

CSP E-Lesson 16, Fall 2008

Words of Wisdom: "My boss told me that I was selected over other job candidates because she thought I would communicate well with patients."

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Communicator Wanted

Employers say that the number one skill they look for in employees is the ability to listen, read, write, and speak effectively. They also report that communication skills are the ones that most new graduates lack. If you become a strong communicator, you will stand out from the pack.

Rate your communication skills by writing "R" for "Rarely," "U" for "Usually," and "A" for "Always" beside the following statements.

1. ___ I participate actively in conversations.
2. ___ I learn the meaning of words I don't know.
3. ___ I know how to locate information.
4. ___ I pay attention to other people's body language.
5. ___ I can understand and create charts, graphs, and diagrams.
6. ___ I use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation to write letters, memos, e-mails and reports.
7. ___ I speak clearly and don't use slang.
8. ___ I make eye contact when I speak to others.
9. ___ I consider the other person's point of view.
10. ___ I check information for accuracy.
11. ___ I can focus on what others are saying without being distracted.
12. ___ I use a tone of voice, words, and body language appropriate for the occasion.
13. ___ I ask questions to clarify things I don't understand.
14. ___ I can identify the important points when someone speaks.

I See Where You're Coming From

One critical communication skill is the ability to understand another person's viewpoint. It's easy to get wrapped up in your own feelings and focus totally on your own point of view, but communication is a two-way street. Other people are most likely to listen to you and respect your opinion when you show the ability to understand what is important to them.

For example, if your parents become angry when you don't take out the trash as promised, you may resent them and view the chore as an annoyance. Your parents may see the chore as a responsibility that is necessary to keep your home comfortable.

In the workplace and in your personal life, the ability to understand viewpoints of other people will help you avoid misunderstandings and conflicts. Try the following tips:

- Allow others to express their viewpoint fully; listen carefully and show understanding.
- Express yourself calmly without blaming or judging.
- Identify and concentrate on the ways you agree.
- Express yourself in a positive way.

Work with a partner to identify each person's point of view in the following situations. Then create a role play with your partner in which the two of you avoid a misunderstanding or conflict.

1. Charles has a low opinion of his sister Meg's new friends. They use bad language, wear too much makeup, and dress in a way that draws negative attention. He plans to speak to her about the company she is keeping.

Charles' viewpoint _____

Meg's viewpoint _____

Create a role play showing the best way Charles can communicate with Meg.

I See Where You're Coming From (Continued)

2. Marilyn and her teacher have different political opinions. Recently, she received a low grade on a social studies report and a note from the teacher that read, "Your personal opinion interferes with your ability to understand the subject matter." Marilyn believes she received the poor grade because her opinion is different from her teacher's. She thinks the report deserves a higher grade because she showed her understanding of the concepts. Marilyn plans to talk to her teacher about a re-evaluation of the grade she received.

Marilyn's viewpoint _____

Teacher's viewpoint _____

Create a role play showing the best way for Marilyn to communicate with her teacher.

3. Lil has recently gone through a divorce, and she has been moody and irritable at work for over a month. She snaps angrily at co-workers, and the quality of her work has deteriorated. Others have to frequently correct her errors. Pete, her supervisor, must let Lil know that, although she has always been a valued employee, her behavior needs improvement.

Pete's viewpoint _____

Lil's viewpoint _____

Create a role play showing the best way for Pete to communicate with Lil.

Tell of a recent occasion at home, in school, or at work where you and another person had different viewpoints. Were you able to have a productive conversation without a misunderstanding? Or did you have a conflict because you failed to consider each other's point of view?

Don't Talk To Strangers

When you were a child, you were warned not to talk to strangers. However, when you enter the workplace, you will be expected to be able to walk up to almost anyone, anywhere, at any time and carry on a conversation. Are you ready for it?

Your conversational skills will help you open doors, network with professionals, build relationships with customers and co-workers, and boost your self-confidence. You might not realize how easy it is to be a good conversationalist, so here are some guidelines to follow.

