

IMPROVING COMMUNICATION IMPROVES HUMAN PERFORMANCE

11 Tips on Talk

BY MIKE KOPER

These guidelines for 21st century communications deliver on the importance of using communication skills that can yield optimal performance and expected results. You can avoid the proverbial missteps, vagueness or misunderstandings passed in a common message and achieve communications utopia.

Suppose you receive an email that reads, “the parts for the machine are in.” Perplexed, you ask yourself, “What? What exactly is this message telling me?” As you try to figure out this snippet of information, you may then ask yourself, “What parts, how many, from where, where are they, which machine, and who has them now?”

The two core foundational elements of innovation are learning and communication. New processes and discoveries must be learned and continuously better communicated. Without a structured delivery of information important signals unintentionally get crossed. To further explain, consider the following example. Imagine that you are a rookie playing for the Boston Red Sox. It’s Opening Day, and on your first trip up to bat you are walked. Upon standing on first base you begin to lead off, and you look over to the third base coach trying to decipher the signal cadence but to no avail. Being fresh from the minor league, you’re unaware of what the indicator is in the signal cadence, in other words you’re lost and can’t decipher the message. Similarly, when

we as people or companies sit down systematically and aspire to learn, transfer knowledge or supply a service to elevate performance, the essence of the event is to communicate. Yet in reality, the foggy barrage of data, news, signals, numbers and messages has never before been more prolific and chaotic in the history of learning, or mankind for that matter, than it is today.

In order to promote your message and expect good results, you must invoke a communication methodology where the anticipated result is remotely close to the real result. An example is the communication dialog occurring between the project manager, their client and the team members that perform the work. While the expectation has been set by the client and the project manager believes they have it covered, the

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message relayed to the team members may set a vague course of direction. Through communication methodologies and acknowledgement of what is expected many upfront snafus can be halted and resolved early on in the project cycle. The same can be said for the delivery of complex technical skills that must be presented in a digestible format so that the end user can absorb and “take-away” the most critical content for future performance improvement.

“Dr. W. Edwards Deming, a quality and productivity expert, professed that certain principles of management and cultures within organizations can increase quality, accelerate throughput and simultaneously reduce costs (generally by eliminating redundant repeated tasks and by reducing waste). His basis was that teams that focused on quality would inherently yield lower costs and higher quality, while teams focused solely on cost yielded short term savings and higher long-term costs while allowing quality to dissipate.

Deming went on to say that all managers and/or management systems need to have what he called a System of Profound Knowledge, consisting of four parts:

1. Appreciation of a system: understanding the overall processes, it also

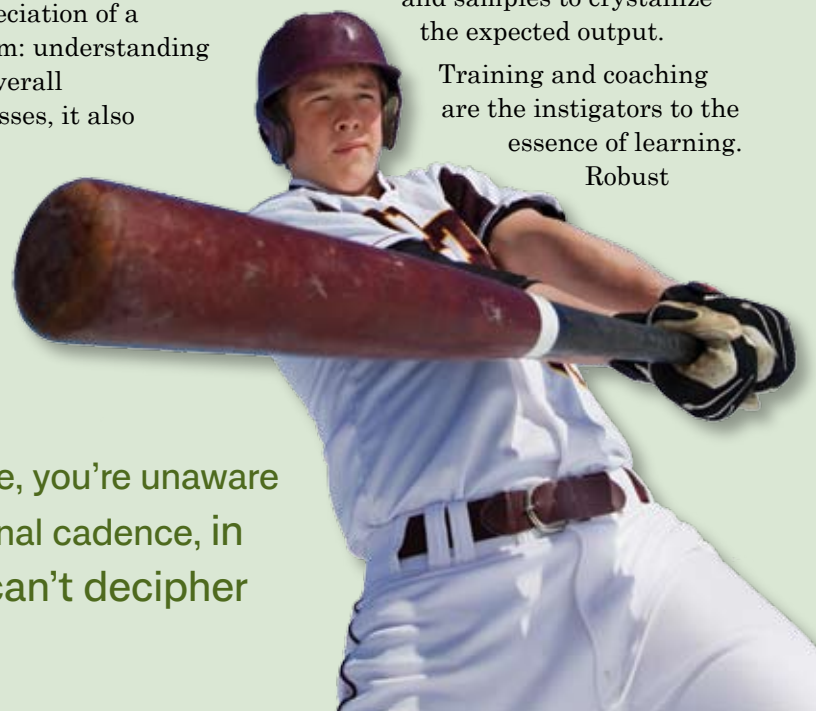
illustrated the fact that interactions (i.e. communications) can lead to their own restrictions on the state of the system.


2. Knowledge of variation: anticipating and strategically planning for differences in quality and output rates for a small sampling.
3. Theory of knowledge: the concepts explaining knowledge, know-how and the limits of what can be known.
4. Knowledge of psychology: being cognitive of the concepts of human nature (pride, fear, feeling of importance, etc.) incorporating how chaos of data plays a role with each team member.

The key is to practice continual improvement and think of manufacturing as a system, not as bits and pieces.”¹

Similarly subtle techniques exist in communications that enable you to propel the innovation of skills and ideas to exacerbate a collaboration of action and results. Certain techniques available to trainers and managers include: 1) consistent explanation of material, 2) anticipate stall-outs then provide solutions, 3) emphasize execution, experimentation and follow-through, 4) utilize references and samples to crystallize the expected output.

