



The Art of Global Communication

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We are starting to see a convergence of communications styles and tools in this fast paced, ever-changing world we live in. Fifteen years ago, who would have thought text messaging would be one of the preferred communications tools used by teenagers?

Just because we have all of these neat tools and gadgets to communicate does not necessarily mean we are more effective in our communicating our message with others. I recall attending a parent/teen communication workshop at our church shortly after our repatriation back to the U.S. What amazed us during the workshop was how both parents and teens focused on the communication technology but not the messaging between the two parties.

I also find this evident when I talk with businesses trying to understand how they communicate their message to the market. Many of them are focused on the brochure colors or the quality of the photos but they forget to focus on the message they want to communicate to their market. This is even more evident when trying to communicate across cultures.

How to get your message understood

Whether you're marketing a new product or communicating to an internal global work team, it's important for you to have a clear understanding of how you want your message to be received by your audience. Let's look at some simple rules that will make your global communications more effective:

Rule No. 1: It's about the audience

Too often in our communication we are trying to tell our audience about ourselves or our business. Unless you have a very strong personal relationship with your audience they really don't care! What they want to understand is what does your message mean to them? How will you solve their problem? How will this change impact their business or their job? So understanding how the receiver will interpret your message is very important in getting their attention and action. By understanding your audience you can craft your message to maximize acceptance. In some instances, you may have to craft your message several ways to reach your total target audience even within the same company.

Rule No. 2: Differentiate your Message

Focus on the uniqueness of your value proposition, whether you are trying to market a product or yourself for a job interview. Defining the uniqueness will give your audience a clear picture of the value of your solution versus the competition.

Rule No. 3: Avoid the assumption that everyone knows what you know

How often do we receive e-mails or messages from businesses promoting products or co-workers discussing a project; assuming we have total understanding of what they are communicating to us. Take some time to provide some background information to bring your audience to your level of understanding of the situation.

Rule No. 4: Avoid inference

Don't assume someone will take action based on an observation. How often have you heard, "We're out of milk!" What the other party wants us to do is to get some milk. However instead of asking for the action they are inferring you will go perform the action based on their observation. Be specific in your request. This is especially true when dealing with people for whom English is a second language.

Rule No 5: Be sincere in your communication

Too often we Americans say things in jest. How often have we said, "Let's do lunch!" as a means of ending a conversation versus really meaning for the parties to go to lunch. Or how about the internal message from the CEO: "People are our greatest asset," while at the same time you know the company is planning to downsize. People view this as rude and insincere. You need to support your message with appropriate action.