1. Get to know the other person, so you'll have a reason for a conversation.
2. Listen twice as much as you talk.
3. Ask open-ended questions that can't be answered with one word.
4. Let one question lead to another.
5. Resist the urge to dominate the conversation.
6. Give everyone an opportunity to talk.

Where did you go? Out. What Did You Do? Nothing.

Asking good questions is the key to an interesting conversation. Open-ended questions that begin with what, why, where, and how require other people to expand on their answer. You should avoid predictable questions such as "How are you?" or "What did you do in school today?" that lead to one-word answers such as "fine" and "not much." For example, instead of asking someone "Do you agree with the new rules at work?" ask "What is your opinion of the new rules at work?" and you'll get a more detailed response.

Read the following questions and turn them into open-ended questions that encourage detailed responses.

1. Close ended: "Did you enjoy your trip to England?"

Open ended: "_____?"

Don't Talk To Strangers (Continued)

2. Close ended: "Did you learn from your mistake?"

Open ended: "_____?"

3. Close ended: "Do you like living in the city?"

Open ended: "_____?"

4. Close ended: "Is Tom a good manager?"

Open ended: "_____?"

5. Close ended: "Would you like a job that involves travel?"

Open ended: "_____?"

Breaking the Ice

Meeting and talking with complete strangers can seem intimidating. However, breaking the ice isn't difficult when you begin a conversation with a common or "universal" topic.

Here are three examples of common topics. Add three more that you believe interest most people.

1. Family
2. School or career
3. Hobbies
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

You can hold an interesting conversation and get to know something about almost anyone by choosing a universal topic. Start by asking one open-ended question. Listen attentively to the answer, and use it to form another question. You only have to be a good listener and show genuine interest in the other person to get a conversation going.

Don't Talk To Strangers (Continued)

Choose a classmate that you don't know well and practice your conversational skills with the person. Select a universal topic and toss the conversation back and forth by taking turns asking and answering open-ended questions. Try to let the conversation flow naturally and allow the topic to change if it seems appropriate. Remember! Listening is the key to a successful conversation.

Here's a question for the universal topic of "school": "What do you like about your favorite class?" Develop a similar question for your universal topic.

After completing a two-minute conversation with your partner, write answers to the following questions.

What I enjoyed about the conversation was _____

What I didn't enjoy about the conversation was _____

I found it difficult to _____

I found it easy to _____

I need to improve my ability to _____

My partner is good at _____

My partner needs to improve his or her ability to _____

Cut on the Dotted Line

Giving and taking instructions makes up a big part of any person's job. In the workplace, problems caused by poor or misunderstood instructions cost companies millions of dollars a year. Therefore, if you are able to help a company cut costs because you give and receive instructions well, your communication skill will be noticed and rewarded.

For your instructions to be clear and effective, here's what you need to do:

- Explain the end result that is expected.
- Identify the tools and equipment needed.
- Describe the step-by-step procedure that must be followed.
- Demonstrate or illustrate what you mean if possible.
- Use specific words that describe your meaning.

How well do you give and take instructions? Read and follow these directions to find out.

Task: Change the shape of a piece of paper by folding it ten times. The end result may be flat or three dimensional. Write instructions so that the same shape can be recreated.

Equipment needed: one piece of notebook paper

Step 1. Measure the size of an ordinary sheet of notebook paper. Include the measurement in your instructions.

Step 2. Change the shape of the paper by folding it ten times, but don't let anyone see the result.

Step 3. Write step-by-step instructions so that another person can recreate your same folds. Use text, diagrams, or a combination of both. Your instructions may be completed with either paper and pencil or on a computer.

Step 4. After you've developed and written your instructions, exchange them with a classmate who also completed this activity. Follow your classmate's instructions and compare your folded results with his or her folded paper from Step 2. Did you get the right result? Did your classmate get the right result from your instructions? If so, both of you were good at giving and receiving instructions.

It's an E-World Out There

Tim Burrows works for an entrepreneur who operates a storefront in an electronic mall on the Internet. At this virtual site, each store is represented by its logo. People click on the logo to "go shopping."

