

Is timely, clear and concise communication now the exception?

Over many years of working as a technician and manufacturing engineer, I have seen a degradation of even adequate communication among coworkers, vendors, friends, and even family members. Unfortunately, the results of which all too often include significant losses of both time and money. I suspect that these are the most common reasons for those we have all experienced, more than a few times.

1. The response-based communicator in question is too busy to reply or take another form of action in a timely manner.
2. This communicator perceives a response as not necessary or unimportant.
3. (This one relates to #1.) The communicator is overwhelmed with email or phone calls and does not know how to organize the landslide of "input".

Trends in the workplace: Certainly, some of these issues are due to the propensity of upper level management to combine titles and job responsibilities after an employee, supervisor, or manager leaves or is laid from the company. Many of you have heard the phrase "Jack of all trades, master of none". Trying to devote a limited amount of time to many more tasks typically results in scattered focal points and infrequent TOTAL satisfaction from some or all of YOUR stakeholders - those who depend upon your completeness/timeliness of duties.

How can we improve the core of incompleteness that is so prevalent in our workplace and elsewhere? **First and foremost, we need to improve our own communication.** I recommend:

1. When sending email or leaving voicemail messages, include as much relevant information as you can in as short a message as is possible. The subject of an email should include searchable words that present a broad overview. If you are communicating matters related to a Purchase Order, for example, start with the PO number and then follow with 2-3 words of description. Think of this as something similar to a title of a drawing in which the noun (subject) is placed first, followed by descriptive adjectives. **By including highly relevant information, you are reducing the amount of time the recipient will need to spend searching for that information.**

2. Whether you are the sender or recipient of a message, use email software's tools to remind you later to follow up or respond. In other words, prioritize but don't forget the items that still need to be completed, despite their not being at the top of your list. The latest Outlook has an amazing number of tools to help keep you "on top of things". Spend some time to learn them. It will be time well spent.

3. Keep track of phone messages that need to be answered by jotting down (electronically or by hand) pertinent information from the sender. If you are the sender who is leaving a phone message, consider stating the date and time, as well as the purpose of the call, your name and number, **without sounding like an announcer in an estate auction. Speak slowly and clearly!**

4. In the event that your recipient does not respond in a timely manner, I recommend that you **follow up, in person**. If you are a supervisor or manager, advise your team members to do the same. Obviously, this is not always possible to do this when it comes to dealing with those who are physically outside of your company's residence. Then again, a bit of travel for a personal visit can do wonders to enhance your communication effectiveness. Lastly, let's spread good communication practices to others. Good examples, combined with a "helping hand" demeanor will help us all.