

HULL &  
ASSOCIATES

# The Corporate Communicator

## Hull & Associates

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### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Listen to understand,  
not to defend."



## A Good Laugh

Humor can reap many benefits in the workplace. Remember to keep it tasteful, and don't take aim at any person or group of people. Humor can improve productivity, lower stress, bond teammates, improve creative thinking, defuse tension and prevent burnout.

Here are a few ideas for integrating humor into the workplace:

1. File any funny stories, jokes or cartoons in your office. When you notice your team needs a boost, post them in the lounge or copy room to give everyone a lift.
2. Make a point of sharing entertaining articles, especially when you think the team is in need of a pick-me-up.
3. Using humor when opening a

meeting breaks the tension when the team has been under pressure.

4. Try different types of humor and use the DiSC® Personality Profile to help determine what works best with your coworkers.



## Commitment

**What is commitment?** Commitment is a willingness to contribute to an organization and believe in common values and goals. In the world of work, job involvement expresses a partnership of values and organizational objectives and a desire to support the organization in order to achieve the same goals.

### How do I recognize commitment?

1. **High quality:** Committed employees care about the quality of the services or goods they provide.
2. **High performance:** Committed employees work to achieve the organizations' goals and objectives.
3. **A good reputation:** Committed employees speak positively about their work to associates, friends, and family.
4. **High morale:** Committed employees enjoy their work.

**5. Team spirit:** Committed employees foster team cooperation and interaction and work more effectively together.

We have found that commitment does not just happen. It takes effort and investment. Commitment has to be developed, fostered and rewarded.



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\*MSRP: \$35.00

## Thank-You Cards Can Be Valuable Retention Tools

We all want to feel appreciated.

You can reduce turnover with one simple tactic: Try giving your team members specially printed packets of thank-you cards and encouraging them to pass them on when they are made aware of exceptional work.

Recognizing outstanding work or extra effort is easy when you provide the vehicle. Find notes that express what you want to say when you are unable to find the appropriate words.

Ken Blanchard, in his book "The One Minute Manager," says to "Catch 'em doing something right." With preprinted notes, it is easier to do just that!

## Building Bonds

The quickest way to strengthen the bond between employees and management is to improve communication. Everyone can learn to communicate better, but not everyone knows how to open up the lines of communication with their employees.

Here are some suggestions for opening communication:

**1. Hold open forums.** Set quarterly forums where workers can talk with decision-makers on issues that are important to them. Don't get discouraged if at first the forums focus on areas of dissatisfaction. If you make an effort to address issues and report progress, the meetings will become more productive.

**2. Improve credibility.** Do what you commit to do. "Don't let your mouth write a check that your body can't cash."

**3. Find ways to communicate.** Finding

new ways to share information with your employees will keep everyone on the same page. You may want to start an internal newsletter and highlight an employee who is really going the extra mile.

**4. Eliminate fear of reprisal.** Employees want to be able to voice their ideas, concerns, or complaints without fear. You may want to bring back the anonymous suggestion box to get an honest assessment of people's concerns.

**5. Information.** Treat employees as partners and communicate the good and the bad. Don't hoard information because you fear its effects on others. The grapevine is usually worse than reality, and you may find new solutions to old problems.



**1. If it is not a good time to listen, then don't pretend it is.** It is better to let someone know that you need to reschedule than to not give them the attention they deserve.

**2. If it is a good time, put your other work away.** Remove all temptation to do other things so your full attention can be on what the person is saying.

**2. Bite your tongue.** One of the first signs someone isn't listening is when they cut off others in mid-thought. Don't interrupt.

**3. Smile appropriately.** You will be amazed at the effect a simple smile or nod can have. You send the message that you are fully engaged in what the other person is saying.

**4. Ask questions.** Questions tell the speaker that you have been listening to what they have been saying and you are committed to learning more about the issues being discussed.

You have two ears and one mouth. Listen twice as much as you talk!

## Why You Have Two Ears and One Mouth

Are you really listening? Letting employees talk is not the same as listening. Listening takes work. Here are four things to remember that will make you a better listener.

## Managing Personality Conflicts

Personality conflicts are inevitable. At Hull and Associates, we are often called on to intervene when a conflict arises in the workplace. You can't always avoid conflict, but it can most certainly be reduced.

**1. Don't avoid difficult issues.** If issues arise, handle them quickly and as unemotionally as possible. The longer they fester, the worse they become.

**2. Identify your "hot buttons."** List the behaviors that bother you and let people know what they are. If people are unaware of what bothers you, they cannot be held accountable to correct them.

**3. Understand the "hot buttons" of others.** You are not the only one who gets irritated by things in the workplace. Be sensitive to others and ask your coworkers what bothers them.

**4. Focus on performance.** If you work with someone who irritates you, don't focus on their personality. Put your energy into completing the task in front of you.

**5. Examine your role in the conflict.** We

make judgments about others, and problems emerge when these judgments negatively influence how we treat them. If you come to the realization that you are allowing your judgments to affect your attitude and behavior, an apology and change of behavior may be just what the doctor ordered.

**6. Recognize the difference between intent and effect.** More often than not, people do not intend to hurt or irritate others. Let people know that you recognize their good intentions and appreciate their sensitivity in certain areas.



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## Quick Tips

### Small Talk Is Big Business

Business settings such as conferences, trade shows or training events don't have to be awkward. So often we worry about what we are going to say when we need to focus on what questions we are going to ask.

Consider asking: "What type of work do you do?" and "How did you get into that line of work?" These types of questions break the ice and open the door to better communication.

Amazingly enough, the more questions you ask, the more the other person talks and the more brilliant a conversationalist they will think you are!

## Have You Visited Our BLOG?

Please visit our new **BLOG**. The address is

<http://www.hullandassociatesblog.blogspot.com>.

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## Reduce Personality Conflicts!

Start by understanding the personalities!

A resume is an advertisement. Now you need the "operating manual" for your employees and coworkers.

## Do the DiSC® Online Personal Profile.

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by Dr. Mimi Hull

THE corporate couch



**Q:** We have an incredibly negative woman in our office. She constantly complains about her life. For example, she tells us of all her friends who are sick or dying or she describes the details of how her daughter is a constant source of anguish. It is a real downer to listen to her. I feel selfish, but I don't want to hear her negativity any longer.

— *Secondhand Depressed*

**A:** Often people who are negative are seeking attention. Don't give it to her. When she starts to get negative, remind her that you are not a counselor and suggest that she seek out a good therapist or an employee-assistance program, if one is available. Ask her on a regular basis what is going well in her life. Help her refocus on the positives by honestly complimenting her on anything successful she is experiencing.

— *Dr. Mimi*

**Q:** Our business offers a feedback survey where customers can rate our service on a scale of 1 to 10. If one client rates me as a 6 and another person rates me as a 9, which score truly represents the service and customer experience I am providing?

— *Concerned Employee*

**A:** Both scores do. Each person who provides feedback on your performance has his or her own perception of how you do. If your survey form allows clients to write down comments, refer to those for clarification on what the numbers really mean. If your form doesn't allow for comments, request that your business develop a new form. By having that additional information, you'll get a truer picture of the areas in which you are doing well or need improvement, as well as how your coworkers are doing.

— *Dr. Mimi*

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).