

HULL &  
ASSOCIATES

# The Corporate Communicator

Www.HullOnline.com May-June, 2010

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## Consider This...

"We have two ears and one tongue in order that we may hear more and speak less."



## It's Hard to Really Listen!

A key to effective communication is to listen, really listen. Not only will you be able to comprehend better, you will be able to provide a better response as well.

### Why is it hard to listen?

**Physical distractions** - Everything from the voices around us, the temperature of the room, scents and inadequate lighting affect our ability to pay attention or listen. We have a choice ... tune them out or find a better space!

**Message overload** - We get too much, too fast. Listen and reflect back key points and ask if you are correct. Do not assume that effective communication is just the sender's responsibility.

**Not maintaining eye contact** - Look at the speaker directly. Do not multitask! You know how it bothers you when others do it ... so don't be guilty of it yourself.

**Assuming you know what they are going to say** - Let the speaker finish without interrupting. You may learn that what you thought was so is not!

**Judging prematurely** - You decide before all the facts are presented. Try waiting and listening before you make a decision. Look for main and supporting points in the speaker's message.

**Rehearsing your response** - Before you respond, repeat what you have heard. The chances of a better response is greatly increased if you do!

(From Business Communications - Hull & Associates)

## You're a Control Freak!

**When you hear the term "Control Freak," do you feel complimented or insulted?** A lot depends on whether you think that a control freak is in control or simply controls others. I prefer to think of them as being in control! Here's why:

**Control freaks control their thoughts.** They know what they want and can focus on their goals without distracting "what-ifs" and "how-about's."

**Control freaks don't rely on luck and/or happenstance.** They take positive action to get the things they want.

**Control freaks are focused.** They provide stability during change and help reduce stress. You can be sure that control freaks have their eye on the ball (or all the balls in the air) and can make

it easier for everyone to get through changes with a minimum of stress.

**Control freaks get things done.** They do not want pie in the sky. They want pie on their plates!

**Control freaks are NOT bullies or micromanagers!** All of the advantages mentioned above involve control freaks controlling either themselves or those who actually want to be controlled, like nervous employees in times of transition. Control freaks and team players are not mutually exclusive. In fact, there is an important place on the team for control freaks!

So ... if someone calls you a control freak, just say, "Thanks!" And then ask them what they meant!

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## Five Strategies for Difficult Conversations

**1. Discuss one item at a time.** Too many issues at one time can be overpowering and people will feel dumped on! Prioritize what you have to say. Think of what will make the greatest positive difference and focus on that behavior.

**2. Know what you want to say, do it soon and deal only with facts.** Resentment sets in when there is a problem or a difficult situation and nothing is being done to solve it. If you use lots of words, the message can get lost in the verbiage.

## Eight Steps to Create Accountability

Leaders are always asking us how to increase accountability to get the results they need. Simply put, the leader's job is to ensure every member of the team wins, and winning is defined as meeting the organization's top objectives. Here is the seven-tip formula you can use to create accountability and achieve extraordinary results in any organization:

- 1. Establish the top three objectives.** Once identified, objectives must be SMART, specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timed!
- 2. Assign each team member his or her respective objectives.** Take the time to go over what they need to accomplish and what help and/or training they need.
- 3. Identify roadblocks.** Have each team member identify *in writing* a maximum of three things they need to accomplish each objective. Agree on what the leader will do to help.
- 4. Clarify and remove roadblocks.** Meet individually to agree on what's needed to win and who will be responsible for it happening. Probably, as the leader, you will assume some responsibility to help them get what they need to win. Perhaps you will call in

Share behaviors, not inferences. Say, "You leave 15 minutes early" rather than "You are lazy."

### 3. Use a moderate tone of voice.

A loud voice and an accusatory tone can be intimidating and may lead to a battle of words, or on the other hand, someone clams up or shuts down so no one listens and both parties lose.

**4. Don't interrupt.** Let the other person finish before you start talking. Sometimes we assume we know the whole story and we only half listen. Listen attentively - to understand not to contradict.

