



Accomplished People Skills Are Required To Be A Successful Leader

By Shari L. Frisinger

Early in life we are taught to “play nice” and “follow the Golden Rule.” As we grow up and enter the business world, we find out that there are different ways to “play nice.” Others’ (or our own) behaviors can lead to frustration and general misunderstandings of situations. None of this is productive in the work place. In fact, it can lead to poor morale, a substantial loss of productivity, and counterproductive employee turnover.

Those who have learned to minimize these problems are referred to as having good “people skills.” Others may do very well technically, but they are not always the best at team play and often not good at managing.

There are four fundamental approaches to good communication that meld into four merged techniques, which layer into eight blended methods. Each method has separate yet predictable actions; all are instrumental in understanding how we relate to other individuals and teams. Once you have learned to recognize certain behaviors for what they are, you can improve your communication channels with co-workers and achieve the results you desire.

Do you have, for example, a person who is very task-oriented, direct and a high achiever? How well does that person get along with enthusiastic idea people? How about with someone who is not very forceful, needs consensus, and avoids risks? Or, do you have someone who is detail-oriented and prides him/herself on accuracy and analytical problem solving skills?

Each of these people is a very necessary ingredient to an outstanding team. Getting each of them to recognize everyone’s strengths and accept and appreciate the differences can be a difficult task. This diversity in each of us can be better understood and managed, producing positive outcomes.

In this four-part article series, we will look at different parts of Behavioral and Commutative traits as they relate to human action and reaction in the work place. This first article is about speaking and how the human factor can make or break any speaking engagement in both professional and private environments.

Quickly Gaining Rapport: Speaking Patterns

One of the quickest ways to gain rapport with others is to match their speaking patterns. You don't need to match their patterns to the extent the other person senses you are mocking them - or being disrespectful. What exactly could you match?

1. Rate of speech (fast vs. slow)

It can be irritating to talk with someone who talks either faster or slower than you do. Generally speaking, a fast talker will mentally handle information more quickly than a slower talker. Let's look at situations from each perspective (to make it easy, assume a fast talker is a fast listener and a slower talker is a slower listener):

a. Fast talker -> slower listener

- i. Fast talkers will become annoyed because their listeners cannot keep up, and they have to repeat themselves again and again. They may not even be able to repeat what they initially said, because in their minds, they said it so long ago.
- ii. Slower listeners will get lost early in the conversation. They will miss not only important highlights but also many details because they are focused on deciphering the jumble of words that are being hurled at them.

b. Fast talker -> fast listener

- i. The fast talker will be in heaven and may not only talk faster, but also leave out words and just hit upon the higher points of discussion.
- ii. The fast listener will be nodding quickly in agreement and will respond just as fast.

c. Slower talker -> fast listener

- i. The slower talker will be meticulous in speech and detail, and will become frustrated when the fast listener doesn't appear to be interested.

- ii. The fast listener will be taking mental vacations, popping back into this reality to check in and be sure nothing is missed.
- d. Slower talker -> slower listener
- i. The slower talker will feel comfortable with the slower listener. There will be numerous pauses and head nodding.
 - ii. The slower listener will be totally in tune with the slower talker and, between the two of them, will examine every point meticulously.

2. Pauses

Pauses are critical to slower listeners; pauses give them the opportunity to mentally review what has been said. When the fast talker does not give enough pauses, slower listeners will become annoyed because they may not be able to keep up. When slower talkers pause, it is because they are gathering their thoughts before they verbalize them. They will express these ideas clearly once they have mentally composed them.

3. Words

The words you use when conversing play a major part in gaining rapport. For instance, when you use words like "well prepared," "high standards," and "very thorough" to a process-driven and analytical person, then you are indeed speaking the same language. Using words like "high energy," "enthusiastic," and "full potential" to the same person will result in discomfort and possibly a loss of respect. Listen to the types of words the other person uses and substitute those words for your regular ones in your conversations.

4. Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm takes many forms, and it is important to match your enthusiasm level to the other person's. Not doing so can have unintended results; you may be perceived as "too emotional", "not excited enough" or "overly-enthusiastic". To some people, it is unnerving and possibly intimidating to express enthusiasm quite differently than they do.

5. Tone and vocal variety

Have you ever had to strain to hear someone talk? Or felt you had to take steps backwards because it felt like the other person was SHOUTING at you? Either method will dampen willingness to continue the conversation. That's not to say you cannot talk softly or loudly. If the person you are talking to is speaking softly, you should soften your voice. If they are more forceful in their speech, you can be more forceful in yours by standing up straighter and speaking from your diaphragm. You can also speak

more forcefully in phrases.

6. Facial expressions

Some people smile a lot when they talk; others not so much. If you are talking with a person who has a more solemn nature, constant smiling could remind them of the Cheshire Cat in Alice in Wonderland. They could be wondering what you are hiding, or if you are not taking them seriously. That could damage your relationship before you even begin. An occasional warm smile along with a nod during a conversation will show your interest and your encouragement.

If the other person is very animated, you would do better to be more animated yourself. You can do this by smiling a bigger smile, opening your eyes wider, and even making your mouth into an 'O' to convey surprise or unexpectedness.

Matching the rate of speech, pauses, enthusiasm and words of other people may not guarantee you instant success in dealing with them. It is more like acknowledging their individuality and showing you respect them. They, in turn, will sense that you understand them and are looking out for their best interests.

Drawing on nearly 20 years of communication expertise and combining her Masters in Aeronautical Science research explaining how different personality types communicate in the real time decision bubble of the cockpit and Corporate America, Shari Frisinger, MAS, has delved into such communication concepts as listening and attention filters, building rapport in speaking, managing for comfort or efficiency and connecting the disconnects.

Shari is a leadership consultant, coach, trainer and national speaker. She has taught enhanced leadership workshops focusing on effectiveness ["doing the right thing"] and efficiency ["doing things right"] through increasing communication skills, strengthening people skills, reinforcing teamwork and achieving results through goal-oriented actions.

Throughout her career, she has worked with companies focusing on achieving company objectives through strong leadership and clear, concise communication. Shari has had several articles published in the areas of teambuilding and leadership.

"It isn't what you said, it's what they think they heard!"

Explaining how different personality types communicate in the real time decision bubble of the cockpit and Corporate America, CornerStone Strategies, L.L.C. works with company leaders to focus on effectiveness ["doing the right thing"] and efficiency ["doing things right"]. We work with clients to increase communication skills, strengthen people skills, reinforce teamwork behaviors and achieve results through goal-oriented actions.

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CornerStone Strategies, L.L.C. is certified by NBAA to offer PDP courses and has given scholarships at NBAA Flight Attendants Conferences, Schedulers and Dispatchers Conferences and Maintenance Managers Conferences.

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