

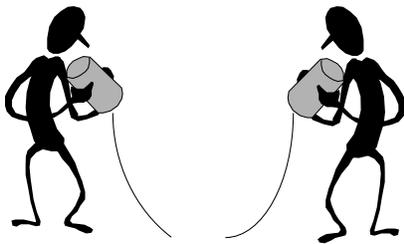
Communicate, Communicate, Communicate & Communicate Some More



One of the most persistent pieces of advice regarding change management is “Communicate, communicate, communicate.” This repetitive counsel generally means you should keep hammering home the message. That’s true enough but that’s only part of it. Let’s begin examining the rest of it by adding a fourth repetition so that the counsel becomes “Communicate, communicate, communicate, and communicate some more.”

Now, let’s sort out four different uses of “communicate” and examine their implications.

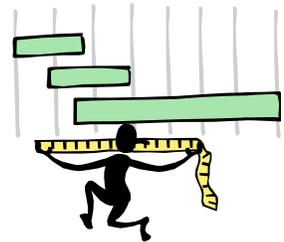
Communicate (1). A first use of “communicate” does indeed refer to “hammering home” the message, of continuously and constantly broadcasting the reasons and rationale for the change – for its necessity, for its value, for its nature, and for the form it takes. But repeating the same message over and over, even though it is absolutely necessary, won’t get the job done by itself.



Communicate (2). A second use of “communicate” refers to recognizing that people are different and, psychologically speaking, they are in different places at different times. Accordingly, they hear and don’t hear different things at different times. The message, then, must be varied so as to take into account the differences among people and the different places a given person might be in at a particular time. If not, the message won’t get through. And the same

basic message must be repeated over time so that people who weren’t ready to hear it will hear it when they are ready. The bottom line here is that you need multiple versions of the same message – and you have to keep hammering them home, too.

Communicate (3). A third use of “communicate” refers to the fact that, over time, the message itself needs to change. As a change progresses (or doesn’t), what needs to be communicated changes, too. Some things (perhaps the outcomes sought) might remain constant, but progress will vary as might the strategy and tactics associated with effecting the change. People need to be kept abreast of the change effort as it unfolds, emerges, progresses and even as it encounters difficulties and obstacles.



Communicate (4). Finally, a fourth use of “communicate” reminds us that true communication is a two-way street, not a one-way broadcast. You know what you’re saying (or at least you think you do) but, unless you check with your audience, you have no idea what they’re hearing. Thus, this fourth use of “communicate” reminds us that active listening is every bit as much a part of effective communication as is the repeated broadcasting. So listen to what people are telling you about the change.

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To sum it up, what “Communicate, communicate, communicate, and communicate some more” means is that (1) you do indeed have to “hammer home the message,” (2) you have to tailor your communications to fit the members of your audience and their state of receptivity, (3) you also have to modify your communications to fit changing and unforeseen circumstances and (4) you are well-served by listening to what other people have to say about the change because what they have to say is just as important to you as what you have to say is important to them.

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