

Getting What You Want, How You Want It, When You Want It!

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By Kirstin Carey

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Have you ever asked someone to complete a task, but it was not done the way you expected? Or have you agreed to meet people at a large event, but were unable to find them once you got there? Do you have trouble managing staff or delegating responsibility because no one ever does what you ask them to do?

Challenges with delegation, meeting locations, and the completion of tasks usually indicate a communication problem. There are two areas that cause a breakdown in communication: being specific and quantifying. If you learn to how to be effective in these areas, you will dramatically reduce your communication problems.

Be Specific and Get What You Want

Unclear or ambiguous communication can lead to very ugly problems. Terms or phrases such as "a few" or "some" or "later" or "soon" can lead to misunderstanding and miscommunication.

You probably have your own "filler" or vague words you use to stay non-specific. These words are great in situations where being specific isn't necessary, such as when you tell a co-worker that you're just finishing a project and will meet her in the lunch room, "in a minute." Of course everyone knows that doesn't mean exactly 60 seconds. It means soon. But what is "soon"? For some people that may mean 15 minutes. To others "soon" may mean only three minutes. Vague words often mean different things to different people because the word is relative to the listener's personal paradigms.

If you tell an experienced speaker to expect "a lot of people" in her audience, she may expect to see two thousand people sitting in an auditorium. An inexperienced speaker may only picture 35 people in the audience when told the same thing.

Tell a group of people to arrive "around five o'clock" and you will have people showing up anywhere from 4:30 to 7:30. (I have family members that believe they're on time if they arrive on the right day!)

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A deadline is set to have a project finished "by the end of the week." Does that mean the project should be completed by 9 am on Friday morning or 5 pm Friday evening?

Be specific with what you want and what you are talking about and you will be more successful with your communications.

Quantify and Create Tangible Understanding

It is difficult to quantify everything, though many things can be measured and/or given a number. Attempt to put everything you can into quantifiable terms to create a "value," especially when discussing non-tangible items. Let's look at some examples.

On a resume, a job applicant lists her past job responsibilities as:

Handled bookkeeping
Managed client accounts
Created new filing system

To give more concrete value to these items, the applicant needs to quantifying her successes and give them the attention they deserve. A more effective listing on her resume would be:

Handled bookkeeping of accounts totaling \$1.5 million
Managed 125–140 client accounts annually
Created system which saved 15 hours of manual work weekly
Much better, right?

When you speak in quantifiable terms, people are more likely to understand the value of the items you are discussing. Quantifying is particularly effective when you are marketing a business, asking for a raise, developing a job resume, or debating an issue.

Quantifying is extremely effective in the sales and marketing process. If you can quantify the gain of what the potential client will get by buying your product or service or the loss by not buying, you will be more successful.

If the prospect understands and quantifies the problem specifically, he will be more likely to understand the scope of the issue. Rather than just thinking there is a "problem with employee morale," help the client quantify the problem in real numbers.

Guide the potential client into telling you that the average length of time an employee stays with the company is 16 months. Company statistics shows it costs an average of \$3,500 per employee for training classes, a uniform, and standard employee supplies. During the training, an employee receives a paycheck but is not yet productive. The average salary for an employee is \$2,500 a month and it takes two months to train a new employee; costing the company \$5,000 in salary during training. An average of 25 new employees must be hired each year. Therefore, it conservatively costs the company \$212,500 a year just to train new employees.

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If your solution to employee turnover is less than the cost (\$212,500) of the problem, then the client would be insane not to hire you, right?

Let the numbers do the selling for you. Numbers are tangible. Numbers are concrete. Numbers speak volumes.

So, by being specific and quantifying you will begin to get what you want, when you want it, and how you want it more often. You will be a better manager, leader, negotiator, and overall communicator. Now go out there and have fun with your new communication tools!

Kirstin Carey is an award-winning speaker and consultant and Principal of Orange Tree Training & Speaking Group. She works with organizations on effective and persuasive communications. Her company also has a special division which focuses on helping women advance and succeed through more effective communication skills without having to communicate like a man. To find out how Kirstin

can help you, call (800) 380-6520 or go to www.powHERful.com

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