

My Face—Your Face. Is Face to Face Communication Necessary Today?

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Social media, e-mail and other advancements in technology seem to suggest that face-to-face communication in the business world is “old school,” that people do not miss or desire in person communications. One businessman I called recently had this recorded message on his phone. “Hi, I only check phone messages once a week so if your message is important, please send me a text message or email.” While business professionals accept that new methods are cost effective, they are offended when there is not in person communication in certain situations. So what are those situations?

Change Messages

If your organization is about to experience a significant change such as merging or restructuring, employees want the executive team to deliver this message personally and to be available to answer questions. Even if the message is totally positive, people fear change. They wonder, “Will they be able to do it?” The bigger the change, the more important it is to deliver the message in person. Without face-to-face discussions, it is difficult to get people on board quickly and difficult for them to stay positive. Often multiple meetings must be conducted to define the scope of the change. While the initial meeting should be done in person, follow-up meetings on the same topic can be done via a teleconference or other media.

Bad News Messages

Messages where there is likely to be a strong emotional response should never be communicated other than in person. For example, if a company needs to eliminate a department or layoff a percentage of their workforce, that message undoubtedly will precipitate fear and anger. Those concerned feel the least their manager or executive team can do is deliver this news to their face. Emotional charged messages cannot be digested quickly. There must be multiple meetings and plenty of time for discussion.

Critical Messages

Highly important data or information, such as test

results, earnings, new opportunities or priorities should also be delivered in person. It demonstrates criticality and shows respect for the listeners' input.

Performance Reviews

People work hard, especially in this difficult economy. They want to hear how well they are performing and what they need to improve. They need their efforts recognized with a face-to-face performance review if at all possible. While employees recognize cost cuts and travel freezes, performance reviews by phone are not well received. The individual does not feel valued.

Social media and virtual communications are here to stay, but so also is the need to recognize that some meetings can or should not be done virtually or electronically.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their presentation and telephone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.