEVING YOUR COMMUNICATION POTENTIAL

Impediment:

Good communication practices take an extra effort.

Sometimes you just don't feel like it. There are so many things you're involved in, why not skip the collaborative process and simply use your own best judgment?

Solution:

No easy answer here. Good communication takes time and effort. But the payoffs are rewarding. As one manager put it, "When my people know what they are doing, they turn in great performances, which makes me look terrific."

"When you get people involved, it creates a much healthier organization. People feel better and bring something beyond their bodies to work every day."

This is a goal every organization is striving for— motivated, well-trained people working to the highest standards of performance and integrity.

ACHIEVING YOUR COMMUNICATION POTENTIAL

Impediment:

You may be uncomfortable addressing a group. You're not alone. Fear of public speaking tops the charts of what people are most afraid of; in fact, fear of death ranks second.

Solution:

The person who can put across his or her ideas is the one who succeeds. The good news is that public speaking isn't the only way to do that—all the technological advances such as E-mail, Voice-mail, along with written



communications and one-on-one talks are important components of good communication. But public speaking is inevitable. So, start with small groups, do it often, and you will begin to find some level of comfort.

Opportunities to practice exist outside the organization in groups like Toastmasters. For those with severe stage fright, solutions can range from speech coaches to special courses.

FEEL THE DIFFERENCE

Walk through an organization where there's good communication and you can feel it. There's a current of energy, a sense of purpose. Walk through one where there isn't, and you can feel that too. Where would you rather work?

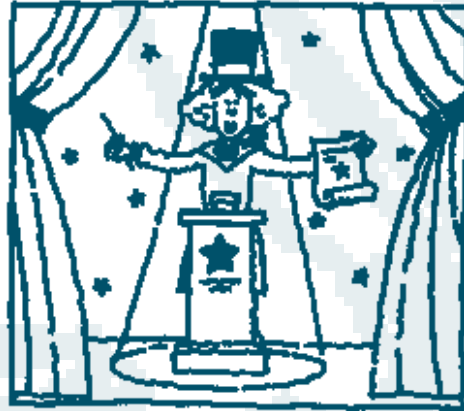
HOW AM I DOING?

Use this list to check yourself periodically on good communication practices.

- ✓ Employees are sharing information with each other.
- ✓ Staff meetings are a planned, regular occurrence.
- ✓ You're providing feedback to employees.
- ✓ Questions and feedback flow freely back to you.
- ✓ Be visible, accessible to your employees.
- ✓ Share successes from your group, other departments, participants, the community, and funders.
- ✓ Publicly recognize individuals and groups for results.
- ✓ Don't duck the bad news.
- ✓ Make resources, including other people, available.
- ✓ Take the fear of making a mistake out of the environment.
- ✓ Let yourself off the hook! It takes time and effort to be a good communicator, and we have "good communication" days and "bad communication" days.
- ✓ *Have fun!*

STAGING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Just as you wouldn't run your agency without a plan, the smart manager won't run a meeting without a communications plan.



This is true for one-on-one meetings but especially effective for larger meetings. Getting up in front of a group is the last place to wing it. A little homework can pay off in big results. A communications plan answers the following:

- ✓ What is the objective of the meeting?
- ✓ How long will the meeting last?
- ✓ Who is invited?
- ✓ What is the central message?
- ✓ How is it conveyed?
- ✓ Is it reinforced throughout the meeting?
- ✓ What media are appropriate?
- ✓ How will you recognize achievement?
- ✓ How will you solicit feedback?
- ✓ Does the information need to be passed on by those attending the meeting?
- ✓ How will you make certain it is?
- ✓ How will you determine whether you have met the objectives?

RESOURCES

BRAINSTORMING

Getting the most from the most Brainstorming is an excellent way to suspend judgment until the maximum number of ideas have been generated. It also promotes listening positively to the ideas of others, while refraining from negative comments which might cause the creative process to dry up. The theory behind brainstorming is that a group can generate more ideas, and better ideas than all the individual members could do if they worked independently.

How Does It Work?

