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COMMUNICATE STRATEGICALLY : 54 TIPS TO INFLUENCE, ENGAGE & ACTIVATE

From the minute we wake in the morning until we fall asleep at night, we have innumerable opportunities to communicate. Following are a variety of ideas, reminders and techniques to assist you in making sure when you communicate you intentionally engage, influence and activate.

- 1 Take a breath before responding to a question. It will give you a moment to formulate your answer and the pause will engage your listener more than an immediate response.
- 2 Whenever telling a story or anecdote look for the "universal truth" – the moral of the story that anyone, anywhere can relate to.
- 3 Be sure when you prepare a communication it encompasses the 4 C's – It's Clear, has Context, is Colorful, and has a Call to Action.
- 4 Unfold complex issues to ensure your communication is easily understood.
- 5 Do more of what draws people to you and less of what doesn't.
- 6 Talk about the three things that position you best (example: coach, writer, speaker)
- 7 Before you begin any important communication ask yourself: What is my purpose (To inform my audience of the three new features of our contact management system) and my outcome (By the end of my presentation, my listeners will know how to use the new features and will have an opportunity to practice). Defining your purpose and outcome will guarantee success!
- 8 Be assertive and use "I" statements ("I'm confused...I don't understand") rather than blaming the other person ("You are confused...You don't understand")
- 9 Avoid jargon and use words and phrases your customers understand.
- 10 Speak optimistically and tell people what you CAN do for them.
- 11 Talk more about fewer topics rather than talking too little about many.
- 12 Practice "but economics" and bridge with "and" instead ("I appreciate your idea AND I want to share with you our latest research...")
- 13 Mirror and match your listener's body language and vocal pace to create rapport.
- 14 Add a video component to your next presentation to tap into people's visual learning channel.
- 15 When you have no time to prepare for a presentation, remember to organize your thoughts by sharing with people what you want them to KNOW (the core information), FEEL (the emotion behind the content) and DO (the persuasive call to action).
- 16 Always be prepared to describe your company's purpose and promise. Communicating your company's purpose will engage employees as they want to be a part of something that matters.



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- 17 Translate company values into leadership behavior.
- 18 Make your deficit your greatest asset (older: vast experience; younger: fresh perspective)
- 19 Create an internal editorial board so before any corporate communication is launched, key stakeholders from across business lines can contribute.
- 20 Don't ask questions where the response is "of course" – it can anger.
- 21 Consider a fresh way of describing your service offering – for example rather than "housekeeping" or "maid service" call it "home make-over." When you call things by a slightly different name it is heard with fresh ears.
- 22 When asked, "What do you do?" Answer by sharing information about yourself, your process and the payoff for the client.
- 23 Always modify your energy level to match your listener's – avoid a mismatch.
- 24 Think of your personal marketing statement as "planned spontaneity."
- 25 Include in your pitch to prospective clients how what you do can get them more of what they want.
- 26 Work on becoming a great conversationalist – remember that you are interesting if you are interested in others.
- 27 "We understand everything in human life through stories", said Jean Paul Sarte. To be a better communicator – to sell your ideas, products or services, to move other people to action – incorporate stories.
- 28 Information + Emotion = Memory. Add emotional content to your facts and figures to ensure retention.
- 29 Keep a journal. Journaling improves your ability to recognize and record personal experiences that will evolve into stories you can use in your presentations.
- 30 Bundle your ideas into three main points to make them memorable.
- 31 Engage your employees with an internal campaign whose tag line is refreshed every few years - naming a new era in the organization.
- 32 Leverage every opportunity to speak or present at an industry conference...that visibility will easily triple your peer introductions.
- 33 Collect a few sets of tongue-twisters (Peter Piper picked...) and read them aloud a few times before an important presentation. It will help improve your articulation by waking up your teeth, tongue, lips and palate.
- 34 Suck on a throat lozenge for 60 seconds before you present if will help you avoid "dry mouth."
- 35 Most people are comfortable with 3-5 seconds of sustained eye contact – longer than that and you are staring.
- 36 Never end a presentation without a clear call to action – it could range from "Sign this petition today!" to "Think about what I've said."
- 37 Create "space" (silence or a pause) to allow your audience to catch up with you and reflect on what you are saying.



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- 38 Read. The long held belief that the more you read, the more you know and the smarter you will be, is true. Reading will greatly improve your writing skills.
- 39 As Fran Lebowitz said, "Writing is editing." Don't shy away from the daunting task of writing and instead concentrate on the continued refinement of your drafts.
- 40 Write a letter. Put a stamp on it and drop it in the mail. It will provide you writing practice and be a meaningful gesture to the recipient.
- 41 Whenever you find yourself in the midst of a tense or angry exchange with a colleague or family member, instead of blaming or lashing out...start with a simple, "I'm confused..." "I may have misunderstood..."
- 42 What is "news" from a reporter's perspective? The economy, medical breakthroughs, celebrity scoops, humanitarian actions, crime, underdog wins, the best, the brightest, the fastest, slowest, youngest, oldest, etc.
- 43 Position yourself as a thought leader: an individual or business who is recognized among their peers as being at the forefront of innovative thinking and approaches to a particular problem/issue/subject or business.
- 44 When developing key messages that describe your company or business, be sure to include: 1) Who you are 2) Your financial stats 3) Your target markets 4) Future plans / growth 5) What makes you unique?
- 45 Words that get people's attention include: empathize, energize, candid, critical, deflect, prioritize, prevent, purposeful, accountable, truthful, and valuable.
- 46 Words or phrases that are worn and weary include: "no worries", "in this economy", "Literally", "LOL", "My two cents", "Awesome", "at the end of the day", "circle back", "Totally", and "For some reason"...
- 47 Keep in mind the 4 elements of a great interview: Be Bold, Bundle, Bridge and Bounce. (Bold – begin with an attention-getting headline; Bundle – organize key messages in threes; Bridge – be prepared to segue to something more important; Bounce – display energy that will keep the interview lively.
- 48 Picture, Practice, Realize -- Picture your success (visualize), practice with tools and techniques that will assist you and then you will realize your goals.
- 49 To better assess your communication skills, do a personal communication inventory. What are your greatest strengths? What things do you need to improve upon? Then ask six other people (personal and professional) to assess your strengths and limitations. Is there alignment? Is it clear what you need to work on?
- 50 Follow the Platinum Rule: Treat others the way they want to be treated.
- 51 Don't attempt to "manage up" instead remember that you can engage, collaborate, challenge, advise, object and be loyal. But never manage.
- 52 Become adept at tuning into multiple channels (face-to-face, telephone, email, text, etc.). Avoid become over reliant on one channel.
- 53 Remember that everything we do and say is a conversation. A look, a gesture, an action (or inaction) – they all say something about us to our audience. Work towards being deliberate and intentional in your conversations.
- 54 Display warmth & competence in your communication. They are the universal foundation for all human behavior and relationships.