



It's the Way You Tell 'Em

Laura Ashley-Timms, the Licensing Industry's very own Coach, has teamed up with Total Licensing to challenge you to improve yourself and your business.

So read on... and then send in your questions to be answered in our regular 'Coaching Corner' feature.

Communication has a lot to answer for. Successful individuals and companies have often cracked the communication mystery whilst those still aspiring to success just fail to take it seriously. The great news is that a few small changes can have a significant impact on your results. Suddenly getting what you want becomes both more attainable and more fun!

My inspiration for this article has come from two completely different sources.

Firstly the business requirements of two of my clients who have set improving their communication and conversation skills as one of their main goals; and secondly, my own personal need to learn how to communicate better with my two and three year old children - whilst trying to avoid morphing into 'screamy', 'shouty' or 'nagging' mum! As an aside, for both business professionals and parents alike, I cannot recommend highly enough a book I have discovered called "How To Talk so Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk", by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish. What's particularly inspiring about this book is that it was written over 26 years ago, before these types of books and 'Supernanny' programmes became fashionable. A great read full of excellent tips and filled with idiot-proof 'comic strip' examples.

10 Tips to Successful Communication

What follows are my ten tips to improve your communication – don't be fooled by the simplistic messages. They are not dressed up in fancy language; however, YOU have to TAKE ACTION if you want to make changes.

1. Words...Words...Words...

When we think about communication skills we often start with the 'words'. We consider how we need to improve our diction, or vocabulary, or even about becoming more eloquent.

So lets start with a simple question. What % of communication is based on the words we use? If you don't know take a guess and write it here%. To misquote Fun Boy Three "it aint what you say it's the way that you say it, and that's what gets results"! In fact the "what you say" only accounts for 7% of your communication. Without getting scientific on you, Albert Mehrabian (UCLA) shows the three ways we communicate as the simple pie chart below.

Now this has to be put in context. It does not mean that if I spoke to you in a foreign language you would understand 93% of what I said, but it does put into perspective the importance that other areas of communication have in conveying our intent. In terms of what this means for you – spend less time on the words and put more focus on the way you are saying what you are saying.

2. Set the TONE

From the pie chart, you now know that your TONE of VOICE accounts for over a third (38%) of what you really say. To make a positive impact keep your tone upbeat and positive. Leave the sarcasm at home! Practise saying the same sentence, "That was really good" using several different tones: try enthusiastic, angry, dejected, to really see what I mean. Tone alone can completely change the meaning of the statement.

3. WORK the BODY

The biggest lever you have is your body language, shown as the 'non-verbal' 55% on the pie chart. So use it. Shoulders back, head up and smile - you appear confident, more in control, open to conversation and best of all, it genuinely makes you feel instantly better.

Hunched shoulders, head down, no smile and suddenly you will feel depondent, a bit depressed, closed to others and miserable.

Just try these 2 poses and feel the difference. Then say "That was great" with your body in the two poses. In the second pose, your message will actually be diametrically opposed to your words.

Gesturing (the polite sort) can also reinforce your message.

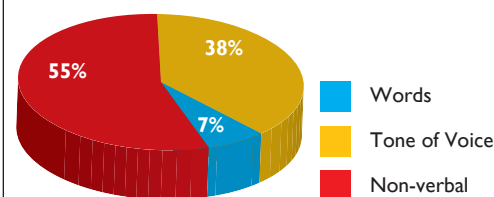
4. Employ your ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

We all know we have two ears and one mouth, but sometimes we forget to use them in ratio.

Listen more and listen actively.

- LOOK at the person who is talking to you
 - Make eye contact
 - Nod and acknowledge what they are saying
 - Paraphrase to clarify that you have heard them and that you understand what has been said
- Sometimes when someone presents you with a problem, if you can man-

THE THREE MAIN WAYS WE COMMUNICATE



age not to speak for long enough, just nodding and listening, then the speaker can often discover their own solutions by just having “talked” them through with you! The huge benefit of this is that they own the solution completely, which they wouldn’t have done had you just stepped in with your advice.

5. Don’t JUMP to CONCLUSIONS

Following on from my last point, it is really important to be open when you are communicating. Don’t jump to conclusions. Be open to what other people are saying and don’t prejudge someone or something, especially when you have historic filters in place. “Last time they messed up”, “Christine always wastes my time”, “He’s wearing a hoodie, he must be trouble!”....