Training and coaching are the instigators to the essence of learning.
Robust





What's the cost of
misinterpreted messages?
Like a serve and return,
innovation has two core
foundational elements: learning
and communication. New
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better-communicated.

collaboration in innovative training then requires concise, accurate content compressed into snippets of highly focused knowledge. As management teams excel to meet the client expectations and as technical instruction tackles the students' most pressing needs, communication on all forms or levels works as the omnipotent driver to achieve the balance in collaboration.

Likewise, the information tidal wave has conditioned promulgated person-to-person communication acceptance of the desire to be saturated with data and the passion to disseminate it through the likes of blogs, share sites and even Twitter. The explosion of data coupled with news bombardments compound the heightened need of effective communication doctrines. Wherefore, communication ideals need to be set from the onset and greatly analyzed for budgeting criteria reflected in time and performance. The challenge of managing innovation through communication channels is applied discipline through open and consistent communicative doctrines.

Doctrines by virtue are the guidelines in learning the importance of applying a communicated skill set. Such skill sets are concurrently competing through the same channel that is being proliferated by vast amounts of chatter data. Trainers, managers and developers have a duty to deliver the content to the end user in clear, concise and practical methods that will be retained and drawn upon for use.

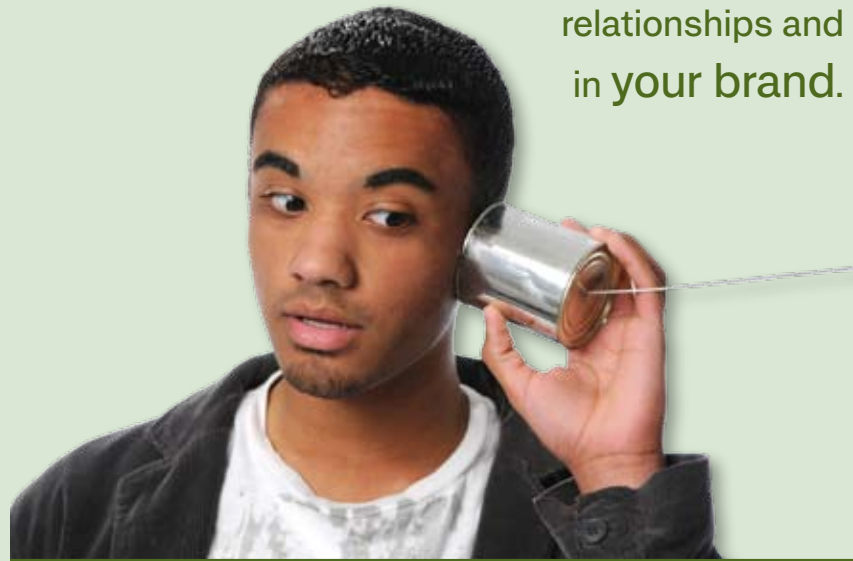
Instituting clarity into your organization culture will be replicated in your deliverables to clients, client relationships and in your brand. Such organizational transformation yields the innovation and

practical problem solving elements that create the mantra that every activity and everyone's job is part of the entire success. Because communication is the fuel of activity, select vocabulary can cut through the data barrage and reveal clarity to tasks. Once clear, many highly-specific complex tasks become a repeatable flawless execution of actions that formulate the basis of throughput metrics and efficiency in human performance.

Practical communication of elevated information can be optimized through doctrines that bring clarity to the voice of innovative management. They include messages containing:

1. Particulars—the surrounding details of fact that separate the specifics from the sea of generalities—commonly required for high standards of performance
 2. Scope—upon observation, the scope builds the action content of who, what, when, where and why, constructing a base of which expectation is formulated
 3. Expectation—the final vision, what's delivered, “what will I get out of this” and “what attitude will I bring to manifest the good to come.” Measurable at various stages of the project to determine direction of progress toward achieving the scope
 4. Constraints—sometimes controllable, sometimes uncontrollable—but each a condition that must be overcome in order to continue progress
 5. Perform—this is where the rubber hits the road or the order is clear, the act of exerting energy to get output—to execute or to do an operation, to act in accordance with requirements or obligations of, fulfill, keep promise, to carry through
 6. Completion—Finalizing, arriving at the end of the project. Putting forth the concluding 10 percent that makes projects go from “attempted” to “accomplished”
 7. Totality—Encompassing the whole aggregate picture, leaving nothing out
 8. Response—assembling through words or acts a reaction to stimuli, an answer to a situation or reply about a communication
 9. Achievement—attaining a certain attribute or lapsing a milestone condition
 10. Whereabouts—location of what place at a specified moment in time, a measurable quality that can exemplify progress
 11. Please/Thank You – always gestures in courtesy and salutatory of respect
- Project stall-outs as well as introducing complicated concepts can be minimized by clear descriptive communication that doesn't leave the reader

Communication is the fuel of activity—and instituting clarity into your organization's communications and culture will be replicated in your deliverables to clients, client relationships and in your brand.



in a fog and provokes the desired response from properly ascertained information.

Better management of “unnecessary” communication dilemmas is a critical pillar to eliminating progress freeze-ups and unscheduled stall-outs. Corraling communications is a management tool for dedicating more time to focus on project deliverables. Noted quality guru, Phil Crosby, wrote a book in 1979 titled “Quality is Free.” Relevant today, the cost of quality in communications is likewise free as it tends to solidify direction and lead to greater throughput.

Resources

¹ W. Edwards Demming, System of Profound Knowledge, Wikipedia 2009

WHO IS MIKE KOPER? Mr. Koper is the Stamping, Powertrain, TCF Manager for RWD's Manufacturing group and has been a leader in the company for 11 years. As a certified Project Manager, he works to interface with client's plants while establishing new and maintaining current training programs. He brings over 20 years to the manufacturing industry and has authored over 15 articles in trade magazines.