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This Issue: **Communication Confusion**

a MESSAGE from SYLVIA

The Manager's Coach

According to Webster's Dictionary, communication refers to exchanging information or opinions. Sounds simple, doesn't it? And yet, for most of us, it can be a great source of frustration. Despite all of the sophisticated channels we have available today—telephones, emails, social media, virtual platforms, iPads®, Skype, and fax machines—communicating with other people still remains an enormous challenge. Why is it that many of our exchanges don't go well?

Aside from technology breakdowns that are bound to occur, we ourselves are responsible for most of the problems. We need to own this. Each one of us. Often we don't speak or write with the clarity that functional and meaningful communication demands. There are various prices to pay for this. We may harm or lose relationships. We may frustrate people to the point they don't want to deal with us. We may get unexpected results. We may make wrong assumptions. We may not get our needs met. One or all of these could happen. When communication is incomplete or just plain inadequate, we and others suffer.

Few of us begin the day planning how to make our communications unclear. Actually, we crave clarity—even if we don't realize it on a conscious level.

We crave clarity deep inside because relationships go more smoothly, tasks get done more easily, and we end up feeling more satisfied by the time we climb into bed. We really do want to get it right. Plus, there's a lot of external pressure to get it right. But frequently we know we blew it. Well, it's hard to fix something when we aren't really sure what's broken. The feature article below highlights ten reasons behind communication confusion.

Sylvia

FEATURE ARTICLE

10 Reasons Behind Communication Confusion

1. Leaving important steps out of a process

Did someone ever give you instructions for how to do a project and he didn't communicate a critical step in that process? As a result, that project either didn't turn out the way everyone expected or completing it was a much greater struggle than it needed to be.

2. Talking in circles

After listening to somebody talk in circles you generally find yourself exhausted, right? Obviously, the person had no real idea about what she was attempting to communicate to you. Clarity around the main points of the message was missing.

3. Failing to provide the details

If your boss asks you to represent him at an important meeting but doesn't communicate specific preferences for how you should interact with certain others in attendance, then it's entirely possible that you will approach the situation using your "lens" rather than his. Unfortunately, after you return, your boss may express displeasure about the role you assumed during the meeting.

4. Implying one thing but meaning another

When you get strong verbal vibes that your team leader would rather have you switch projects tomorrow, you take steps to make that

change. Later you learn that the team leader never intended for you to work on the other project. She asks you why you ever made that assumption.

5. Speaking too softly

People who talk too softly risk being misunderstood. As you walk away from these folks, you begin to doubt that you got all of their content. You fill in the gaps by yourself, and the next day you realize you drew totally wrong conclusions.

6. Assuming other people are intimately familiar with a topic

Somebody at your office engages you in conversation about planning a party for a seasoned colleague. Excitedly, she starts talking about the proposed date, time and location for this event, but you have no idea why a party is being organized in the first place. When you inquire, she quickly tells you that Susan is leaving the company for another position elsewhere. “Didn’t you know that?”

7. Choosing not to ask clarifying questions

You are 85% sure about how to approach a major project. Because your boss was fuzzy about the remaining 15%, you feel a bit insecure. Instead of going back to your boss and asking the necessary questions that would provide you with the clarity you need, you proceed with the job and make a big mistake.

8. Using words that leave room for personal interpretation

You are sitting in your annual evaluation meeting, and your boss is telling you that she’s pleased you and your team completed all major projects on time throughout the year. She continues to praise you for your noteworthy time management skills. As a result, you begin to assume that she is happy about all aspects of your project management work. You are unprepared for her low written rating of your skills around motivating others because she never mentioned this piece during the conversation.

9. Failing to communicate critical information altogether

Were you ever in a situation where you had started to implement a particular process when someone informed you out of the blue that this

process is no longer being used? It doesn't feel good, does it? In fact, it's downright annoying. Later in the day you learn that your boss should have made a formal announcement about the process being replaced by something new and different.

