



PHENOMENAL PEOPLE

A black and white photograph of a man and a woman in business attire. The man is on the left, wearing a suit and tie, looking down at a document he is holding. The woman is on the right, wearing a blazer, looking at the document and holding a pen. They are standing in front of a stone wall.

# Better Communication

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## A Quick Start Guide

# BETTER COMMUNICATION

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***“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”***

**- George Bernard Shaw**

One of the biggest challenges we come across in the workplace is ineffective communication. Part of reason, to paraphrase the Irish playwright, George Bernard Shaw, is that we think we have been clear in what we have said or written but, while it makes perfect sense to us, it makes no sense, or a different sense, to the recipient.

The following are four areas of focus that will rapidly improve your communication skills.

## **CLEAR, CONCISE, PRECISE**

**Make sure you have been very specific in your communication.**

For example, if you ask your team to be in good time for an off-site meeting with a client, make sure you clarify what that means. For some ‘in good time’ means half an hour early, while for others, five minutes seems adequate. We all have different ways of seeing things and can’t assume another person’s perception is the same as ours - we shouldn’t be annoyed with them if we haven’t checked to see that we’re all on the same page.

**Use language that everyone can relate to.**

It’s great to have an extensive vocabulary but if you use a word someone doesn’t understand, they may be too embarrassed to ask you the meaning and may misunderstand what you meant to say. Don’t assume people will be proactive enough to look up words they don’t understand.

# WORDS ARE ONLY A SMALL PART OF COMMUNICATION

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## **Avoid waffling.**

People's attention spans are short and if you are too vague or keep reiterating the same point, they will lose interest and may miss valuable information. If you know you have a tendency to go off on a tangent, either write bullet points of the elements you want to communicate or email them. If you do email, go back over what you have written and strip out anything that isn't essential.

## **Check understanding.**

Without being patronising, check that the person you are communicating with has understood your message. A helpful way of doing this is to say, "I'm not always as clear as I think I am, so may I ask you to summarise what you have understood, so that I know we are on the same page?"

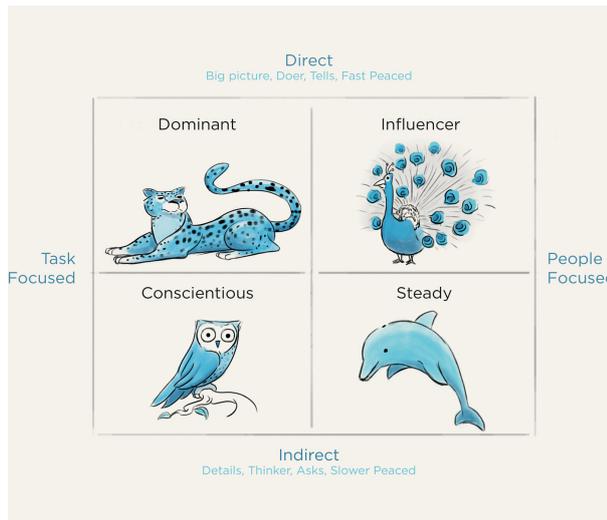
## **WORDS ARE ONLY A SMALL PART OF COMMUNICATION**

Some of you may have come across Dr Mehrabian's communication model. This model illustrates that words may not have as much impact as we may think in communication.

When face to face, body language represents 55% of our communication, the tone of voice we use, 38%, and words only 7%. Even if a person is not consciously aware of it, they will pick up on your body language, if it doesn't match your words. Be aware of what you are really 'saying' and try to ensure your words, tone and body language convey the same message.

If our communication is not face to face (phone, email, text) tone becomes even more important. We need to be aware that if we are distracted, annoyed or worried about something, that can leak into our current communication. Giving the interaction our full attention minimises misunderstandings.

# UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION STYLES



## BE AWARE OF OTHER PEOPLE'S COMMUNICATION STYLE

DiSC is a valuable psychometric profiling system, as it allows us to become aware of how our communication style is perceived by other people and enables us to better understand the communication styles of others. For simplification, people's communication styles fall into four different categories. We will adopt elements of all four of these categories but often we favour one or two of the quadrants.

The illustration above is a simple introduction of the ideas presented in the DiSC model.

As we often find it easier to relate to avatar, we have assigned an animal or bird each quadrant, to better illustrate the communication style.

By looking at the characteristics of the quadrants, you probably have an idea of where you fit and may be able to identify the communication styles of some of your team members. The value in this is recognising the need to flex your style to suit the person you are talking to, to ensure that you communicate effectively.

For example, quadrants that sit next to each other have more common ground, so are better able to relate to each other. Where the quadrants sit at a diagonal to each other, there is little common ground in communication styles, so misunderstandings may arise.

You can imagine that a peacock type may find an owl type to be boring and too caught up in detail, while an owl might think the peacock is a show off and self centred.

# LISTEN

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## LISTEN WITH THE INTENT TO UNDERSTAND

(cont). Similarly, the lion type may find the dolphin vague and timid, while the dolphin might find the lion type abrupt and intimidating. Becoming familiar with this concept, we realise that some of the misunderstanding in communication has happened because we have different styles – not because some is trying to ruin our day. From this understanding, we can make an effort to communicate in the style the recipient would most like to receive. This is not being subservient – it's improving communication and creating a more cohesive team. It takes practice to flex our communication style but the benefits are well worth it.

If you are interested in exploring this concept further, we can provide certified DiSC profiles. Contact us for more details.

### LISTEN

To quote Stephen Covey, "Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply." So many mistakes and misunderstanding because we don't listen, properly. We need to be present with the person and really pay attention to hear what is being said. In our busy lives we are often distracted and not fully in the moment. We need to learn to slow down again and be aware of where we are putting our attention.

The simple question, "Where is my focus?" will help us to bring it back to the present moment (see our QS Guide on Resilience for additional resources).



Remember this is only a Quick Start guide, meant to introduce you to the principles of better communication and providing a basic checklist of what to focus on. If you'd like to develop this skill set further, we'd love to support you.

Contact our team at: [hello@phenomenal-people.com](mailto:hello@phenomenal-people.com)