**5. Treat the person with respect and try to come to a win-win solution.** Have the other person suggest solutions, before you give your ideas. If you were wrong, apologize. If you made your words sweet, it is a lot easier to eat them!

someone else to train or help.

**5. Follow up.** Schedule a 30-minute monthly update using a **color-coded results report**. Accomplished results are in green and areas behind are in red. Focus the conversation on what was done to achieve and maintain the green. For red issues, focus on what will be done, when it will be achieved and what help is needed.

**6. Share lessons learned.** Hold bi-monthly meetings with all team members to discuss lessons learned, identify critical roadblocks and offer to help any team member behind plan. *Remember, the leader wins when everyone on the team wins.*

**7. Reward results.** When objectives are achieved, ensure that rewards are disproportionate and highly visible. Those who achieve the most get rewarded the most—and everyone should know that.

**8. Cut your losses.** Ensure that people at the bottom are either improving their performance or being moved out. No one with poor performance gets to remain on the bottom for more than a year without action being taken.

*(from Supervisory/Leadership Training - Dr. Mimi Hull)*

## Conflict Management Styles

Your conflict management *style* is determined by the repeated approach you take in a conflict. This is different from a *tactic* which is used one time in a certain situation.

When disagreeing with coworkers/workers, it is important to understand what type of approach is needed. Here are some options:

**Avoidance:** represents low assertiveness and low cooperation. Avoiders would rather walk away from conflict than discuss it.

You can use this style if an issue is not worth arguing about and/or you need time to think about it.

**Competition:** represents a high level of self-concern and a low level of concern for others' ideas or thoughts. People who are competitors may get what they want, but lose friendships along the way. Competition can elevate the quality of a product or service if used carefully.

**Accommodation:** the opposite of competition, represents a low level of concern for one's self, but a high level of

concern for others. Accommodators put their interests last to let others have it their way. Warning: if you expect to get your way the next time, let the other person know this or else they will think you really wanted the solution and the other person owes you nothing.

**Compromise:** Compromisers don't mind splitting the difference. "Something is better than nothing." This method works if more than one person has a good idea—they can be combined if each side stands to gain something.

**Collaboration:** Labeled as the win-win situation. Collaborators work with others to ensure that every one's interests can be met, not just one over the other.

Collaboration builds good relationships but takes the most time. A good time to use this style is in meetings and brainstorming sessions.



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**CC** by Dr. Mimi Hull

THE corporate couch

**Dear Dr. Mimi,**

Recently, upper management enforced many new rules in the policies and procedures at my workplace. We have been doing things the same way for many years now with much success and my coworkers and I are getting frustrated with all of the changes. How can I learn to adapt when all I want to do is revolt?

– *No Change*

**Dear No Change,**

Change is inevitable and hard! So what can you do to make it more comfortable and successful?

1. Invest your energy in making quick adjustments to the changes. Don't focus on what life was like before the new rules or find ways to rebel. Accept that change has occurred. It is better to be a change agent than a change blocker!
2. Determine how the game has changed. Reorder your priorities. Take a step back and learn why the new policies were necessary. This will help you figure out ways to work with the changes and have the changes work for you.
3. Don't worry about the bad things. Focus on the bright side. Maintain a positive attitude to help you through tough times and long days.
4. Keep in step with the organization's intended pace of change. Speed up. Don't drag your feet in this process. Decide to adapt to changes and work with them to help avoid conflict later.
5. Keep a positive attitude and a sense of humor. Encourage others around you and focus on the positive. Be an advocate for the changes. Express the reason why you feel these changes will be positive for your organization.

Dr. Mimi Hull heads Hull & Associates, a team of trainers, speakers and consultants. A licensed psychologist, she has a master's in counseling and personnel services and a doctorate in psychology with specialization in business management from the University of Florida, Gainesville. Her B.A. in psychology is from Syracuse (N.Y.) University. Reach her at [www.HullOnline.com](http://www.HullOnline.com) or [DrMimi@HullOnline.com](mailto:DrMimi@HullOnline.com).