

HULL &
ASSOCIATES

The Corporate Communicator

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH



Running Productive Meetings

Most of us are not natural communicators. To get results, meetings need to follow an organized structure. Often groups get stalled because there are misunderstandings. When we facilitate meetings, we always consider these four points.

1. "What's up?" It is important to make an emotional connection that enables others to share their concerns with the group.

2. "What's so?" Conversations can move from facts to inferences quickly. We work to delineate what are facts and what are assumptions.

3. "What's possible?" Remember the "leader" is not the only one with good ideas. All participants should work together to create the best outcome.

4. "Let's go!" Get a mutual commitment to action—and confirm it. If you don't confirm the action plan, the excitement for an idea can fade and so will the participation.

Meetings can be productive and enjoyable when they are well-facilitated. Using this model will start you off on the right foot. Let us know if we can help.



Answering Difficult Questions

Ever been caught off guard by a difficult question? When tough questions arise, thinking on your feet and buying a little more time to respond will allow you to avoid the embarrassment of being taken by surprise.

1. Pay attention. Listen closely to the person asking the question and don't interrupt.

2. Repeat the question. Paraphrasing what has been asked will not only buy you extra time but will also clarify the concern.

3. Pause. Distracting filter words like "uh" and "you know" sound less professional and less confident. Pause. Silence will give the appearance of your being in control and allows you to say the appropriate thing.

Don't forget, if you don't know the answer right away and you can't find it quickly, it's OK to let people know. Don't get frustrated. Just ask for the time to return with an answer that is right rather than rushed.

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One Message Does Not Reach All

Not everyone processes information the same way. Some people understand things better when they see them, others when they hear them, and others when they do them.

Learning the DiSC® will help in decoding what path of communication works best for individuals in both sending and receiving information.

For example:

1. Give a brief explanation verbally to a D or I.

2. S and C people prefer seeing it in writing.

If you do an exercise, a case study or a discussion, be sure to tailor it to fit all four types.

To learn more about DiSC®, e-mail us at info@hullonline.com or call us at (407) 628-0669.

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Criticize Effectively

Telling an employee or coworker they have done something wrong is one of the hardest and most stressful conversations. Criticizing effectively is a skill that is useful both on the job and in everyday situations. Here are a few helpful hints.

1. Focus on the action and not the person.

2. Make the criticism specific. Don't say "You forgot to send an e-mail," but instead, "You forgot to e-mail the report to Ms. Anderson yesterday."

3. Be sure the behavior is something they can change. Poor grammar is not going to change overnight.

4. Start the conversation by giving positive feedback or a compliment about their work.

5. Use words like "we" and "I" to show that you are willing to work on a solution together.

6. Don't lecture. Make your conversation short and concise.

7. Promote change by offering incentives and assistance.

8. Don't be counterproductive by being angry or sarcastic.

9. Show compassion and understanding. Realize that different personality types will take criticism differently and need to be handled accordingly.

10. Reaffirm your confidence in them.

Remember people are unique and what works with one person may not work with another. Our clients have often commented that by knowing a person's DiSC® type, giving criticism has become easier and more effective. You can't avoid the need to criticize but you can learn to do it more productively.

When Reward Becomes Expectation

Some of our clients run into the problem of over-rewarding their employees. Once overcompensated for their efforts, employees can get into a "what have you done for me lately" mentality. What had been a reward or a privilege becomes an entitlement or perhaps even a right. No longer is it a motivation but rather an expectation.

If this is your situation, there are ways to correct your generous habits without eliminating them completely.

1. One Time vs. Every Time. Manage expectations. Let employees know that just because you do something once does not mean you will do it every time.

2. Vary Awards. Expected rewards become viewed as an entitlement and have less motivational impact than if you vary the award. When you keep things fresh, it makes life less predictable and more motivational.

3. Reground Recognition. The recognition needs to be about personal thanks and commendations on a job well done, not the gift cards and free lunches.

4. Reward with Value. Start rewarding with things that employees say they value most; time off, flexible hours, earned perks

and privileges and learning opportunities. These types of incentives will add excitement and enthusiasm to the workplace.

5. Make it a Win/Win. Do something for your employees that will help you as well. For example, some of our clients do a training day and let their employees choose the topic. Selecting from options such as improved communication, time management, or stress management, employees feel rewarded and you get more productivity!



Admit it!

Why is it so difficult to make a good apology? Some of the reasons we have trouble are:

- We hate to admit to others we said or did something wrong.
- We are afraid people will ridicule us if we admit to making a mistake.
- We can't stand being less than perfect.
- We feel we are giving up power and control if we admit we are wrong.
- We fear the consequences.
- We don't know the proper way to make an apology.

A meaningful apology depends on the three Rs: regret, responsibility and remedy, says Beverly Engel, author of "The Power of Apology."

Regret conveys empathy for the other person and acknowledges the damage, hurt or inconvenience you caused. "I know I hurt you with my anger. I'm sorry for the pain I caused."

Accepting **Responsibility** makes the apology effective. Admit that you were

wrong. Avoid making excuses or blaming the other person. "I reacted unfairly, and you didn't deserve that."

Remedy means showing your willingness to remedy the situation. "I will commit to communicating without anger or blame."

Don't over apologize. Save your "Mega-sorrys" for intentional or deceptive actions. Apologies are for honest mistakes and errors.



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On Our Blog

Dear Dr. Mimi,

I work for a small company who has a very overworked CEO. He often treats people very poorly. He recently told one employee, "Talk less and listen more." His callous and negative treatment is demoralizing the workforce and I fear that several of our newest staff members are going to start looking for new jobs. I happen to be friends with our CEO's wife on a social level. We were friends before I took the job with the company. I wonder if I should say something to her about how widespread employee dissatisfaction is and that many employees are starting to interview for new positions. After all, the situation DOES affect her being as the success of the company is the livelihood for her family. Should I say something to her?

—Afraid of the Boss

Want an answer or have a comment? Visit our Blog at Hullandassociatesblog.blogspot.com.

Reduce Personality Conflicts!

Start by understanding the personalities!

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It is time to do the DiSC® Online Personal Profile and the good news is that it costs less than \$29.

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CC by
Dr. Mimi Hull

THE corporate couch



Q: I have been accused of not returning phone calls soon enough. But I don't always have time to drop my current project simply because I've gotten a phone call—especially when that call is not urgent or life-threatening. So how long is too long to wait and call someone back?

— *Perplexed*

A: I wish I could give you an exact time frame. I can tell you that, ideally, you should return all calls within 24 hours. To make matters easier, change the message on your voicemail to include a request for callers to tell you how soon they need you to respond. An alternative would be to inform callers of a particular time frame in which they can expect a return call. Keep in mind that the acceptable response time for returning phone calls is shorter today than it has ever been in the past. We live in a world that expects instant answers and results.

— *Dr. Mimi*

Q: I am thinking of taking a position with a competitor that is similar to my current job. When I accepted this job assignment, I signed a six-month, noncompete agreement. The employer who offered me a new position has asked me to sign a disclaimer stating I will not bring any past clients with me so he won't be sued by my current employer, but I am working on commission! How enforceable is my current agreement? I want the new job, and I'd like to bring my contacts with me immediately.

— *Tempted*

A: An agreement is an agreement. If you violate it, not only are you looking at a possible lawsuit but also at possibly being "blackballed" in your industry. And you may even have to live with a guilty conscience. If you are good at what you do, you will be successful without violating the agreement.

— *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 or DrMimi@HullOnline.com.