



Employee Communications for HR Professionals

Human Resources Elements

Hire ❖ Develop ❖ Retain

Communicating with Employees

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HR's Role in Communication

More times than not, HR practitioners find themselves at the hub of the communications wheel within the organization. It often falls to them to keep all the spokes informed and working together, as well as to help resolve problems stemming from poor or misunderstood communication.

To be successful in this role, the HR practitioner needs *IDEAS*: Information, Discretion, Ethics, Authority, and Skill.

Information

- What do employees want to know?
- What do employees need to know?
- What do employees need to know, but not want to hear?
- What does management want employees to know?
- By what medium will the messages be conveyed?
- How do I keep informed myself?
- What messages should be sent upward through me?

Discretion

- What will cause more damage and harm if communicated?
- How can I communicate in a tactful, diplomatic fashion?

Ethics

- What is honest?
- What can be relayed without violating privacy?
- What can be relayed without jeopardizing the wellbeing of others?
- What should we not communicate?

Authority

- In what instances do I have the authority to speak "for the company?"
- What procedures must I follow in communicating to others not under my direct supervision?



Skill

- Can I write well?
- Is my business writing clear and understandable to employees?
- Can I speak with conviction and authority?
- Do I have annoying personal habits, which interfere with my ability to communicate?
- Do I know when and how to make myself accessible?
- Am I appropriately responsive, and responsive in a timely manner?

Why is communication such an important HR function?

Employees and the management team alike have come to rely on human resources for skill in the "soft" areas, such as communications. Often the HR professional must take the lead in managing intercompany communications.

Individual (and team) success in the work setting is greatly influenced by:

- The quality of the relationships that develop.
- The type of communication that takes place.

Effective communication exists when individuals work to communicate in ways that:

- Enhance trust and respect.
- Eliminate unintended roadblocks.

It is critical for you to increase your understanding of what takes place in the process of communication within your company. The information offered is designed to help you develop and strengthen effective communication practices.

Communication Objectives

Sound communication serves a number of vital functions for the company, not the least of which are these three:

- **Imparting/disseminating information**
Communications serve the traditional function of imparting necessary information to employees that will better help them to get their job done. This is the lifeblood of participative management. We communicate to get things done.
- **Employee recognition and bonding with company**
A sound communication program gives employees recognition that they so much desire by making them feel a part of the organization. An employee who feels "important enough" to be kept informed and whose input is valued will feel less frustration and will be, other things being equal, more loyal. Good, credible communication systems (or lack thereof) have a direct impact on morale.



- **Detection of unrest**

Vertical communication programs serve as a monitoring device to detect any supervisory mistreatment or employee unrest. In this connection, the program should be so comprehensive and so diverse that no employee would ever feel the necessity of going outside the facility to voice a complaint or vent a frustration. The program must, therefore, be so designed that it will bring out each and every case of employee discontent.

Being an excellent communicator and communicating with others regularly is an essential HR role and responsibility since the human resource professional's work is deeply intertwined with helping employees become more productive and effective; helping to retain, motivate and empower employees; and helping to rectify situations which cause employee unrest and frustration.



Two Main Arenas for Communication

Most organizations deal with internal and external communication, and many utilize the HR professional extensively for these purposes.

Internal Communication

In **internal** communication, information flows up and down the formal organizational structure or laterally between employees or units at the same level in the organization. For example, lateral information flow is present in the communication between human resource staff and line managers.

Because internal communication is essential to helping employees maximize their job performance, HR must assure that management is committed to improving the quality of information available to employees.

For example, the more information employees have about the organization's goals and strategies, the better able they are to target their efforts in that direction. The "attitudes" and motivation of employees are also affected. When employees are involved and have good two-way communication with management, job satisfaction is higher. That not only means better "attitudes" among employees but also higher productivity, quality, and creativity in their work.

The role of human resources is *to continually work on ways to improve this internal communication*. Part of that work will require systems analysis, part of it will require reshaping beliefs and resultant behaviors of management and employees.

External Communication

In **external** communication, information flows from the organization to the external environment. Human resource professionals are involved in communication with stockholders, community residents, suppliers, legislators, regulators, media and others. HR professionals are in this way, a major focus of the organization's proactive communication strategy.



Communication Gaps

Misunderstandings between people at work occur when the listener understands the message differently from the way the sender had intended it to come out. Have you felt offended by something someone either said or did to you recently? Did you get up this morning and say to yourself, "I'm going to intentionally make someone angry today?" Chances are that the person who upset you did not do it intentionally. You *assumed* what his or her intentions were based on your negative reaction to his or her behavior.

An interpersonal communication gap occurs when the meaning of a message is interpreted and reacted to in a manner different from what was intended. The meaning of a message (as conveyed by outward behavior) results from how the sender's intention is interpreted by the receiver.

Effective communication exists between two people when the listener interprets the speaker's message the way the speaker intended.

Barrier Bashing

There are six common barriers to communicating better. They distort the messages employees hear and make it more difficult for you to communicate effectively with others.

1. Hearing what you expect to hear
 - Tendency to selectively listen for only those things that meet our expectations.
 - Screen out everything else.
This is why different people (with different expectations) hear different messages from the same speech. This is why politicians are intentionally vague...they can meet everyone's expectations!
2. Evaluating the source
 - When you receive one incorrect piece of information from someone and thereafter label that source "unreliable." You then evaluate any information coming from that person with a certain amount of doubt.
 - When information comes from someone with an outstanding reputation, feeling that the information cannot be questioned. Judging the value of the information based on who's sending it.
3. Having different intentions
 - Automatically reading into other people's actions.
 - Assuming that the other person wanted to upset you
 - Ignoring/misinterpreting nonverbal communications.
 - Actions speak louder than words, but sometimes you forget to notice them.
 - Not all nonverbal signals are accurately interpreted.



5. Being distracted by noise.
 - Modern office dividers lend themselves to considerable noise and distractions.
 - Noise in a manufacturing setting.
6. Having different perceptions.
 - Naively assuming that all employees see the world as you do. (You're likely to be wrong much of the time.)