Participants must discipline their inputs to the discussion or project suggested. The facilitator for the session only presents the ideas and keeps the group on track with the following steps.

- ✓ Generate, don't evaluate.

Quantity is the goal: the more ideas the better. While quality is important, stopping to judge or challenge an idea will only inhibit the creative process.

- ✓ Create new ideas by amending or analyzing those which have already been suggested. This amendment can take such forms as increas-

ing, decreasing, adding, deleting, consolidating, substituting elements, or reversing. Ideas can be built upon and alternatives can be suggested, but they cannot be negated.

- ✓ Once the group has developed an idea, the facilitator will have the option to have the group further develop the idea with an action-plan. If the facilitator or group members elect not to develop the idea, the group must not invest in the idea.

GROUND RULES

Since this training method relies heavily on the synergy of the group, group members must feel comfortable in freely expressing ideas.

To produce an atmosphere of free expression and creativity, you might have the group develop a list of ground rules to follow. Some ground rules that support the process, include:

- ✓ All hidden agendas must be checked at the door.
- ✓ All titles, years of experience, power, etc. must be checked at the door.

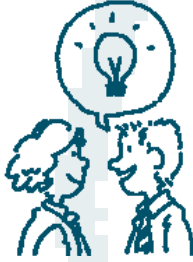
- ✓ The facilitator's only role is to keep the group on track with an open agenda, and with time checks.
- ✓ All group members are responsible for understanding the rules and enforcing them within the session.
- ✓ Group members must not become invested in an idea.
- ✓ Seating and setting of the session will be determined by the facilitator prior to the session.

SUGGESTED FOLLOW-UP

Since group members will invest their time and energy in generating ideas, it's a good idea to follow-up with them to recognize their efforts and let them know of outcomes. Some suggestions include:

- ✓ Scheduling a follow-up action planning session.
- ✓ Forming a committee for implementing ideas.
- ✓ Sending a follow-up memo on actions taken from the session.

RESOURCES



CONDUCTING A COMMUNICATIONS SURVEY

Conducting your own survey is one way to get feedback on how you're doing. Here are some sample questions you may want to include. Not all questions may be appropriate for your situation.

From which sources do you prefer to get information: *(Rank in order of preference with one being the highest)*

- Meetings with senior management
- The grapevine
- Immediate supervisor/manager
- Bulletin boards
- Radio, TV, newspapers
- Videotaped messages

How do you get that information now?

- Meetings with senior management
- Publications
- The grapevine
- Immediate supervisor/manager
- Bulletin boards
- Radio, TV, newspapers
- Videotaped messages

RESOURCES

Do you attend regular staff meetings?

- Always Sometimes Never

How would you rate the frequency of these staff meetings?

- Too often OK Too infrequent

Do you receive an agenda for the meeting?

- Always Sometimes Never

Are topics covered in enough depth in the meetings?

- Always Sometimes Never

Are all the subjects covered about which you need information?

- Always Sometimes Never

List the subjects about which you want more information.

Do you get enough information about other teams, groups or departments in the organization?

- Always Sometimes Never

List the other areas about which more information would be more helpful.

How would you rate your organization on the following?

| EXCELLENT (1) | GOOD (2) | AVERAGE (3) | FAIR (4) | POOR (5) |
|------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|
|------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|

Listening to your problems and complaints

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

RESOURCES

CONDUCTING A COMMUNICATIONS SURVEY (CONT.)

Developing an atmosphere of open communications

1 2 3 4 5

Feedback on job performance

1 2 3 4 5

Communicating department strategy and goals

1 2 3 4 5

Providing sufficient information necessary to perform your job

1 2 3 4 5

Providing clear information about organizational strategy and goals

1 2 3 4 5

Understanding the department's role in achieving overall goals

1 2 3 4 5

Passing on information from senior management

1 2 3 4 5

What kinds of information do you want to know that you are not currently receiving?

What kinds of information are you now receiving that is very important to you?

TIPS FOR ANALYZING YOUR COMMUNICATIONS SURVEY: NEXT STEPS

So you get back all these surveys, what do they mean?

