

## **Four Essentials of Effective Communication**

Learning how to communicate effectively is crucial to the survival of your business; unfortunately there's no other way to cut it. If you approach people too casually, don't take the time to communicate clear information, or don't appear cordial, you are risking the success of your business. Below are four essential tips to ensure effective communication.

### **1. Listening is the No. 1 Rule**

Contrary to what some seem to believe, the most important aspect of effective communication isn't talking, it's listening. A great amount of miscommunication could be avoided if business owners took the time to communicate effectively, first by listening to the needs of their clients and prospects. Remember, your clients may not need you, but you definitely need your clients or you're going to be out of business. Your focus should be filling the needs of your clients, not the other way around, and that starts with listening.

*"We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak."* - Epictetus (Greek Philosopher (AD 55-c.135))

Granted, it can be challenging to listen without speaking, but it will get easier with time when you understand the purpose behind first listening. Not only do you have an opportunity to really listen to what your client needs, but you have time to form the best reply or answer. Give your client all the time they need to explain their concerns. If you are short on time, politely offer your help at the beginning of the conversation and add that you are limited on time. Also offer an opportunity for the clients to speak to you at a later time and offer to call back when it is convenient for both of you. Be sure they understand you want to help them and will do what it takes to listen.

### **2. Clarity is Always Key**

What may be second nature to you may seem like a foreign concept to some people. When in doubt, leave out the jargon. However, if a client shows interest in understanding the small details, offer the acronym after you've explained what it means. The goal here is to be sure your clients understand what you're specifically discussing.

One word of caution: don't over simplify. Speaking to your client as if they are unintelligent will not win you any fans. You will have to pay attention to their personality and try to gauge how much detail they really need or want. As you know, there are some clients who need to know every single detail of a project or process, while there are others who could care less about the details - they just want to know how to get from point A to point B. It's up to you to look for clues as to the personality of your client and how to direct the conversation. It is better to provide less information as those who want more information will ask for it. Don't waste people's time with things they don't really need to make a decision, unless you are legally required to do so.

### **3. A Message with Confidence**

Confidence is an essential role in being able to come across as a master of effective communication. If you demonstrate that you aren't confident in your abilities, people will instinctively think that lack experience and are bluffing your way. This may lead to one of three outcomes: A) the client tries to talk you down from your initial quote; B) the client doesn't hire you at all; C) the client hires you at your original rate but isn't confident that you can complete the task to his or her expectations.

If you're selling a quality service, you should be confident about your skill set. Of course, if you're a startup entrepreneur know that it gets easier as your experience increases - just don't let the client see that you are at all insecure about your talents. Honestly, being new to entrepreneurship is not a deal breaker. What is a deal breaker, however, is if the client feels you cannot competently complete the task. The more time you spend communicating with clients, the more comfortable you both will feel. In turn, you'll grasp the true concept of effective communication.

#### **4. When You Can't See Eye-to-Eye**

It happens - your personality sometimes clashes with that of a client's. Does this mean you need to immediately end the business relationship? No, it certainly does not. When you can't see eye to eye with your clients, it's important to let go of your ego, and remain calm.

Your disagreements may stem from the fact that you're not communicating effectively. If you've offered your professional opinion to a client, and your opinion was ignored, take it with a grain of salt. You've fulfilled your professional and ethical duty by informing your client. It's nothing personal, it's just business. If you allow the rejection to get to you, you'll lose out on a lot of valuable business and will ultimately never be able to understand how to communicate effectively; when it comes to practicing effective communication with clients, emotions shouldn't be involved.

When you take on the role of business owner, you take on the commitment to never-ending personal and professional improvement. Here are four steps that you can implement now that will help you provide effective communication:

Action Step #1. Listen before speaking. If you must set the tone for the call, reword the phrase so the subject is about your client, not about you. Instead of saying, "I want to discuss...." you could say, "What questions or concerns would you like to discuss today."

Action Step #2. Be clear with your words. An easy way to keep track of what needs should be addressed, write a brief outline of topics to be covered and check them off as they are discussed. You could additionally, go over the checklist during the introduction part of the call so your client is clear about what you will be providing. Revisit the checklist at the close of the conversation and encourage the client to ask questions if they are unclear about any of the topics.

Action Step #3. If you tend to be nervous during a call, practice the conversation with your assistant or colleague. The more confident you are in the conversation, the more effective your communication will be. This is a great opportunity for questions to be addressed so you can adjust the content as needed to ensure clarity.

Action Step #4. It's going to happen - there will be some clients that you just don't jive with. Don't take it personally and focus on the commonality and areas where you see eye-to-eye. Remain professional and pay attention to providing quality service or products until the client moves on.

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