



The 10 most common blocks to becoming a remarkable communicator

Remarkable conversations are those that people can't stop talking about... they can't refrain from remarking on the clarity, ease and the outcomes that resulted from communicating with the other person. Often those people we share the most inspiring conversations with are also, unsurprisingly, remarkable leaders.

We all know someone that is brilliant at communicating. At a dinner party their input may silence all diners. At a work round table somehow their contribution seems to be worth more. So what are some of the faux pas that prevent the less impressive communicators from doing it well? After 20 years of working with people and leaders this is where I too often see people limit themselves, their relationships and the outcomes they are looking to achieve.

So what do subpar communicators typically do?

1 Have 'yoursations' not conversations

One of the greatest gifts you can give someone is not your advice but your undivided attention. To listen.... really listen. The goal is to expand the conversation not to narrow it.

A good conversation is like a tennis rally – back and forth. The air time is usually even, although unlike tennis, the outcome of each point is rarely recorded. Otherwise you leave the court/bar/couch feeling you are being talked at not conversed with.



We've all been on the receiving end of those people that love hearing the sound of their own voice, more than yours. They seem to wait you to get your thought out, not so they can add value to it, but because it's time for them to talk again. Or perhaps you can be honest enough with yourself to say that sometimes you have moments of falling into this category as well (perhaps more often than you choose to be honest about).

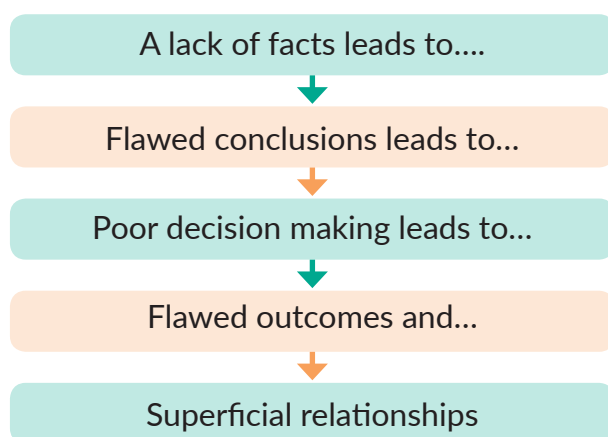
For communicators taking up more of the air time in a conversation, it is time to learn that these are known as 'yoursations'. You could practically have these discussions without the other person present... you just can't see it. All of you 'Yoursationists' are too busy having your point heard or telling your stories. Many of you probably feel they're not being listened too as well, further proof of the ineffectiveness of 'yoursations'.

2

There is little search for the 'real truth'

Coming to a conversation, or business decision, thinking you have all the facts is as pointless as going to relationship counselling on your own. When you're the only one contributing, or are solely prepared to listen to your side of the facts, you are more likely to reach flawed outcomes as a result. After all, you're only focussing on number one, rather than considering all the factors and opinions surrounding you.

It is a combination of what YOU know and what THEY know that leads to great decision making, remarkable outcomes and deepened relationship building.



It's not a happy chain of events!

The implications of not having (or discounting) all the information leads to erroneous decision making that can affect your customers, your colleagues, your strategy and your reputation (both your brand and your personal one), right along the business food chain.

3

Need to be right

Susan Scott, author of *Fierce Conversations*, talks about taking responsibility for the emotional wake you create with others. Just like when a jet or water skier creates a wake beside and behind them. The same exists for how you make others feel. Whether it is your intent to do this or not, it is irrelevant. It happens.

When your desire to win the conversation, or your need to be right dominates the agenda then you are likely to steer the conversation in the way you need, with no real regard for the damage along the way. Whether positive or negative, you create an emotional wake that impacts trust and respect in all relationships.

If you are not prepared to be honest with yourself and get out of your own way then how can you expect others to be honest with you? Being right becomes a lonely existence in which very few people trust you and even fewer want to work with you.

4

Fail to notice when others are not feeling 'safe'

Maintaining safety in a conversation is the difference between an outcome and an outbreak. When both parties feel 'safe enough' to be honest with each other is when you reach the best outcomes and preserve, or in some cases restore, great working relationships.

When we don't feel safe in a situation or conversation we have a stress reaction.

When our safety is challenged, our emotional or physical safety, we have a stress reaction. Examples include: you're going to crush my ego; challenge my sense of self; remind me of my estranged parent; and we go into fight or flight mode. This in turn shows in our behaviour.

When people are in fight or flight mode they no longer hear what you are saying in the same way. Blood has rushed from their brain to their vital organs, and they won't hear you clearly... they are simply too busy protecting themselves or preparing to run.