Perceptual Differences

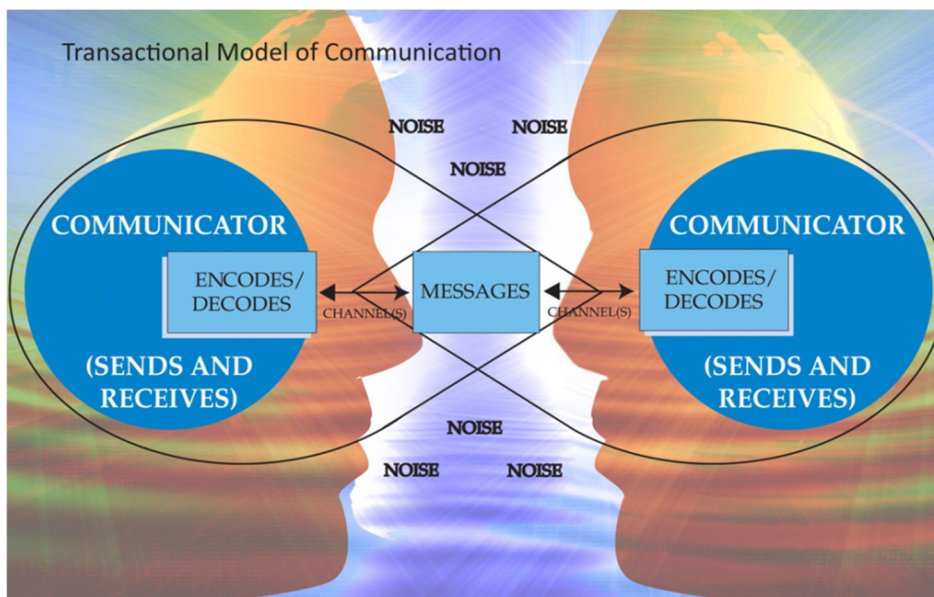
How we perceive our world can be viewed in three ways:

1. How we select information.
2. How we organize the information.
3. How we interpret the information.

How Perceptions Work

Perceptions are the result of the process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting observable behaviors. How we perceive things, or the effect that an action has on us, is private. Our perceptions are known only to ourselves until we communicate them to others. To communicate our perceptions, we must translate our intentions into actions and messages that others in their turn can observe and perceive. Our perceptions determine what our reality is. And unless we are aware of them, perceptions can become a major source of interpersonal gaps.

The Communication Process



PROCESS	HOW	WHY	EXAMPLE
SELECT STIMULI	<p>Make choices on where to focus our attention.</p> <p>Block out some stimuli.</p>	<p>Influenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Expectations ●Needs ●Wants 	<p>I have to make a decision on something by 5:00 pm. In order to concentrate on analyzing the problem, I block out the noise of the construction in the office next door, the voices of the people talking in the hallway, and a secretary who is asking me a question. When the secretary finally gets my attention, I say, "Sorry, I didn't hear you."</p>
ORGANIZE DATA	<p>Use "figure-ground" organization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Concentrate on one set of stimuli (i.e. "figure") ●Place the rest into the background (i.e. "group") ●Use "closure" organization: See only a part of what's going on <p>Fill in what's missing (usually with negatives)</p>	<p>Don't see what's in the background.</p> <p>Can't see "figure" and "group" at the same time.</p> <p>Parts filled in are as real as what is actually observed.</p>	<p>I need to talk with Joe this afternoon. As I walk down the hall, I see Joe walking with three other people. After the fact, I couldn't have told you whom Joe was with in the hallway.</p> <p>Someone overheard me talking about one of our vendor's plans to drop one of their product lines. By the end of the week, a rumor was running through my department that we were going to be dropping one of our products and laying people off. I have been trying to correct the rumor, but people are convinced that I'm not being "straight" with them.</p>
INTERPRET SITUATIONS	<p>Make a value judgment about the situation.</p>	<p>Influenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Ambiguity of the situation. ●State of mind- (moods). ●Comfort zone (past experience, personality). ●Psychological context. 	<p>Bill is from Kentucky (i.e. of all the available data I have on Bill, I have chosen to concentrate on where he is from). Kentuckians are rowdy, drink, and aren't refined. (Example: I have chosen to think of a stereotype.)</p> <p>I don't want Bill on my team (Example: I've made a judgment about Bill based on my perceptions).</p>



The Selection Process

We are constantly surrounded and bombarded by activity. To make sense out of things, we become selective in our perceptions and block out noise, talking, and other stimuli.

We select the stimulation that we wish to perceive based on our expectations, our needs and our wants.

- If our first impression of someone is negative, we tend to pick out those actions that support our first impression. We expect certain things to be true and select stimuli to reinforce our expectations.
- If we need more office space, we begin to notice all the wasted space in the building that we hadn't noticed before.
- If we want a new car, all of a sudden we become aware of all the car dealerships along the road on our way home from work.

The Organization Process

Once we've selected what we want to perceive, the brain organizes it in some fashion. This is where the breakdown and misunderstandings often occur.

Figure - background

When one set of information becomes the "figure" and everything else becomes "background." Creates dual monologues.

Example: Two people having a conversation thinking they're talking about the same thing (the same figure), but, in reality, are talking about two different subjects (one about figure, the other about the background). The speakers keep missing each other's points.

To overcome this figure-background misunderstanding, try to clarify with the other person up front the topic and desired outcome of your conversation.

Closure

This is based on the principle that we tend to fill in missing pieces of information in our environments. We have a natural tendency to fill in these blanks with *negative thoughts*, not positive ones. Result - get angry or get even. For example, if we are left out of a meeting or off a memo we feel we should have received, we feel that the sender intentionally tried to slight us.

When we assume negative intentions on another's part, we often react by "getting even." This is called *interpersonal reciprocity*.

The need for closure explains why rumors are so effective and pervasive. Employees only see a part of what is going on and so they organize their perceptions by filling in what is missing.

The best way to overcome this tendency of filling in the blanks with negative assumptions is to check out the facts or ask for the other person's intentions the next time you start feeling upset about what someone is communicating to you. Do employees have easy avenues to do this when they get partial information?



The Interpretation Process

Interpretations of information are affected by

- Ambiguity of a situation
- State of mind or mood
- Comfort zone
- Psychological context of that particular situation

Ambiguity. A man who is obviously in a hurry runs into an airport bar. He orders a drink, drinks it down, throws a \$5 bill on the bar, and runs out. The bartender slowly walks over to the bar, picks up the money, turns to another person and says, "Isn't that interesting? He was in such a hurry, he forgot to pay for his drink, but he left me a \$5 tip."

Explanation: The bartender interpreted the actions of the patron based on what was important to him or her. If you don't tell people how you want your information interpreted, they're free to interpret it based on whatever is important to them at the time.

State Of Mind – Mood. Most people experience some mood changes during each workday based upon interactions with other people or information. You may know what your mood is at the time, but others do not. So as not to send out the wrong vibes, let others know what your mood is at the time of your conversation if it will possibly be misunderstood. Remember, how things look outside of you depends greatly on how things are inside of you.

Sometimes when your mood shifts, others do not pick it up as quickly as you would like them to. Most likely, they will seem confused about how to interpret your message.

Comfort Zone. Generated by:

- Where we grew up (northerners vs. southerners).
- Religious or philosophical background (Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, humanist, Moslem, atheist, etc.)
- Our education and profession (high school graduate, PhDs, engineers, supervisors, line workers, etc.)
- Our cultural heritage (Italian American, African American, Latin American, Native American, etc.)
- Sexual preferences (heterosexual, homosexual, both, neither)

Your comfort zone is unique and makes you who you are. It also requires you to be sensitive to others' comfort zones if you want to communicate more effectively with them.



