



The

Broadcasters' Desktop Resource

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... edited by Barry Mishkind – the Eclectic Engineer

Broadcast Operations **Feng Shui for the Mind: Keys To Uncluttered Communication**



By Marty Stanley

[August 2010] Are you tired of not getting what you want? Do you feel like your staff or colleagues are not listening to you or following through on their commitments? Prepare yourself for a little Feng Shui for your mind.

CREATING HARMONY AND FLOW, NOT CLUTTER AND DISAPPOINTMENT

For those of you who are unfamiliar with this ancient Chinese practice, it is about placement and design to create spaces of harmony and balance. Proponents say good Feng Shui and “Chi,” or flow, have a positive effect on health, prosperity, reaching goals and good relationships.

Similarly, in order to have clear communication we need to know how to use words to remove clutter and barriers. Just like Feng Shui, the careful use and placement of words can achieve balance, flow and harmony at work.

CRAFT YOUR WORDS CAREFULLY

Sometimes we spend more time crafting our words to order coffee than we do to communicate goals, expectations, preferences, or disappointments.

I used to order “a double mocha frappacino with a shot of espresso, “skinny,” Grande in a Venti cup with shake of nutmeg and vanilla bean...” and hope for the best.

Now, I just order a small coffee. It is a lot easier. And I get what I want: A cup of coffee. It is not very glamorous without all the filler, fluff, and calories, but how often does one *really* need all that? Even if you want it, a steady diet of it is not good for your waistline – or your wallet.

And that is what Feng Shui and uncluttered communication have in common: Clarity and Simplicity.

WHAT ARE YOU REALLY SAYING?

If you are not getting what you want, I invite you to step back and listen to your choice of words. Are you clear about what you *really* want – before you start talking?

In this era of things being “on-demand,” instant messaging and texting, we feel compelled to speak or write, before thinking. Instead, *STOP!* Take a few minutes to remove the clutter, to balance your thoughts. What do you *really* want? What is the intended outcome that you want from this inter-action?

Not sure about the goal? Write it down. Look at it. Is *that* what you want? If you got *that*, would *that* make you happy or deliver the results you want? If not, continue writing until you have found the clarity and simplicity of your thoughts.

EXPRESS YOURSELF, BUT CUT THE DRAMA

Once you have “Feng Shui’d your thoughts and words” to be sure they are aligned and in harmony with what you want, it is time to take action. The next step is to express yourself with clarity, conviction and compassion – or at least, without blame, judgment, drama or exaggeration.

It is important to note that whenever there is “drama” around a situation, you can be assured that clear communication is going to be compromised. In these situations, it is even more critical to step back and be objective about the end result you really want to achieve.

Look at all sides, all possibilities and all parties involved. Again, like Feng Shui, it is about creating a space of harmony and balance. Drama creates barriers to accomplishing what you want.

THREE APPROACHES TO CLEAR COMMUNICATION

1. Make a Request. One way to reduce the clutter in your communication and get what you want is to “make a request.” A request is similar to an invitation. When you receive an invitation, you can accept it or decline. In addition, a request can provide an opportunity for a counter-offer.

When you start a sentence with the words: “I have a request,” it forces you to be clear about what you want. It also alerts the listener to pay attention, without the fear, manipulation or apprehension that can occur when someone barks “I need this now!” or candy-coats “Can you do me a favor?”

For example, instead of blurting out: “You’re late again!” or being passive-aggressive about it by sighing, rolling your eyes and looking at your watch as the offender strolls past your office 30 minutes late, try this:

Think through what you really want and how you want to come across as a leader and manager. Align your thoughts words and actions to that image. Now you are ready make your request.

“Bill, I have a request. When I hired you, you said could work from 8 – 4. The past couple weeks, you’re not here until 8:15, sometime later. I request that you honor your commitment to work from 8 to 4.”

In this example, that the manager is holding Bill accountable for keeping his commitment. There is no drama, blame or opportunity for excuses. It does provide, however, an opening for Bill to make another request or counter offer, such as: “I’m taking the kids to school now. Would it be possible to start at 9 and leave at 5?”

Remember: when making a request, you need to be prepared for it to be declined or engage in a counter offer. If you are not willing to accept a “no” or a counter offer, then do not make a request.

2. State Your Expectations. Sometimes we think we have communicated expectations, but maybe we have only been rehearsing the dialogue in our heads! Did you actually tell the person what is expected? Or did you say something like: “you should know this is part of the job...”

Please note: saying “you should know” can put the other person on the defensive and rarely results in a good outcome.

So next time, instead of being snarky and saying, “Why can’t you get this right consistently?” Try this:

“Karen, we have reviewed this customer’s specifications for this job. I expect you to consistently do the work according to these requirements. If you fail to meet the requirements, there will need to be a written warning.”

Make sure your expectations are reasonable and actually part of the job. It helps to refer to documentation to support the expectation, such as a job description, product specifications, or legal requirements. People also need to know what happens if they do not meet expectations.

3. Keep your promises. If you say you will do something, do it. If you find that you are over committed or cannot follow through, the best thing you can do is acknowledge it to the person to whom you made the commitment. Do it as soon as you are aware that you cannot keep the promise.

Now we know you are smarter than a fifth grader, but do not act like one by saying “but I didn’t say: ‘I promise.’” In the final analysis all you have is your word. Do not diminish your integrity by not keeping your word to someone.

One of the best ways to have others keep their “promises” to you is to model this behavior. However there are times when we need to hold people accountable for not following through their commitments to us.

For example, “Jim, you said you’d have the analysis completed by today. I was counting on including that information for my presentation next week. What happened and when will it be completed?”

So there you have it. Follow the formula for Feng Shui for the mind and clear communication, and you will reap the benefits of clarity of thinking, aligning your words to your thoughts, and taking action that is consistent with your thoughts and words.

These are the keys to uncluttered communication.

Marty Stanley, President of Dynamic Dialog, Inc. (www.alteringoutcomes.com) is an author, national speaker and facilitator who helps organizations create their New Normal. For more information, you can contact Marty at 816-822-4047 or martystanley@alteringoutcomes.com

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