

news & notes

SURVEY SHOWS IMPORTANCE OF POSITIVE COMMUNICATION

According to a survey conducted by the Canadian staffing service firm OfficeTeam, good communication skills are the key to building a positive image at work. When asked what has the greatest impact on a person's reputation on the job, 49 percent of those polled said communication style.

"Skilled communicators are able to build rapport with co-workers and business associates, which can help move projects along more efficiently," said Liz Hughes, executive director of OfficeTeam.

Hughes offers the following tips for more effective communication:

- **Keep it short.** Whether it's an e-mail, voice mail, or face-to-face meeting, keep your comments brief and to the point.
- **Play nice.** Don't forget to say "please" and "thank you" and to do what you can to help co-workers. If you go out of your way for people, they're apt to return the favor.
- **Be a wordsmith.** Choose your words carefully, especially when e-mailing, since written messages often appear more severe than intended. If you request action, be clear about what you need.
- **Listen up.** Give those with whom you speak your full attention. Resist the temptation to finish others' sentences or to formulate your own responses while they are talking.



Company Name Here

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Positive Communication

How you say it is as important as what you say

Ever since cavepeople uttered the first meaningful sounds, communication has been a key ingredient in all human interaction. In the workplace, effective communication is vital. Whether it's face-to-face, on the phone, or in writing, the way you communicate with co-workers, customers, and others has a lot to do with how successful you are on the job. Those with the most positive communication styles are the most likely to get ahead and win the respect of their co-workers.

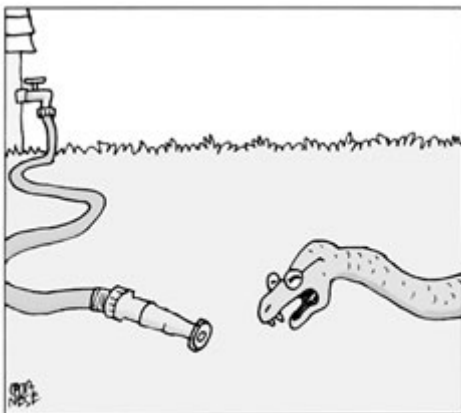
Here's a little quiz that will help you rate your own communication style. On the line to the right of each statement, **write 4 if the statement is always true; 3 if it is usually true; 2 if it is sometimes true; 1 if it is rarely true; and 0 if it is never true.** Then add up your score and find out how you rate.

1. I know what I want my communications to achieve. _____
2. I think before I speak and organize my thoughts. _____
3. I keep my communications brief, clear, and to the point. _____
4. I limit topics in each communication to avoid information overload. _____
5. I use conversational language in speech and writing and avoid jargon. _____
6. I encourage questions and feedback. _____
7. I phrase things positively ("Do") rather than negatively ("Don't"). _____
8. I focus on what others are saying when they speak. _____
9. I am conscious of my body language while speaking face-to-face. _____
10. I speak clearly and keep my tone pleasant and my volume at a moderate level. _____

TOTAL SCORE: _____

How do you rate?

If you scored 40 (perfect score), you have an effective communication style, and your success on the job no doubt reflects that. A score of 30 to 40 also reflects a mostly positive communication style that works in your favor. A score under 30 means you need to work on your presentation. You may not be coming across as effectively as you think.



"Hello? Hello? Have you listened to one word I've said??"

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REDUCE NEGATIVE STRESS

December is **National Stress-Free Holidays Month** so try these tips to help you have a happy holiday:

- **Treat problems as situations to be corrected**, not as threats to your future.
- **Put things in perspective.** Every problem isn't a crisis.
- **Don't take things personally.** Changes, criticisms, or difficulties often reflect what's happening on the job or at home, not a negative response to you as an individual.
- **Don't try to control everything** and everyone. It's impossible, and it just adds to stress.
- **Accept that nobody is perfect.** Everyone makes mistakes so be forgiving of yourself and others.

MAKING GOOD DECISIONS

Ask these questions:

- **What's the best thing** that could come of making this decision?
- **What's the worst thing?**
- **What do you wish** would happen?
- **What's likely to happen** based on your experience?
- **Have you made this decision or a similar one in the past?** How did it turn out?
- **What would happen if you made no decision** at this time?
- Pick someone you respect. **What would this person decide to do?**



Choose Gifts Carefully

How to select safe toys for children

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, 25 children between the ages of 3 months and 12 years died in one recent year as a result of toy-related accidents, and an additional 255,000 children under the age of 15 suffered toy-related injuries.

To prevent these accidents and to raise public awareness about buying safe toys for holiday gift giving, **December has been designated Safe Toys and Gifts Month.** Follow these recommendations to make wise and safe selections this holiday season:

- **Read the age and safety labels on every toy before making a purchase.** These labels tell parents if the toy is safe for their child. Keep in mind that toys that are suitable for older kids could be unsafe for younger children.
- **Check all toys for sturdy construction** before making a purchase. Make sure small parts will not break off.
- **Avoid toys with sharp edges** and those that can be shot or propelled.
- **Avoid items that young children can choke on**, such as balloons, balls, blocks, and toy parts that are smaller than 1¼ inches in diameter.
- **Avoid toys that make loud noises**, like cap guns; they can damage a child's hearing.
- **Make sure strings and ribbons are no longer than six inches** to prevent strangulation.

Everyone Counts!

What does workplace diversity really mean?

An organization like ours that recognizes diversity is one in which:

- **All employees show respect** for one another's differences.
- **Differences are viewed as pluses** to the organization.
- **All employees feel comfortable** and equal in the work environment.
- **All employees feel encouraged to express their views** and ideas.
- **No particular group receives extra** benefits.
- **Individuals are judged by their own skills**, talents, and abilities, not stereotyped by a group of which they are a part.
- **Individuals are judged by the same criteria**, not by criteria tailored to specific groups.
- **People think before they speak** to avoid voicing stereotyped or offensive remarks.
- **Work teams have diverse memberships** and perspectives.
- **Different ideas and approaches are welcomed.**
- **Diversity is viewed as a given**, not a program-of-the-month.
- **All employees recognize that organizations can succeed only when they have access to every possible talent**, perspective, and market.

Workplace diversity isn't mandated by law. It is not forced on us by the state or federal regulators. It is something we choose because we know that it makes our organization stronger, more competitive, and more profitable. But to make diversity work, your support is essential. Remember, everyone counts!