Psychological Context. We interpret information based on the last piece of information we happened to be thinking about. For example, if a customer service representative is thinking that she knows what a customer needs, she may write up the order that way, not the way the customer said he wanted it. She will have written the order based on her interpretation, not on reality.

From time to time you get caught up in your own thoughts and don't pay attention to what another person is trying to tell you. About 40% of the cost of redoing work is directly related to mistakes made because of psychological context.

How much sense does it make to pay attention to what others are saying as opposed to what you are thinking at the time? Checking out the accuracy of what you think you heard is most important in order to clear some of the barriers to more effective communication. Your increased sensitivity to perceptual differences will help you to better understand and overcome behavioral and verbal differences.



How We Communicate

To be an effective communicator, you need to:

- Understand your own style
- Diagnose the informational needs of others
- Communicate with others in a way that is sensitive to and aware of their informational needs.
-

The more information you have about how you communicate, as well as how others communicate, the easier it will be to "bridge the communication gap" that occurs as a result of differences in styles or informational preferences.

People will sit up and take notice of you if you sit up and take notice of what makes them sit up and take notice.

Misunderstandings between people often occur simply because two individuals are communicating on two different wavelengths. How you communicate with others—as both a sender and receiver of messages—will in large part be influenced by your own behavioral style.

What is important to you as an individual, in terms of the type of information you wish to send and are willing to hear, may not be as important to the person you are communicating with. S/he may have a different set of preferences in choosing how to receive information. It doesn't mean that either of you is necessarily wrong in defining what's "important;" it simply means that there is a difference in your preferences in the way you send and receive information.

Communication Style - Definitions

How are you likely to respond when someone speaks to you? What do you say? And what can you learn about the way you view others and relate to them? An analysis of your responses will give you insights into your communication style and its impact on others.

The self-assessment you just completed yields four scores that indicate the degree to which you tend to respond with Empathy (E), Criticism (C), Searching (S), or Advice (A). These are the most common response modes in interpersonal communications.

The EMPATHIC Response (E) - The empathic response shows understanding. It is a non-judgmental reply that captures the essential theme and/or feeling expressed. This communication mode reflects a positive attitude, sorts out elements of personal value, and goes all the way in making the communication a two-way exchange. A person in this mode will listen between the lines for underlying meanings, will keep an open mind staying out of a judgmental framework and will focus on what would be useful to do rather than on what is wrong. This person concentrates on fostering respect, rapport, trust, and understanding.



By holding back on our rebuttals, we can keep a more objective point of view. The empathic response stimulates the other person by being attentive, alert, and interested in their needs. Such responses encourage the other person to elaborate on their ideas and feelings. They will be willing to open up to the degree that we remain non-judgmental and non-critical. The empathic listener is like a mirror, reflecting what the other person is feeling. This leads people to open up, comfortable in the assurance that they can talk openly without being criticized or judged.

A major element of this communication style is that the empathic responder avoids the temptation to give advice. When people are given the opportunity to talk about and think through their problems, they have a better understanding of the implications of their problem and will be able to work out their own action plan. Although empathic responders avoid suggesting a solution, they can still remain a resource person who can share information when appropriate. It is important to remember that you don't have to agree with what a person is saying to be an empathic listener. Your empathy extends to their feelings and what they might be experiencing...it need not extend to their actions.

The CRITICAL Response (C) – The critical response shows disapproval. It expresses judgment or evaluation that the other person often perceives as a put-down. This response often results from our natural tendency to judge others, either approvingly or disapprovingly. This responding style often challenges what people say and why they feel the way they do. Even though people may tell you that they want feedback and evaluation, most people do not take kindly to criticism, regardless of the spirit in which it was given.

Because a critical response is often perceived as a threat, it increases the emotional level of the other person who feels turned off, labeled, and categorized, and thus may choose not to respond. When we become critical, we are likely to “get hooked” into negative feelings that will cloud our objectivity and cause us to jump to false or premature conclusions.

Many factors can lead us to make critical responses. One is the pressure of time and conflicting priorities (i.e., we have other things to do rather than listen to another person's problems). Another is that the values and ideas of the other person may differ from our own, thus biasing us. Still another is that we have our own experiences and needs, and in our desire to share these with others, we inadvertently adopt ways that are easily construed as being critical or judgmental.

There are three unfortunate outcomes of the critical response. The other person (1) feels rejected or put down, (2) will usually retreat or “clam up,” and (3) will not have a chance to release the feelings and emotions that may be begging for expression. We all give way to critical responses from time to time. What is important is that we know when it's happening and work to overcome the problems that our critical responses may create.

The SEARCHING Response (S) – The searching response is an attempt to get additional information. Sometimes we need more facts and feelings so as to understand the other person. Sometimes the additional information will help us get to the root of a problem. Sometimes we want to help the other person to “ventilate” and thereby express their emotions. These are all good reasons for using a searching response.



But there are times when a searching response is inappropriate. Too many questions can be felt as interrogation...a feeling of being “grilled” or given the “third degree.” Then too, we sometimes ask questions to fulfill our own needs and not of our concern for the other person. This may disrupt their train of thought. At times we are so busy thinking up our next questions that we fail to listen to the other person’s response to our last question.

The timing of a searching response is very important. For example, consider the person who is speaking emotionally and in fragmented sentences, describing a current experience – something dear to them that was just stolen. Even though we have a lot of questions to ask, we might want to use a few empathic ones first (“Sounds like you’re really at a loss” ...”You must feel awful, having lost a family heirloom.”) to get their emotional level down to the point where they can think objectively and talk coherently. Then, when you feel they can be logical and analytical, you are ready to use the searching response.

The ADVISING Response (A) – The advising response reflects a desire to help others by telling them what they should do. When we are busy thinking of solutions while the other person is talking, we cannot listen fully to what they are saying.

There’s a common myth that many people perpetuate the notion that when someone comes to us with a problem, it’s our job to solve it... or at least to tell them what to do. Even when people report on something they’ve done (successfully or unsuccessfully), we feel obligated to tell them what to do next.

When we give another person advice, we deprive them of the chance to talk through the problem or opportunity. This kind of communication mode tends to build dependency relationships. The best help we can give others is to enable them to work out their own solutions. People feel more self-confident and behave more maturely (independently) when they can plan and organize their own situations rather than have others tell them what to do.

Sometimes we give advice out of genuine desire to help. Sometimes our recommendations are prompted by our own ego needs – for status, prestige, power, etc. But whatever our motivation, advice is usually given at the expense of the other person’s personal and professional development. It’s okay to supply information, ideas, and facts, but we hinder others when we give them advice on things they need to work out for themselves.



Natural Hostilities

There is a natural hostility that can build up between certain behavioral types that makes communication difficult at best.

This natural tension occurs between individuals whose orientations are so dramatically different from one another that it often looks as if each is intentionally trying to get the other upset.

For example, when a Conscientious and an Influencing type are trying to communicate, the Conscientious type will demand details that the Influencing type is both unwilling and unable to provide (they just don't think in terms of details). Similarly, Influencing types will want to talk about "the big picture" or some future considerations with a Dominant type whose only concern is for the work that has to get done today ("yesterday").