The most effective surveys are the ones that affect change in an organization.

When analyzing a communications survey look for consistent patterns. It's likely you will have a variety of responses for each question. It's best to code the questions and average the responses. When you have "crunched the data" you might want to look at:

- ✓ What people want to know more about: You may want to schedule special information sessions to address.
- ✓ How people are getting important information: If they indicate the grapevine or other unofficial sources, they are probably indicating information is not sent quickly enough.
- ✓ Staff meeting frequency and topics: You may want to restructure your meeting to include an agenda that goes out prior to the meeting that can be added to. If your organization is undergoing numerous changes—especially in leadership—you may want to increase the number of staff meetings to pass on timely and important information about the changes.
- ✓ Departmental performance: Staff may need to re-address mission, vision and values of the organization and department. They may also benefit from team-building.

RESOURCES

ADDITIONAL COMMUNICATION RESOURCES

**ACT-Action Communication Training*, August Scornaienchi and Stanley Shalit (this is out of print but is available from National Service Resource library)

The Business of Listening, Diane Bone
Crisp Publications, 800-442-7477, \$9.95 (group training video also available)

Clear Communication: Breaking Down Barriers, Pfeiffer and Co., 800-274-4434, 1/2 day workshop kit includes looseleaf trainer's guide, 1 participant guide, 10 minute video, \$395.00

Communicating with Employees, Frank M. Corrado
Crisp Publications, 800-442-7477, \$9.95

**Communication and Conflict Resolution*, (video) Youth Service California
Great River Productions, 707-445-9105, \$19.95

Communication: Skills to Inspire Confidence, Barrie Hopson and Mike Scally
Pfeiffer and Co., 800-274-4434, \$7.95

Communications: A Positive Message From You, Trudy R. Sieta
Points of Light Foundation, 800-272-3806, \$7.00
Guide to improving personal communication skills.

Culture, Communication and Conflict: Readings in Intercultural Relations, Gary R. Weaver, ed., Intercultural Press, 207-846-5168, \$36.00

Do's and Taboos of Public Speaking, Roger E. Axtell
Nonprofit Partners, 800-860-4490, \$14.95

50 One-Minute Tips to Better Communication, Philip Bozek
Crisp Publications, 800-442-7477, \$9.95 (group training video also available) "Fifty easily mastered techniques for improving meetings, memos, and presentations"

RESOURCES

**Getting Past No: Negotiating With Difficult People*, William Ury
Nolo Press, 800-992-6656, \$9.95

**Getting To Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, William Ury and
Roger Fisher, Houghton Mifflin, 800-225-3362, \$29.95 (hardcover)

Getting Your Message Across, Kurt Hanks
Crisp Publications, 800-442-7477, \$12.95

“The innovative ideas, practical examples, and exercises in this book help
readers identify and overcome communication problems.”

Influence: Portable Power for the 90's, Elaina Zuker
Crisp Publications, 800-442-7477, \$9.95

Influencing Others, William L. Nothstine, Ph.D.
Crisp Publications, 800-442-7477, \$9.95

“Influence others more effectively through written or verbal
communication.”

Listen Up Learning Activities, Kittie Watson and Larry L. Barker
Pfeiffer and Co., 800-274-4434, \$59.95

38 reproducible activities in a loose leaf binder.

Listening Styles Profile, Kittie Watson and Larry L. Barker
Pfeiffer and Co., 800-274-4434

Facilitator's Guide, 1 profile, 1 answer sheet: \$19.95 (other packages
available)

**Rules for Reaching Consensus: A Modern Approach to Decision Making*, James R.
Lawson and Steven Saint, Pfeiffer and Co., 800-274-4434, \$9.95

Speaking With Confidence: A Guide for Public Speakers, Wanda Vassallo
Points of Light Foundation, 800-272-3806, \$9.95

**You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, Deborah
Tannen Random House, 800-773-3000, \$12.50

* = items available from National Service Resource Library, call
1-800-860-2684 for more information.

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