

5 Deadly Communication Mistakes

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When I was young and got into trouble, my mother always asked, “Now what did you learn?” She never accepted, “I don’t know,” as an answer. Her feeling was that if I couldn’t verbalize what I would do differently, I would continue to make the same mistakes. My mother was a wise woman.

In our business worlds, invariably there are times we wish we would have done or said things differently. We all make mistakes, but there are some situations we might be able to avoid if we knew about them on the front end. In terms of communication, there are five mistakes business professionals make when trying to persuade others. These are:

1. Overloading listeners with too much information.
2. Not demonstrating an understanding of their business issues.
3. Speaking in jargon or acronyms.
4. Not establishing trust or credibility.
5. Being down right boring.

Overloading listeners with too much information.

In an attempt to convince our audience, often we tell them everything we know about our product or service. We go into a lot of detail. Our assumption is that the more the audience knows, the more interested they will become. Unfortunately, our listeners often feel overwhelmed and conclude that what you are recommending sounds very complex. Also, since listeners are a captive audience, another mistake speakers make is overloading their audience with the company’s full suite of products and services. Nine times out of ten, this also has a det-

rimental effect. Since listeners are only interested in their own needs, they may see this as an attempt to push products instead of solutions and become annoyed. Speakers with simple messages facilitate comprehension. They increase their chances of success. If listeners want more information about your product or your company’s other offerings, they will ask.

Not demonstrating an understanding of business issues

More often than not, speakers tell their listeners what they want them to know. They say the same thing regardless of who the customer is. They don’t take the time up-front to analyze their listeners’ business needs and to create content that addresses those needs. Because speakers often deliver a standard presentation, they also don’t cite relevant examples or stories that make the customer feel you really do understand. Consequently, you do not convince them to take action.

It is important to remember it is all about your listeners, not you. Listeners must see a clear link between their issues and your product or services, or they move on to your competitors. Presenters who can demonstrate they understand key issues and have a solution that not only meets these needs, but also offers a good return on investment, undoubtedly will close business.

Speaking in jargon or acronyms.

The new language of the twenty-first century appears to be jargon and acronyms. It’s everywhere, even on the nightly news. Listeners don’t like to struggle to understand your message. Jargon and acronyms force listeners to focus on what you have just said, instead of what you are currently saying. People just want you to speak as simply and clearly as possible so that they can keep up with you and/or explain what you have said to someone else. The bottom line is that the clearer your message, the more people feel they can make a decision.

Not establishing trust or credibility

To be persuaded, listeners, of course, need to believe you are a straight shooter, someone credible. We establish trust and credibility by taking time to get to know the person and to let the person know something about us on a personal level. Also, what

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we say or promise must be true. If we promise 24/7 customer service, it cannot be sporadic. Finally, there are certain body language issues that dramatically affect trust. One is eye contact; the other is pausing. When a speaker doesn't look his listeners in the eye, when he has lots of "ums," "ahs" and other filler words, or when he speaks quickly, listeners question whether this person knows his stuff. Strong eye contact and pausing are essential skills for any speaker.

Being down right boring

Listeners have short attention spans. If the speaker isn't animated and if the speaker doesn't have interesting stories or relevant examples, attention wanes. It is a mistake to think our words alone will compel people to listen. If a speaker is passionate and not afraid to demonstrate it, his listeners will pay attention to him, not just at the beginning, but all the way to the end.

All of us make mistakes, and we aren't always successful communicators. However, the pros, those that have the reputation for being effective, will tell you that they paid attention to their mistakes along the way. They took note of their pitfalls and made a commitment not to allow these mistakes to become habits. If you are not getting the results you want and feel your message was miscommunicated, force yourself really to analyze what went wrong and verbalize how you will handle the situation differently next time.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.