To communicate effectively with different styles, it is important to understand their orientation, value it like your own, and learn some basic techniques to communicate within their comfort zone.

As the HR professional, you have to be able to communicate with ANYBODY and EVERYBODY within your organization. That means, you will have to master the art of communicating with styles different from your own. Below is a cheat sheet to help you in that regard.

Verbal Pattern Differences

Be alert to verbal pattern differences. Verbal differences are comprised of the specific words that you both use and tune to. Each of us has a dominant pattern. These patterns fall into three categories:

1. Audio:

If you have an audio pattern, you tune to and retain predominately the information that you hear. Example: someone talking to you.

2. Visual:

If you have a visual pattern, you pick up on information that you see and read. Example: memos or textbooks.

3. Kinesthetic:

If you have a kinesthetic pattern, you relate best to what you can or have touched. Example: relating to an experience such as running equipment.

Each pattern is often associated with predominant feelings and temperaments. The two patterns that present the least compatibility are Audio and Kinesthetic. People with an Audio orientation may have difficulty understanding why Kinesthetic people are so emotional; and Kinesthetic persons may perceive Audio types as being cold, unfeeling, or uncaring. Audio persons tend not to be feeling- oriented and may often have trouble describing feelings, in part because they do not primarily lead their lives with thoughts about feelings in mind.



How you interpret verbal patterns influences your ability to understand people. By identifying someone's dominant verbal pattern, you will be on your way to more effective communication. You will learn about how that person thinks, and so, have some clues on how to effectively share your ideas and suggestions with him or her. Keying into the dominant pattern of a speaker can help you listen and respond—in the speaker's language.

Look below to understand the different characteristics of the verbal patterns.

VERBAL PATTERNS	ORIENT-ATION	VALUES	VERBAL CLUES	EXAMPLES
AUDIO (HEARING)	-Words	-Logic -Reason -Concepts -Logical strategies and solutions	-Think -Ideas -Concepts -Analyze -Hear -Sound	-This sounds good to me. -Let me think about it. -Let's hear the numbers. -How do you like the idea? -It seems a logical move. -Here are the facts.
VISUAL (SEEING)	-Pictures	-Images -Symbols -Holistic strategies and solutions	-See -Picture -Look -Vision -Seek -Symmetry	-Look at it this way. -See what I mean? -We need a balance. -Give me the big picture. -He can't see the forest for the trees.
KINESTHETIC (TOUCHING)	-Experience	-Intuition -Insight -Perception -How people feel about a change or decision	-Feel -Touch -Sense -Emotion -Share	-You know what I mean. -How do you feel about it? -Our people won't go for it. -Let's keep in touch. -Would you share? -I'm not comfortable with it.

You cannot control how effectively others listen. But you can control how effectively you send the message.



Effective Listening

The theory of communications is one thing; the function of communications is another. HR communication is often successful because of personal skill and commitment to the art of listening. Listening is the product of caring and being interested. Listening is an **absolute necessity** in today's workplace for the HR professional.

Accessibility

Before you can be in a position to properly listen, you must be accessible to employees. Don't sit in your office waiting for them to come to you "if they have a problem." You must express to them that you are open and willing to listen to them by going where they are. This accessibility is a prerequisite to sound and meaningful communications.

Accessibility includes the obligation to keep an attentive ear open for complaints and problems. If you do this, the by-product is that thereafter employees will seek you out, instead of going to some less-desired recipient, such as a disloyal fellow employee, the local press, or worse, a union organizer.

Responsiveness

Once you have established that accessibility, your next responsibility is responsiveness. You are obligated to correct problems or explain to employees why they cannot be corrected. You should always strive to be fair in justifying your position, or that of the company.

Here are some ideas to help you improve your listening with employees who seek you out:

- Find areas of interest. Say to yourself: "What is s/he saying that I can use?"
- Judge content, not delivery. Say to yourself: "I can overlook the speaker's personality defects or bad delivery; I want to find out what s/he knows and has to say."
- Hold your fire. You must train yourself not to get excited about a speaker's point until you are certain you thoroughly understand it.
- Listen for ideas. Recognize the language in which central ideas are usually stated - you must be able to discriminate between fact and principle, idea and example, evidence and argument.
- Resist distractions. Fight distraction; if necessary, hold your calls, close the door, shut off the radio, move closer to the speaker, ask the speaker to talk louder. Concentrate.
- Keep your mind open. When we allow emotion to respond to information we hear, communication efficiency drops rapidly to zero.
- Capitalize on thought speed. Most people speak at 125 words per minute and think easily at four times that rate. Therefore, we have normally about 400 words of thinking time to spare during every minute a person talks to us. Focus on what is being said. Make mental pictures to keep your mind from wandering.
- Remember non-verbals. Observe non-verbal cues and actively reflect them back to the speaker to ensure you understand.



There may significant barriers to communication that the HR professional must recognize and combat:

- Fear and distrust.
Employees are reluctant to relay information for which they will be punished in some fashion. When management demonstrates inconsistency between words and deeds, employees are confused and distrust management. The HR professional must continually work to eliminate practices in the organization that indirectly and directly contribute to fear.
- Time constraints.
Many managers, including HR, feel they don't have time to explain or to listen to employees. In most cases, this is a grievous error.
- Old-style management thinking.
Many managers (and HR generalists) improperly withhold information which employees would value and benefit from knowing.



Guidelines for Effective Communication

You can improve your communication skills (and help your managers improve theirs) by implementing some guidelines for effective communication:

Sincerity

This falls in line with ethics. In planning communication with employees, recognize that sincerity or insincerity will become apparent. The best technique is the development of a track record of fair and honest dealings with employees. Remember that our total behavior is involved in communication. “Walking the talk” is essential to establishing credibility.

Feedback

Feedback procedures are often established but not utilized because busy managers may send out nonverbal signals of indifference or tend to listen poorly to what their employees are trying to communicate. Be alert to every possibility of “feedback” in your communication. Ask questions to see if your listeners understand your intended message. Watch for behavioral cues to the listener’s response. Since input from employees is extremely valuable, increase the communication flow from employees by providing concrete feedback to their suggestions and concerns. Methods of employee input include:

- Suggestion programs that are a form of upward communication that stimulate participation by rewarding employees for suggestions. The suggestions may cover work methods, procedures, and other matters related to the effectiveness of the organization.
- Employee involvement programs that ask for employee input on needs and issues.
- Meetings at the departmental level to aid communication between managers and their groups of employees. This communication offers immediate feedback and thus less opportunity for misunderstanding.
- Focus groups designed to obtain employee views and opinions on policies, practices, or procedures.
- Opinion surveys to measure employee morale. Surveys are another communication method designed for employees to communicate with management. When completed anonymously, the questionnaires provide information that can be used to help the organization become more successful in satisfying employee needs and wants.

