Communication for Results: Building Bridges to Gain Support

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Communication is Key

- Communication is the key to success
  - for your organisation and
  - for your career.
- Communication is the source of most organizational problems.
- People perceive themselves as good communicators.
- So, where does the problem lie?
Be the Change Agent

- We can’t change others’ behaviour
- What we CAN change is our own behaviour.

- To achieve our goals, we can’t wait for others to change.
Overview

1. Three Pillars of Success to Gain Support:
   - Understanding
   - Positive Reaction
   - Trust

2. Levels of Resistance that Keep Us From Gaining Support

3. Techniques to Build Bridges and Reduce Resistance
Exercise

- Please prepare a brief proposal for senior management to accomplish the following goal:

  - Scenario 1: Work from home 1 day/week
  
  - Scenario 2: Obtain funding to enrol in La Salle’s M.A. in Corporate Communication.

- You have 10 minutes to complete this task.
Three Pillars of Success to Gain Support

1. Understanding
2. Positive Reaction
   • Champion
   • Support
   • Go Along
   • Drag Feet
   • Actively Oppose
3. Trust
Resistance

- Primary reason why changes fail

- Understanding resistance can help us to avoid it.

- We must pay attention to, not just our goals, but to how our audience will receive the message.
Levels of Resistance
Maurer (2002). Why Don’t You Want What I Want?

- Level 1: Lack of Understanding
  - “I don’t get it!”

- Level 2: Negative Emotional Response
  - “I don’t like it!”

- Level 3: Lack of Trust
  - “I don’t trust you!”
Level 1: Lack of Understanding
"I don’t get it!"

- Based on the *content* of the idea
- Lends itself to explanation and questions
- Need to adapt to different learning and communication styles

- The goal of working with Level 1 Resistance is to *increase understanding*
Techniques to Increase Understanding

- Don’t presume understanding.
  - May not have received/read
    - “But I sent it to them!”
  - May not have understood
    - “It’s perfectly clear to me!”

- Determine what others have understood.

- Ask questions to gauge understanding.
  - Open ended gain more information
    - E.g. "Why" and "How", or phrases such as "Tell me about...".
  - “What questions do you have?”

- Paraphrase content.
  - “So it sounds like you’re saying...” “If I understand...”

- Summarize (or ask others to).
Level 2: Negative Emotional Response

"I don’t like it!"

- People may experience the “fear response”
- Communication is hindered by emotional responses
- Rational evidence can’t be “heard”

- The goal of working with Level 2 Resistance is to recognize and mitigate negative emotional responses.
Techniques to Increase Positive Reactions

- Recognize that everyone’s wondering “what’s in it for me?”
- Avoid knee-jerk reactions (monitor your own triggers)
- Try to assess where others are coming from
  - Consider the context
  - Ask questions
  - Paraphrase emotions
    - “You sound...” “You must be...”
Level 3: Lack of Trust

"I don’t trust you!"

- People aren’t reacting to your idea;
  - They’re reacting to you
- We may become the focal point for a larger issue.
- Selective perception may influence how others hear us.

- The goal of working with Level 3 Resistance is to tend to relationships to build trust.
Techniques for Building Trust

- Establish common ground (shared goals)
- Focus on issues *not* positions
  - E.g. Change the structure vs eliminate inefficiency
- Show that others’ concerns are understood
- Use communication bridges to gain trust
  - Compliment the other
  - Find a “Grain of Truth”
Exercise

- Revisit your proposal. With the techniques we’ve discussed in mind, please think about what you would change or add.

- Scenario 1: Work from home 1 day/week

- Scenario 2: Obtain funding to enrol in La Salle’s M.A. in Corporate Communication.
Three Questions to Continually Ask to Gain Support

1. Do they understand?

2. Are they reacting positively or negatively?

3. Is there sufficient trust for them to support me or the idea?
Summary

- What will you take away?
- Identify a few specific, concrete behaviours that you can put into practice in your work.
Thank you

Questions?