The key here is to learn and to look. Learn to look for people's fight or flight behaviours if you think they may be not feeling safe. Because you need to restore safety before you can move forward and have an outcome focused conversation.

5

Don't highlight the real issue

Most people don't feel confident enough to go straight to the heart of the problem. As a compromise, they sugar coat it or walk around it in the hope that the other person will do the heavy lifting and see the truth hidden underneath.

If the purpose of having the conversation is to improve performance, change a behavior or improve a relationship yet we fail to say what we mean, what do you think the outcome will be? Typically there is confusion, frustration at the lack of depth in the conversation, it may lead to an argument or the person in question continues on in ignorant bliss. Nothing solved, nothing gained. This could all be because we have not developed the courage and/or the right interpersonal skills to discuss the real issue.

6

Let the 'Board of Directors' in their head do the thinking

We all have a view of the world based on our upbringing, culture, faith, community, age, etc. This then forms how we perceive information, people and circumstances. These are called our cognitive distortions, or our BoDs. They change the lens of how we see things. The BoDs tells us that our interpretation of life, people and situations is the right one. But what if they are wrong?

These BoDs in our head dramatically influence how we approach conversations before, in the moment and after the fact. They take us away from objective thinking and often steer us away from ideal outcomes.

The BoDs include; Blamer, All about Me'er, Black and White Thinker, Negative Thinker, Catastrophiser or Minimiser, Always Right and the Powerless. They hinder us from seeing the real facts. They are like the crazy mirrors at the circus that make us look very different from what we really are.

7

Take others at face value

Based on our Board of Directors (see 6. above) we often decide whether someone is right or wrong based on our own perceptions. What we also do is look at someone's words and behaviours and judge them. We only see what they say, what they do and how they look but this is not who they are. And this is often only a small percentage of their whole being.

Often what people say and do is a direct result from their life experience. For example their values may dictate that it is respectful not to look someone in the eye, they might have been taught that all leaders cannot be trusted. Or they might feel that honesty is not always appropriate, and polite small lies are more acceptable. Whatever it is, they will then react based on those foundation understandings of the world. It doesn't make them a good or bad person, nor does it warrant your judgement. It's just what they know, so be conscientious not to judge others by their behaviours and instead try to see people for just the tip of the iceberg; the real person resides in full under the surface.

8

Lead with opinions and feelings, not facts

Often we find it difficult to decipher the difference between the facts and our own opinions and feelings. So we lead with our feelings and opinions in a conversation and wonder why things go wrong.

Facts are non-disputable pieces of information. They can be proven, are measurable, precise and exact information. Whilst your feelings and opinions are true for you they are not a proven truth.

Therefore, it's easy to understand that when we open conversations with our 'facts' it's logical that the other person is not going to effectively take the new information on board. Statements such as

'You've got an attitude problem' or 'No one enjoys working with you' and even 'Everybody's says you don't respect them', might be true to you but rarely do they reflect your entire workforce. It's safe to say, these are not the beginnings of a productive conversation.

9

Use 'honesty' as an excuse to verbally assassinate

Those four words.... "I'm just being honest". They seem to give some people permission to say precisely what they think. After all, we live in a world of free speech. But there are consequences that can be serious and long term. Practise this type of honesty and not only will you see trust and respect bank being depleted, but also the 'discretionary effort' bank too – regardless of whether we are friends or work colleagues. It will seem as if we don't want to go the extra distance for these people anymore. They have hurt us.

So why do people chose to grind your self-esteem down to the size of a pea?

It's our own moral compass that we need to take ownership of. When we speak our words can harm our colleagues and we create an emotional wake... whether we like it or not. Learn to communicate to your benefit, and the outcomes will be quite remarkably improved.

10

Don't self manage in the moment

Are you a lover or a fighter? Do you run and hide or always have to have the last word? Either way, knowing how you react in life and as a colleague puts you a step ahead when it comes to self-management in a loaded conversation.

For most people don't recognise their reactions until it's too late and the damage is done. Alternatively, if they do many have not yet developed a 'toolkit' to be able to self-manage in the moment. If conversation is the relationship then how we manage ourselves during that interaction is everything. I think this quote from Wayne Dyer says it all.

"How people treat you is their karma. How you react is yours."



Whilst the above 10 are the most common blocks from creating outstanding communication and collaboration they are not mountains to climb. The good news is that people can learn the skills and self-awareness to move these aside and create outstanding relationships and become the leaders that people want to follow. I've seen it happen and it creates a shift in team cultures that is tangible.

Learn how to create a culture that eliminates these issues and become a remarkable communicator today.



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