Listening

Listening has been referred to as probably the most important, and yet the most neglected, aspect of communication. Managers and employees within an organization need to concentrate on listening actively and objectively. Individuals should listen for the main ideas and supporting facts and not automatically tune out a speaker whose ideas and biases differ from their own. Keep the communication channels open by remembering to preserve the other person’s ego. Do not abruptly disprove their statements, and don’t be over-anxious to show up weaknesses in their point of view. Encourage the free flow of communication by taking every opportunity to express an honest appreciation or admiration of the other person’s thoughts and actions. Strive to look more for virtues in people and look less for faults.



Understanding Needs

There is a close relationship between motivation and communication. Management's attention to employees' needs, interests, and attitudes can encourage employee receptivity and input. Encouraging people to ask questions when they don't understand, and/or providing them with the opportunity to disagree with you without repercussion, fosters a climate where relationships are more open and the manager is perceived to have greater credibility. Remember that disagreement in human relations is inevitable, and normal. Expect it, and use it to sharpen your awareness of the various aspects of the problem at hand.

Proper Timing

The importance of the proper timing of a communication cannot be overlooked. Take into account the current conditions of a situation and the attitudes of employees when making announcements.

Appropriate Channels and Media

For maximum effectiveness in communication, the channels and media should be chosen carefully.

- **Written Communication**
As a human resource professional, you are responsible for many types of written communication, including job descriptions; policy, practice, and procedure manuals; employee handbooks; organization newsletters; and more. You can increase the effectiveness of your written communication by keeping words simple, concise, and specific.
- **Face-to-Face Communication**
This is probably the most important type of communication between HR and employees because of its effect on the employees' attitudes and behavior. You need to be interested and ready to listen when conducting face-to-face communication for the communication to be of benefit. Your tone of voice, your facial expressions, your general mood may be affecting a listener's reactions even more than your actual words.
- **Telephone Communication**
The telephone is a very efficient method of communication. Studies have shown that people often communicate more effectively on the telephone because there are fewer distracting and misleading signals to sort out.
- **Environment**
Try to be keenly aware of the total physical and human setting in which you are communicating – be flexible when necessary.



Positive Communications Avenues

There are many avenues available to the HR professional to communicate in a positive fashion with employees:

- New employee orientation
- Employee handbook
- Day-to-day contact
- Small group meetings
- Employee opinion surveys
- Bulletin boards
- Posters and flyers
- Company newsletter
- Individual employee interviews
- Suggestion system
- On-the-job training
- Job posting or bidding system
- Letters to employees' homes
- Formalized complaint procedure
- Paycheck inserts
- Employee performance appraisals
- Safety and health committees
- Continuous improvement team meetings
- Management correspondence, speeches, etc.

How many of these avenues do you use regularly? How many do you use well?



Facts and Fallacies about Employee Morale

HR professionals know that employee morale is a vital, if intangible, fact of life. High morale can rally salespersons to stave off a competitive threat; poor morale can lower product quality and even shut down plants. In fact, morale probably has as much to do with the profitability of a business as its share of market, cash flow, or production rates. Nevertheless, it is surprisingly misunderstood.

Part of the difficulty is that morale is hard to define. Morale experts, like all other experts, seldom agree on definitions. But this one is reasonably close to what more of them have in mind when they discuss employee morale: ***In a given group of employees, morale is the consensus of employees, and the consensus of their desires to help or hamper the organization in which they work.***

In other words, morale is the sum of feelings that employees have about being employees. This can range from real pride and satisfaction all the way to anger and humiliation.

Tangible Consequences

In the not-so-distant past, HR managers often assumed morale was usually irrational and therefore impossible to understand - and anyway, it wasn't the business of business to "make everybody happy." Today we know morale can be investigated and the consequences of morale are quite capable of appearing on something as tangible as a profit-and-loss statement.

At times the consequences of good or poor morale are dramatic: The *esprit de corps* of a highly motivated department for example - or, at the other extreme, the outraged employee who denounces his immediate supervisor. In the first instance, morale has been carefully nurtured by the supervisor; in the second, totally ignored.

Complaints (Health/Unhealthy)

As part of their morale-building efforts, many companies (and supervisors) assure subordinates that their "door is always open" to hear complaints. But too often, your supervisors and managers don't recognize the difference between "healthy" and "unhealthy" complaints from employees. The knowledgeable supervisor is not dismayed by the former (in fact, a good supervisor would worry if s/he weren't getting any)—but s/he is acutely concerned about coping with the latter.



In a "healthy" complaint, employees are unhappy about obstacles that prevent them from doing their job effectively. Such obstacles might be inadequate supplies, improper tools, lack of cooperation by other departments, or unreliable information. The employees may become quite irritated, but the irritation is directed at things that prevent them from *helping* their department and the company. Complaints of this kind, which should be handled promptly, are a signal of basically positive morale.

"Unhealthy" complaints, on the other hand, are aimed at things that employees received *in exchange* for work rather than at the work itself. For example: inadequate pay, poor service in the company cafeteria, or unfairness from a supervisor. Complaints of this kind can culminate in a widespread mood of anger—which, in turn, leads to increased turnover, work slowdowns, and other costly results.

Studies of morale indicate it usually changes slowly, inching upward or downward over periods of months or even years. Specific events—a round of wage increases or a layoff, for example—usually don't have as much long-term influence on morale as does the accumulated weight of day-to-day experiences on the job. This is because upward or downward trends in morale gradually acquire considerable momentum; they begin slowly, but eventually become very difficult to reverse or even stop.

Checking Up On A Downward Trend

To avoid a downward acceleration of morale, some companies hold formal, periodic surveys of employee attitudes. In other companies, the HR department, managers, and supervisors are encouraged to seek out employee attitudes more informally through individual conversations and interviews as well as group and departmental meetings. The idea is to detect downward trends before they pick up much momentum, and to identify and cope with their causes. Oddly, complaints from employees who are ready to quit are usually similar to those from employees who are only mildly annoyed; the critical difference lies in *how long* the complaints have been allowed to fester.

Some companies are reluctant to investigate morale because they feel that doing so would stir up latent resentments that might otherwise have remained latent. In other words, "Let sleeping dogs lie." The fallacy here is that most people don't need to have their dissatisfactions stirred up to know that they are dissatisfied.

Though they may express their feelings more freely when asked about them, the feelings themselves gain no strength from being expressed. In fact, the act of "blowing off steam" probably reduces the intensity of feelings, at least for awhile.

Action Expected

Obviously then, inviting employees to express their attitudes is unlikely to worsen those attitudes. But it does have another very important effect - it creates expectations. That is, when you ask people for their opinions, they will expect you to be influenced by them. Therefore, another fallacy about employee morale is that you can study it in a noncommittal way. As a practical matter, you can't. The very act of inquiring implies a commitment to some kind of responsive action. Taking effective action is probably the best guarantee of low turnover and high productivity.