6. Ask QUESTIONS

Seek to clarify what people are really saying to you by asking open and reflective questions. “What specifically would you like to happen?”, “what ideas do you have to solve this?”. Also use questions to show your real interest in others. Ask them about themselves; this is a great way to build rapport. And make sure you are actively listening to their responses.

7. Have a POSITIVE ATTITUDE

It is always easier to talk to someone who is usually positive and open to new ideas and others’ opinions. You know what it is like when you have Miss Negative sitting in the corner of the office....no point in speaking to her she will only bring you down. Well, not surprisingly, the opposite is also true, its uplifting talking to someone who is looking for the good in things (unless you are Miss Negative of course!)

8. Acknowledge others FEELINGS

This can be very powerful, especially with children, but don’t underestimate its impact on adults too. Acknowledging when someone is angry, frustrated, sad or thrilled is basically showing someone that you are aware of how they are feeling and that you care.

A child who wants a new doll NOW and is about to go into a full-blown tantrum in the supermarket is completely diffused by you saying, “You really want that doll, I can see that”. This can be followed with, “lets put it

on your special list of things you want” and then ideally write it down on a list somewhere. From personal experience this is like magic. My daughter knows that I heard her need for the doll and also knows that I have registered this need. That was the real urgency, not necessarily taking the doll home today. It’s also far better than screaming back at her “you cant have it, money doesn’t grow on trees, so get over it”!!

Good customer service agents often employ the same skill.



9. Make EYE CONTACT

Whilst this is briefly mentioned in point 4, it deserves its own focus as it is SO important. Good eye contact develops trust and allows you to build faster rapport.

If someone looks away from you when you are talking to them you assume they aren’t listening, or don’t care, or you are not important enough for their full attention, or they are just shifty and untrustworthy....

None of the above are traits you want to project, so stop looking away and start making excellent EYE CONTACT.



10. SMILE

For the Brits reading this – we are allowed to sometimes.... Smiling makes you feel good and also makes you more attractive to others. If you smile then someone will smile

back and now two people are feeling good. It’s contagious.

If we smile when communicating we can sometimes get away with murder too... it can soften difficult communication. Imagine saying to a member of staff “Are you going to start work soon” with a smile, it will have the desired effect without the negative connotations the same words would have coming out of a stern and serious face.

Yet another benefit of smiling is that you become instantly more approachable and easier to talk to!

Next steps – taking Action

The easiest way to improve your communication is to make a decision to start implementing some changes today. It takes at least a month of constant practise to create a new habit, so don’t give up after the first few attempts.

1. Choose three areas from my 10 tips that you could improve.
2. Score yourself out of 10, where you think you are TODAY against these 3 areas. Next, set an improved score that you want to achieve in a month’s time.
3. Make a list of the sorts of things you would have to be doing to justify the improved score by next month.
4. Use ‘role playing’, ‘visualisation’ and ‘just doing it’ techniques to practise the new skill until you bed it in as a habit.
5. Start to enjoy your improved communication skills.

Don’t forget that for readers of Total Licensing Laura is offering a completely FREE no obligation 30 minute coaching consultation.

So go on and pick up the phone, what have you got to lose? Your only risk is spending half an hour talking about yourself...Contact Laura Ashley-Timms at Notion Limited. Tel (UK) 0845 4568217 (Int) +44 (0) 1926 840078 Mobile +44 (0) 7968 164083 laura@notionltd.com www.notionltd.com

Coaching Corner

Q: I have been told by my staff that I am uncommunicative, but this is just my way. What changes can I make?
Licensee Manager

A: Getting feedback from staff is only valuable when it is specific enough to be constructive. As a way of showing that you are open and value feedback I would use this as an opening to go back to the individuals that has told you this and ask for more specific information. In what way do you not communicate? Can they give you specific examples? In their opinion what would you be doing differently if you were communicating effectively? The answers to these more specific questions will give you clues as to what would need to change to address their needs for more effective communication. It may be as simple as a small change to your body language, i.e. maybe you have your back to them doing another task whilst they are talking to you? Or maybe you just need to pop in more often and ask them how things are going. By asking, you will soon know...and the great thing is this process alone will already go a long way to improve your communication with them!