10. Starting but not finishing a thought

As you walk to your car after work, one of your colleagues falls into step with you. He remarks that he so frustrated by....His voice trails off, and he never completes the sentence. You ask him why he is feeling that way, but he quickens his pace and heads in the opposite direction. The next morning you are typing on your computer when he appears in your office doorway. He wonders why you are not gathering the team for a meeting to discuss the current project's challenges that have him so frustrated.

RESOURCES

Some folks have written on the subject of communication confusion from different angles than the one I used in this ezine. Working and communicating in a mobile environment is one. Technology and being separated from colleagues adds other challenges to those listed in the Feature article. Take a look at this [overview](#), which presents several types of communication confusion encountered in a mobile environment and possible solutions to them.

TIP

Prevent—or at least Reduce—Confusion Before It Starts

Identify the #1 reason behind the communication confusion YOU experience regularly based upon the list provided above in the feature article. Then determine if this has been a problem for you historically or a recent development. What feedback, if any, have you received from others about it? Think about one thing you could add or leave out to improve your ability to give instructions, tell a story, convey your expectations, deliver an

evaluation, grasp the whole picture, or invite others into a specific conversation.

Where in the World is SYLVIA?

Sylvia facilitated the event *Swap Your Card*, a program on networking hosted by the West Shore Chamber of Commerce on March 23. A photo appears below.

Last Friday, April 8, 2011, Sylvia was the guest presenter at [Lunch Bytes](#) sponsored by Harrisburg University and spoke on the topic, *Establishing Your Professional Image Using an e-Portfolio*. Video clips are available on line including [some pitfalls to avoid](#) in e-Portfolio development. Also, Sylvia is periodically placing free tips on YouTube® based upon her coaching experience that can be useful to many people. Click here for the [Launching Lives channel](#) and bookmark it to return in the future to see new additions.

The Mechanicsburg Chamber of Commerce will host a presentation by Sylvia on the subject of first impressions in the business environment on April 26.

Sylvia continues her monthly columns in the Money section of the second Sunday of the month Harrisburg Patriot. Not published electronically at present, clippings can be read on [Sylvia's blog](#).

About This Ezine

This Ezine is 1) to provide readers with valuable FREE content which contributes to both personal and professional growth and 2) to invite them to take next steps toward working directly with Sylvia.

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About SYLVIA

Presenting to West Shore Chamber members and guests last month



Sylvia Hepler, Owner and President of **Launching Lives**, is an executive coach based in South Central PA. Her mission is to support corporate and nonprofit executives and business

owners as they solve problems, develop leadership skills, and increase balance in their lives. Her background includes: nonprofit executive management/leadership, public speaking, business and freelance writing, teaching, and retail sales.

A [certified executive coach](#) through The Rescue Institute in Colorado and a participant in extensive continuing education, Sylvia is a platinum level expert author on [ezinearticles.com](#). She has produced an audio CD entitled, "Making Change", [two special reports](#) for persons in management positions, and an e-book entitled, No Surprises: A Business Guide for Starting Your Coaching Practice.

More information is available at her [Launching Lives Website](#)

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Launching Lives SERVICES

Launching Lives is an executive coaching company located in South Central

PA. Its mission is to support managers and executives to solve their most pressing problems, develop leadership skills, and increase balance in their lives utilizing a holistic approach. Launching Lives focuses on BUILDING PEOPLE through individual, private coaching, group coaching, specialized products, speeches, and retreats. Most coaching takes place by phone.

Often people don't really know HOW they might benefit from coaching. Quite simply, ask yourself these questions: "What can't I seem to resolve on my own? What is keeping me awake at night? What am I missing when I look at a certain situation? How can I get to the next professional level? How can I learn certain skills quickly? How can I narrow my professional gaps? How can I motivate my staff? How can I communicate more effectively so I serve myself and others better? How can I reduce my work-related frustration? How can I develop a viable plan of action for myself and/or my organization? How can I obtain greater job satisfaction? Coaching is the SOLUTION to any of these issues.

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