Rumors

Despite all your good efforts at clear and efficient communication between employees and management, rumors are likely to occur. Rumors are damaging to employee productivity and morale, and make the work of the HR practitioner all the more difficult.

People will believe and act because of rumors

Back in 1938, Orson Welles presented H.G. Well's famous science fiction story, "*The War of the Worlds*," on his Sunday night radio program. To make it realistic, he decided to do it as a documentary. The drama was handled as a running news story of the conquest of the United States by creatures from another world. Welles' idea was to increase the dramatic effect. It worked—beyond his wildest dreams.

Residents of Princeton, New Jersey, near where the martians were supposed to have landed, panicked. One wild-eyed citizen emptied a restaurant by shouting, "The Nazis have declared war and captured New York!" Other people rushed from their radios to warn friends and neighbors that little green men were at the city gates, and that their only chance of survival lay in instant flight.

The rumors were so fantastic that it is hard to believe intelligent men and women could accept them. But they did. It was two or three hours before Princeton calmed down and people realized they had lost their heads because they had fallen for a rumor.

How did it all happen? Remember the time: in Europe, Adolph Hitler constantly threatened war; the Japanese were on the move in Asia. Therefore, the Welles' program triggered unconscious fears and confirmed unspoken worries.

True, the rumor would have been easy to check. Radio listeners only needed to switch their dial to another station to assure themselves that other programs were being presented as usual. As a matter of fact, the announcers on the Welles' program took pains to explain throughout the presentation that the story was fiction, not fact. But people didn't hear. They listened to fear, not reason.

Why Rumors Start

The HR professional knows the damage rumors can do to the efficiency or morale of an employee group. Of course, the average rumor doesn't do much harm. It probably starts casually with a story that may be based on a half-truth or a three-quarter truth or a full truth improperly interpreted. These kinds of rumors are the "little foxes" that build the grapevine.



Rumors are the unofficial communications system of every organization. It's human nature to want to know what is going on. If facts are unavailable, people sometimes will draw on imagination to explain events. If nothing is done to stop them, rumors may at last be accepted as literal truth. When this happens, it's difficult to fight them even with the correct story. Fancy is frequently more interesting than fact. What's more, when an idea is implanted in a person's mind, he or she is reluctant to root it out. As a result, it is your job to eliminate rumors or keep them to a minimum before their damage is done. If you want to keep rumors at a minimum, the first step is to understand why they start. Psychologists will tell you that rumors in an organization meet two basic human needs:

1. The need to explain events that are otherwise unintelligible; and
2. The need to provide an emotional safety valve for frustrations or worries

Any circumstance that involves people can cause rumors, but from the HR point of view, they may be divided into three groups, each with its particular cause, each with its special characteristics. Here they are:

- **Wishful Thinking.** If a person wants something badly enough, s/he is apt to accept any evidence that seems to prove s/he will get it. Say the company is having a good year. Sales are booming. Suddenly, word gets around that management is planning an across-the-board pay raise. Nobody knows how it started, but the story spreads like wildfire. Everyone wants to believe it. You may even believe it yourself unless you act promptly to find out the truth. There is no quicker way to deflate the morale of a group than to allow them to build their hopes up in anticipation of something that won't happen.

The wise HR practitioner keeps close tabs on what's on the minds of employees. If a story is making the circuit that you can see is heading people for later disappointment, you must move quickly to debunk it with some feet-on-the-ground facts.

- **Fear.** Fear is spawning ground for rumor. If business slacks off and management is forced to layoff people, stories quickly multiply. Usually the rumors are far worse than the facts. There are times when employees have to be told unpleasant truths. It is better to give them facts than to try to conceal them because you don't want to upset anybody. In the absence of official facts, people make up their own. The best way to knock down rumors is with the straight arm of truth. This doesn't mean it's smart to upset people with things that *might* happen, or *could* happen. But it does mean that, when things will happen, or are happening, it's best to give them facts. There is no fear greater than uncertainty, or anything more likely to cause demoralizing rumors.
- **Dislike.** Hostility is the ignition switch to rumor-mongering. If someone doesn't like a person, accusing him or her of something in a whisper is rule-of-thumb for the vicious. Even normally fair-minded people are likely to accept as fact an uncomplimentary story about someone they resent. The only way to stop this kind of rumor is to trace it to its source as promptly as you can, and then bring out the truth. The best way to stop *this* kind of rumor peddler is to expose the person.



Curing Rumors

The only sure-fire prescription to cure your environment of rumors is to douse them with facts. However, this can't always be done. If top management has given you confidential information that leaks out into the workplace from another source in the form of an untrue, wild rumor, do you have the right to act on your own initiative and tell the straight story? The answer is no. At the same time, you can report to management that rumors are circulating which need fast and accurate answers in order to head off future trouble.

The susceptibility of any group to believe in rumors is in direct proportion to the leadership strength in the group. It's important, therefore, that you be perceived as a strong leader within your organization. If you are perceptive, you know how to spot a rumor at 20 paces. If you have good judgment, you know what to do about it. When employees know they can trust your leadership, they trust your word, for you have learned how to insulate their attitudes against rumor through the communication of sound management.



The HR Manager's Guide to Rumor Control

- **Be Perceptive.** Alertness to conditions that cause rumors enables you to spot them quickly when emergencies occur. When changes are introduced, when policies are changed, explain why.
- **Avoid ambiguity.** "I am not in a position to say," is an answer that is certain to produce rumors. Employees may think you have told them "yes" or "no," according to the way the question was phrased, and rumor is born. If you don't know the answer or are not free to give it, tell upper management that the question is being asked. They are then in a position to deal with the problem intelligently.
- **Be clear in providing rationale.** When you give an instruction - especially if it's unusual - explain why. If you don't, people will provide their own reasons, and there will be rumors.
- **Be factual.** Encourage and reassure employees, but don't kid them. A straight answer is almost always the best answer. If employees know that you are straightforward in what you tell them, they'll take even your "I don't know, but I'll tell you as soon as I find out" without feeling the need to substitute rumor for lack of information.
- **Keep higher management informed.** Let upper management know what's bothering employees, especially in regard to company plans, policies and actions. Ask for specific instructions on what you can tell, how much you can tell, and when you can tell it. Experience enables you to anticipate how employees will react, and to be prepared with the right answers to the questions that you know are sure to come.
- **Talk to key employees.** When anything happens that might cause rumors, meet with your main assistant or the lead employees. Give them the story and check their thinking. They are then in a position to spread the facts before anyone else can spread a rumor.
- **Meet with people.** When some decision is made that will affect people, jobs or working conditions, call employees together and tell them about it. Make sure everyone knows exactly why the decision had to be made and what it will mean, even if some people will be affected adversely.
- **Accept responsibility.** The replies of the buck passer, such as "I don't know," or "The top brass made the decision, not me," won't get you off the hook, but may even hook you to the rumor. Answer questions as precisely as possible. If you don't know the answers, it is best not to supply guesses, even well-informed ones. If you promise to get the answers, keep your word and you will keep rumors at a minimum.



