

COMMUNICATION PART 8

I hope you read last week's article. It was a pause in the continuance of communication techniques to remind you that we all need to use our critical thinking skills to make wise choices at the voting polls. Be sure to read how to enhance your critical thinking skills from last week's article or on my website at leadershippoweronline.com at the bottom of all the other articles.

Multicultural Communication: In your lifetime, you will experience culturally diverse people, called a "global-centric experience." Therefore, it is crucial to have a multicultural perspective on leadership and cultural literacy. There are differences between western cultures and eastern cultures related to communication.

Western cultures involve debate and discussion. It involves democratic and scientific thinking and debate. Just think of the many times you have been called to a meeting to discuss a topic of concern. The meeting's driving force was the verbal exchange and the debate around the issue. There finally was a tendency to get to the point of the discussion and make a decision.

Eastern cultures are more likely to use nonverbal signals for communication rather than discussion or debate. To help keep the relationship, it is often difficult for them to say "No." There is a tendency to talk around the point of discussion and not say what they mean. Yet, there is a tendency to finally get to the end of the discussion. Often this gives a person of a western culture a feeling of bluntness, rudeness, and procrastination.

There are some general multicultural recommendations set forth to encourage and enhance multicultural communication. These are:

1. Recognize that miscommunication is likely to happen when working with significant cultural differences.
2. Realize that miscommunication could lead to unwanted conflict.
3. Learn to adapt to different communication styles.
4. Never shout.
5. Define the meanings of words and phrases.
6. Learn to simplify the message to meet cultural needs.
7. Avoid non-standard abbreviations (such as "UR" for "you are").
8. Show patience with different logic.
9. Ask a person to repeat what they said or say it differently if you do not understand.
10. Get help to clarify the information when there is no one to interpret, or you do not understand.
11. Note the distance a hand is extended when shaking hands to determine a person's comfort zone.
12. Give the benefit of the doubt when you do not understand. Consider alternatives to what you thought you heard.
13. Use several media types to impart information. Be sure that every kind of media has the same message.
14. Allow verbal reading of documents to ascertain understanding.

15. When English is a second language, have workers work directly with English-speaking people with English as a first language.
16. Have a reiteration of the understanding of meeting content. Clarification could then occur if there is a misunderstanding.

It is essential to realize that multicultural staffing or working with multicultural persons is challenging and rewarding. Sharing cultural insight can be stimulating and provide a unique learning experience.

Clarification: Sometimes, when a person tells you something, the message is not clear. The most common response to clarify the meaning is, "I don't understand." Those words immediately tell the person that something is wrong with their communication. It is better to identify that you do not understand (if that is true) than to continue the conversation on a misunderstanding note. It is important to explain WHY you do not understand. Clarification helps the other person focus on the exact information to increase your understanding.

When communicating: Say what you mean precisely and mean what you say!

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