

BY: SAL SILVESTER

INSPIRING COMMUNICATION: STARTING WITH YOURSELF

There is no shortage of technical skills in today's workplace, but finding people who can effectively communicate, collaborate, and cooperate is a different story. One of the most sought after requests I hear from my clients, prospects, and girlfriend is the need for better communication.

Communication is a two-way process that involves a sender and a receiver. Effective communication happens when the receiver receives and understands exactly what the sender is transmitting. Communicating effectively is a choice, so the first step in improving communication skills is to start with yourself.

So, where do you start? My response is to start with your APE! Attitude, preconceptions, and emotional state. These are all potential barriers to effective communication.

Attitude

Attitude plays a big role in how others perceive you and accept your message. Any number of things may affect your attitude (e.g., your role on a project, your background, whether you had your first cup of morning coffee). When you project a negative attitude, it is unlikely your receiver will accept and understand your message. Check your attitude before meeting with someone, because when resentment develops, acceptance is unlikely.

Preconceptions

People tend to hear what they want or expect to hear versus listening to what the sender is truly saying. We all do it - we are human. Try to keep an open mind with your sender. Listen fully to what they have to say, and do not plan your response before they have finished talking as you are likely to miss important information. Check your preconceptions to avoid misconceptions.

Emotional State

We have all had bad days, gotten up on the wrong side of the bed, had a late night, or are feeling the pressure from the boss. Whatever the case, your emotional state effects how you communicate with others. If a co-worker comes to you seeking advice and you shut them down, how do you think they will react? They may be reluctant to seek your input in the future. Be aware of your emotional state. Sometimes it is better to table a conversation than to create the wrong impression.

Remember, communication is a choice. Start with yourself and inspire your team.

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