Employee Values

What about your own?

What is important to you? Do your personal values have any impact on how you work and why you work?

Values are the strong guides that steer our actions and color our evaluations of events and people around us. **A value is the meaning you attach to the importance, the desirability, or the degree of worth, of an activity.** You can see why the study of values is critical to the HR professional.

Being cognizant of your own personal values as well as being able to recognize the value-based behaviors of your bosses, peers, and your company's employees provides invaluable insight into how you can achieve your work and how you can help others within the organization achieve theirs most effectively.

When Values Collide

Wouldn't work be easier if everyone's values at work were the same as yours? Although many of your employees may share similar values, as time goes on, more and more diversity in the workplace will bring you into contact with many different value systems. Differences in values as a result of age, gender and life experiences are already infiltrating the workplace at a rapid pace. HR will be called upon to play a leading role in handling change and managing diversity.



Communication Style

This assessment exercise contains a series of twenty statements that someone at work might make. Beneath each are four responses. Your job is to select the response(s) that you most agree with...the one(s) you would be likely to make if you were responding to that person face-to-face.

For each of the twenty statements, you have three points to assign, giving them to one or more of the alternate responses. You must assign three points to each set of four responses.

Example:

	“One of my newer employees seems more interested in his own needs and personal interests than he is in working on our departmental goals and standards.”	Rating	To Be Filled In
A	“Why do you think he’s putting his own needs ahead of the organization’s?”	0	
B	“Maybe you haven’t spent enough time communicating your goals and standards.”	2	
C	“I think you should tell him how you feel and get his views of the situation.”	0	
D	“It must be very difficult for you to supervise such a person.”	1	

	1) “I think I’m doing all right but I don’t know where I stand. I’m not sure what my boss expects of me and he doesn’t tell me how I’m doing. I’m trying my best, but I wonder who else knows that. I wish I knew where I stood.”	Rating	To Be Filled In
A	“Not knowing if you’re satisfying your boss or not is like being in the middle of nowhere.”		
B	“If you gave it some thought, you’d realize that feedback isn’t always a good thing.”		
C	“has your boss ever given you any indication of what he thinks of your work?”		
D	“If I were you, I would discuss it with him.”		



2) "It happens every time the manager appears in my department. He orders my people around as if I wasn't there. When he sees something he doesn't like, he tells them. They get confused. I get upset. Then he leaves. What can I do?"		Rating	To Be Filled In
A	"You're not sure how to confront your manager about your feelings."		
B	"It sounds as though you're getting more upset than your people are."		
C	"How long has this been going on?"		
D	"You should discuss your problem with him or his boss."		

3) "I finally feel I'm on board with the rest of my sales group. I got a big sale from one of my key accounts that pushed me over my sales quota. For only being on the job nine months, I feel good about my progress."		Rating	To Be Filled In
A	"How much over your quota are you?"		
B	"You should figure out what you did so you can repeat this success story."		
C	"Hitting your quota in such a short time must give you real satisfaction."		
D	"Are you sure you couldn't have done it in less time, maybe 4 to 6 months?"		

4) "As long as I've got a goal ahead, I'll keep striving for it. I'm determined to advance; hard work never bothered me. I know it won't be easy and I'll probably have to climb over a few people to get my way. But I want to be somebody, and I'm going to be."		Rating	To Be Filled In
A	"Can you imagine how you would feel if other people treated you this way?"		
B	"What in particular do you wish to achieve?"		
C	"You should take some classes in management to help you speed up your advancement."		
D	"Getting ahead is important to you, even if it means hard work and climbing over others."		



5) "I've worked here a long time but I still don't know anybody. I try to take an interest in the people I work with, but I just can't seem to make friends. I feel uncomfortable and just seem to freeze up. Sometimes I even try to pretend that I don't want friends."		Rating	To Be Filled In
A	"Why do you think you have difficulty making friends?"		
B	"It might be a good idea to be more friendly and talk more to people you meet."		
C	"Seems like you don't make friends easily; you clam up and feel unsure of yourself."		
D	"You have to give a little to get a little, you know."		

6) "The company policy is supposed to be to promote from within. And now I find out this guy is coming in to take the place of my boss. I had my eyes on that job; I've been working hard for it. Well, if that's what they think of me, I know when I'm not wanted."		Rating	To Be Filled In
A	"Maybe your qualifications don't compare with those of the new person."		
B	"Did they discuss it with you at all?"		
C	"I would make sure they know your views and interest in advancement."		
D	"It's annoying when the company picks an outsider and ignores you."		

7) "I had one of the most difficult customers to deal with yesterday. Not once did I let my emotions take over. I kept to the issues, listened with understanding, discussed options, and let her pick the best one. The customer was quite satisfied, and said so."		Rating	To Be Filled In
A	"What kind of problem did the customer have?"		
B	"You're proud of the way you handled a difficult customer to her satisfaction."		
C	"You should follow that procedure whenever you have a difficult customer."		
D	"You shouldn't let a customer tell you what solution is the best one."		



	8) "I think I'm in the wrong job. I've hesitated leaving because I spent four years in college preparing for this type of work. Now I think I'll be happier if I enter this other field – even though I'll be starting at the bottom of the ladder."	Rating	To Be Filled In
A	"You really should talk to a career counselor and get help on the decision."		
B	"To change fields after four years of preparing is a tough decision."		
C	"Do you think you should give up four years just like that?"		
D	"What is it that appeals to you in this other field?"		

	9) "She used to be one of the gang. Then she was promoted. She's not my friend anymore. I don't mind being told about my mistakes, but she doesn't have to do it in front of my workmates. Whenever I get a chance, she's going to get hers."	Rating	To Be Filled In
A	"You shouldn't waste your energy trying to get even with her."		
B	"To be told about your mistakes in front of co-workers is especially embarrassing."		
C	"How often has she done this?"		
D	"I'd suggest you talk it over with her...let her know how you feel."		

	10) "I'm really tired of this. I come in each morning and already I've got twice as much work as I can do. And then they say 'this is a rush,' or 'hurry up on that.' I've got so many requests that I just can't keep up. I like my boss and my work, but I sure could use a vacation."	Rating	To Be Filled In
A	"Is responding to all these requests from other people part of your job?"		
B	"You seem to have too much work. Why not talk it over with your boss?"		
C	"With so many requests it's difficult for you to get everything done."		
D	"Maybe you need organization more than a vacation."		



11) "Marketing gets all the money and attention. Yet we produce 100,000 of these a day, but don't even have enough money to replace these old machines. They get all the glory. We work just as hard, but have nothing to show for it."		Rating	To Be Filled In
A	"Perhaps you should talk to some of the other department heads about this."		
B	"When you knock yourself out and don't get credit, you feel let down and annoyed."		
C	"You're probably not giving the others enough credit for the job they're doing."		
D	"In particular, what do they get that you would like to have?"		

