Effective Business Communications for Project Managers: Building Knowledge & Skills

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What you communicate is:

How you are feeling

Tone of voice 38%
Words 7%
Visual 55%

Really?
- Sad
- Questioning
- Resigned
- Sarcastic

Great speaker
- Verbally fluid
- Knows the listener
- Wants to communicate
- Speaks beautifully

Is this great communication?

Great listener
- Pays total attention
- Listens actively

Learn skills
Not just knowledge

Process of Learning
Tell = Forget
Show = Remember
Do = Understand
Teach = Master

- Be yourself and think when speaking
- Don’t coach gestures and eye contact

Effective Communication
Basic Modules

Nichols’ Two-Things
Share Your Moment
Boring to Brilliant
I See What You Mean

Your group

Team
Presenter
Coaches

Be yourself and think when speaking
Don’t coach gestures and eye contact
**Effective Oral & Written Communication**
*It is not about You*

- It’s about changing what people:
  - See
  - Hear
  - Feel
  - Think

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**Five Realities of Communication**
*Pete Heineman, University of Omaha*

**Reality One:**
- When you don’t communicate you send a message
- Silence is a message too
- Listeners create their own meaning to fill the ‘void’

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**Your silent message**

- Listener creates own message
- Bad news 3X greater than good news

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**Realities of Communication**

**Reality Two:**
- Meanings are in people, not in words
- Listeners attach their own meaning
  - People who are unaware that *meanings* are in people are the ones who complain:
    "But I told them!"

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Communication is not about you

- Shooting pictures into listeners head
- People have a ‘screen’ in the front of their mind
- People create their own messages from what you say

Realities of Communication

Reality Three:
- Communication is a learned behavior
- We want to get reward and avoid punishment
- People write or speak to maximize reward and minimize punishment

Realities of Communication

Reality Four:
- Misunderstanding is the normal result of communication
- Communication’s enemy is the illusion that successful communication has taken place
- Each communication results in a somewhat different meaning in sender’s mind & listener’s mind
- The question is: how big is the difference between you and your listener; i.e., how far apart?

Realities of Communication

Reality Five:
- When communication breaks down, a normal response is to ask, “Whose fault is it?”
- Someone is assigned the blame—they deny it, and time and energy are spent in defense and attack
Make the *Realities of Communication* work for you

Realities

1. Silence is a message too.
2. Meanings are in people not words.
3. People communicate to get reward and avoid punishment.
4. Misunderstanding is normal.
5. When people miscommunicate, someone is assigned the blame.

Here’s what you’ll do:

- Discuss this Reality with your teammate(s):
  - For example, consider the Reality’s importance, the impact on the way people work and communicate.
- Give specific examples that show the Reality at work.
- Make some notes on what you’ve discovered—your team will brief the other teams.

Stephen Covey: *Habit 5*

“Seek first to understand…
Then, to be understood”
—The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

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**Great listener**
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Planning Communication
Message Strategy

*Big mistake*
- What to write?
- What to say?
Communication Channels

- Speaking
- Writing

Communication Channels’ power & limitations

Power of Speaking
Attitude & Emotion

- Pictures
- Sounds/smells/feelings/touch
  - Felt Sense (more on this later)

Communication Channels’ power & limitations

Power of Writing
Details and Complexity

Numbers—
- Financial data
- Statistics
- Time of day
- Dates
- Procedures
- Instructions
- Directions

Oral Message
What you’ll remember:
- First & last things said
- Pictures & stories (events)
- Repetition — things said 3X (sort of)
Oral Message
What you’ll forget:

- Names
- Numbers
- Details
- When things happened
- Sequence of events: will tend to create and add

Message Strategy
What to Write and What to Say

Write down what you remember from the Pizza Story:

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10

Nichols’ Two-Things

Nichols’ Two-Things is:
- Message Packaging device
- Message Delivery technique
- Fast
- Very productive
- Creates a professional impression
- Maximizes communication impact

People remember 2 things
Will forget more ideas

Nichols’ Two-Things
Big Messages

- Trust your brain
- Data reduction device
- Like ANOVA
- Your brain searches for patterns
- Looks for similarities
- Master of the Message

Pick a topic
What jumps into your brain?
Popular USA **Nichols’ Two-Things©** Message Topics

- How to use dental floss
- Middle seat on the airplane
- Body piercing
- How to serve shrimp
- Baseball’s *designated hitter* rule
- Dryers that steal socks

- Sea otters mating
- Beer backwash
- Tropical drink cocktail umbrellas
- Bellybutton lint

**Nichols’ Two-Things©**

**Question Opening©**
- Captures attention
- Starts listener thinking

**Repetition**
- Make complete thoughts
- Link all levels together

**Nichols’ Two-Things©**

**Big Messages© criteria**
1. Umbrella and important
2. Sensory rich
3. Benefit/interest to listener

**Cold Closing©**
- Summarize
- End on a strong, positive emotion

**Grand Tanian© Team Exercise**

**Pick the topic you like best:**
- Low Fat Diet
- Road Runner *versus* The Coyote
- Running Shoes

**Work with your partner(s):**
1. Apply the Nichols’ Two-Things© Message Packaging strategy
2. Fill-in the Nichols’ Two-Things© phrase at each level
3. Pick Facilitator
4. Other partner(s) answer the Facilitator’s questions
Facilitator:
“When you think of (topic), what’s the first thing that comes to mind?”

Answer: Usually your Big Messages.

**Big Messages Checklist:**

Are Big Messages …
- ☐ umbrella and important?
- ☐ sensory rich?
- ☐ benefit/interest to listener?

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**Test for Sensory Rich Messages**

*How to tell if your Big Message is Sensory Rich:*

**Ask:** “When I say (Big Message), what do you see?”

**Pass the Sensory Rich Test:** If you see a picture in your mind, then your Big Message is Sensory Rich.

**Fail the Sensory Rich Test:** If you don’t see a picture, your Big Message is *not* Sensory Rich.

**Do this:** Go back to the Topic.

*The Facilitator asks again:* “When you think of (Topic), what’s the first thing that comes to mind?”

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**Sample Nichols’ Two-Things©**

- **Topic:** Summer is the best season
- **Big Message One:** Warm, bright sun, Bar-b-que
- **Big Message Two:** Feels good on your skin, Lots to do outdoors

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1. Feels good on your skin
   - A. Warm, healthy feeling
   - B. Relaxing

2. Gives you energy
   - A. Streets full of people
   - B. Lots to do outdoors

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Nichols’ Two-Things©

Topic__________________________________               __________________________________

__________________________________ 1__________________________________ 1___________________________________
A______________________________ A_______________________________
B______________________________ B_______________________________

_________________________________ 2__________________________________
A_____________________________ A______________________________
B_____________________________ B______________________________

Check if your Big Messages are: ☐ Umbrella/Important? ☐ Sensory Rich? ☐ Listener Benefit/Interest?
Good Communicator's Check List

- Set a positive attitude before you speak
- Remember that communication is *not* about you
- Know that communication happens in the listener’s mind

**Plan communication:**

- Decide what is best to say
- Decide what is best to write
- Say important things first and last
- Shoot pictures into your listener’s head