12) "If I only had enough money, I'd jump at the opportunity. I'm sure I could make a go of that business. All a person needs is a little vision, some common sense, and the courage to try it. I've got all three. I just don't have the money to do it. That's life, I guess."		Rating	To Be Filled In
A	"Do you really think you could make a go of a business on your own?"		
B	"What kind of business do you have in mind?"		
C	"What you should do is talk to a banker. They finance new ventures."		
D	"It's disappointing not to have the money to do something you really believe in."		

13) "I gave my boss a suggestion for reducing paperwork. My boss quickly saw how my idea could save time and money, and wants me to work with Bob to put it into effect."		Rating	To Be Filled In
A	"Are you sure that your idea will really work and not backfire?"		
B	"If I were you, I'd make sure that your boss tells Bob that it's a good idea."		
C	"Having your idea accepted so readily must be very satisfying."		
D	"How long do you think it will take to put your idea into effect?"		



14) "I don't know what I'm going to do. I'm making all kinds of mistakes and I know my supervisor is unhappy with me. He's already yelled at me two times this week. I can't stand to be yelled at."		Rating	To Be Filled In
A	"What do you think might be causing the mistakes?"		
B	"Why don't you tell your supervisor how you feel?"		
C	"It's disturbing to have someone yell at you when you make mistakes."		
D	"Perhaps your supervisor has good reason to yell at you."		

15) "Oh brother! A person in our department got a promotion by buttering up the higher ups. That promotion should have been mine. I think I am more qualified than he is. He doesn't need the money half as much as I do."		Rating	To Be Filled In
A	"If I were you, I'd tell your manager how angry you're feeling."		
B	"It sounds like that was a promotion you were counting on."		
C	"Your need for the money is irrelevant...he may be more qualified."		
D	"Was it solely his buttering up that got him the promotion?"		

16) " My supervisor often makes mistakes and has me handle the situation for her. It ends up that she avoids confronting the issue directly. To add insult to injury she says to me, 'It's your fault, you should fix those mistakes!' I end up getting blamed."		Rating	To Be Filled In
A	"It sounds like you've been lax in catching mistakes, regardless of who makes them."		
B	"It seems to me you're caught in a double bind and resent being treated this way."		
C	"What kind of mistakes does she ask you to cover up?"		
D	"You should quit that job and find one where you're treated fairly."		



17) "It's happened again! I was describing a problem to my boss when she starts staring out the window. Then she asks me to repeat things I just said. I feel she's superficially giving me the time, but she ends up side-stepping the issues."		Rating	To Be Filled In
A	"Stop talking when you feel she's not listening. That way she'll start paying attention."		
B	"You can't expect her to listen to every problem; learn to solve your own problems."		
C	"What kinds of problems do you talk to her about?"		
D	"It's frustrating to have her 'tune out' when you're trying to solve problems."		

18) "I received a performance review last week. It's the best one I've ever gotten! I've been working on communicating more clearly to my co-workers and following instructions more carefully...none of my paperwork had to be done over."		Rating	To Be Filled In
A	"When did you start working on improving your communication skills?"		
B	"You should get a copy of your appraisal and put it on file for future reference."		
C	"Wasn't it last week you had to redo the planning project because of mistakes?"		
D	"Sounds like the hard work you did to improve has really paid off."		

19) "I work like mad to get rush projects completed. What's my reward for getting them out? Nothing. No thanks, no nothing. In fact most of the time the so-called rush projects sit on people's desks unattended for days."		Rating	To Be Filled In
A	"How often does this happen?"		
B	"you ought to tell them that you don't like being rushed when it's unwarranted."		
C	"You feel like they're taking advantage of you, and that you're being treated unfairly."		
D	"They shouldn't manage by crisis, but you shouldn't get so angry."		



20) "I don't know what I'm going to do. My boss keeps asking me to work overtime, to get letters out or finish a project that could wait until the next day. I can't say anything because he's my boss. I'd sure like to tell him a thing or two, but I just can't risk it."		Rating	To Be Filled In
A	"Sounds like you want to find a way to confront your boss about his behavior."		
B	"If I were you, I'd discuss it with him. You should tell him how you feel."		
C	"If you weren't so afraid, you could have resolved the problem by now."		
D	"Has your boss always treated you this way?"		

Determining Your Style:

Total each "style" (E, C, S, A) and place next to the appropriate letter.

E - _____ C - _____ S - _____ A - _____

Identify the highest score, this is your style:

- E – Empathetic
- C – Critical
- S – Searching
- A - Advising



How Well Do You Listen?

	Your Listening Habits	Yes	No
1.	Do you have trouble “getting everything” when someone gives you a task or directions? (how you <u>process</u> the information, <u>interpret</u> the information, or <u>remember</u> the information)		
2.	Do you listen well to people who you feel are boring?		
3.	Do you “fake attention” or daydream?		
4.	Do you listen well to people you disagree with?		
5.	Do distractions interfere with your concentration (noise, incoming email, people passing, etc.)		
6.	Do you listen well to the people who have a totally different communication style than yours (different work style, different priorities, different responses, etc.)		
7.	Do you let your cell phone take your attention away from the person talking to you?		
8.	Do you stop and give eye contact when you are really busy?		
9.	Can you hold your concentration well in meetings when an agenda item doesn't pertain to you?		
10.	Do you react emotionally to the speaker's words, tone, or expressions?		



No Cause for Alarm

Listen to the story that's read. After listening, circle **(T)** if the statement is true, **(F)** if it is definitely false, or circle **(?)** if it could be true or false but you don't have enough information.

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| 1. The man who disappeared into the night activated the alarm. | T | F | ? |
| 2. A burglar demanded money and got it. | T | F | ? |
| 3. Lee Scarpelli opened the safe. | T | F | ? |
| 4. This is a story about two people. | T | F | ? |
| 5. The stranger disappeared into the night. | T | F | ? |
| 6. The stranger broke into the safe. | T | F | ? |
| 7. Lee Scarpelli is an accountant. | T | F | ? |
| 8. The incident occurred at Lee Scarpelli's office. | T | F | ? |
| 9. The alarm rang only after the incident occurred. | T | F | ? |
| 10. Somebody disappeared with the money. | T | F | ? |
| 11. Lee Scarpelli had spent a long evening working on the ledgers. | T | F | ? |
| 12. We don't know for a fact that the stranger entered through the front door. | T | F | ? |
| 13. The stranger removed the money from the safe. | T | F | ? |
| 14. The burglar got away. | T | F | ? |
| 15. If Lee had time to activate the alarm, he probably would not have been robbed. | T | F | ? |
| 16. Lee was at the office at 9:05 p.m. | T | F | ? |
| 17. Lee Scarpelli was a woman | T | F | ? |



18. A stranger pulled off a hold-up. T F ?
19. The accountant took the money and disappeared into the night. T F ?



Corporate Membership

Compensation

Compliance

Background Screening

Recruiting & Talent Acquisition

HR Consulting

Training

Leadership Development



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