Tim's store, *Good N' Green*, specializes in "green" products that are safe for the environment. All of the store's transactions and communications take place online. Tim was hired because he is familiar with electronic communication. He's accustomed to texting, e-mailing, and instant messaging his friends. He is also good at researching and at uploading and downloading information from the Internet.

Listing Products

One of Tim's tasks is to write product descriptions for new items and upload the descriptions to the storefront. Today, he needs to write a description for a lightweight stainless steel food carrier. By using the food carrier, people avoid using paper and plastic food containers for take-out food or meals and snacks brought from home.

Tim notices that the 7"x 9"x 4" carrier looks like a traditional lunch box, has three compartments, and contains a removable plate, knife and fork. It holds hot and cold food and doesn't give off toxins the way plastic does. Researching the competition on the Internet, Tim finds that products similar to the food carrier cost \$19.99, so he recommends this price to his boss.

A product description must be short and concise in order to attract buyers. It's important to use descriptive words and common language that are easy to understand.

Four things that must be included in a good product description are listed below:

- Features - This includes the product size, color, materials, and functions.
- Benefits - These describe how the product will make life better or fulfill a desire.
- Call to action - This encourages the customer to do something now, for example, "order today while supplies last."
- Price - The customer can't order without knowing the cost.

It's an E-World Out There (Continued)

Use the instructions on the previous page to write a product description that you believe will attract buyers to the food carrier. The first sentence is written for you.

This stainless steel food carrier will remind you of the rectangular lunch box you took to school when you were a child. _____

Fees

Tim is expected to multi-task, like just about every other person who works. One part of his job is to research and calculate the fees his boss, the entrepreneur, must pay for selling on the Internet mall. He often combines his communication skills with math.

1. Listing Fees

The Internet mall charges Tim's boss 20 cents to list each item under \$25.00 in his storefront. If he lists 75 food carriers, how much will he be charged in listing fees? \$ _____

2. Commission

Tim's boss must pay a 6% commission to the mall for each item that sells.

How much is the commission on one \$19.99 food carrier? \$ _____

Last week 34 food carriers were sold. What amount was sold last week? \$ _____

What was the amount of commission paid for the 34 carriers? \$ _____

It's an E-World Out There (Continued)

3. Online payment service

The online service that processes customers' payments charges 30 cents for each transaction plus 2.9% of the amount. What is the processing charge for one food carrier? \$_____

How much was the processing charge for the 34 food carriers sold last week? \$_____

4. Total Fees

How much did Tim's boss pay in fees last week for selling 34 food carriers?

Listing fees for 34 food carriers	\$ _____
Commission for 34 food carriers	\$ _____
Online payment service fees	\$ _____
Total fees	\$ _____

A World of Customers

An important part of Tim's job is answering e-mails from customers about costs. Unlike texting his friends, however, Tim can't use slang or abbreviations. He must be courteous and professional so customers will have confidence in the company and purchase products. A person who receives Tim's e-mail can't hear or see him, so they can't read his body language or hear his tone of voice. It's easy to create a misunderstanding. Here are some guidelines Tim's boss gave him for professional e-mail:

- Answer as quickly as possible.
- Be concise.
- Write out all the words.
- Don't use slang.
- Be courteous; use "please" and "thank you".
- Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Proofread.
- Include a greeting and a closing such as "Hello" and "Regards" and sign your name.

It's an E-World Out There (Continued)

Use the e-mail guidelines Tim's boss gave him and reply to the following e-mails Tim received.

1. Tim received this e-mail from Japan. He is not sure of the exact question, but he knows that it costs \$16.90 to ship a \$19.99 food carrier to Japan. Write a response to the inquiry from Japan.

From: Shigemi Tanaka
Sent: Saturday, November 29, 2008 9:46 AM
To: Good N' Green
Subject: Food carry box

How much? Please can send food carry box Japan.

Shigemi Tanaka

2. Tim's boss gives a discount of 10% on orders of more than 15 of the same item. This e-mail arrived with an inquiry about the discount.

From: Mary Cain
Sent: Saturday, November 29, 2008 9:50 AM
To: Good N' Green
Subject: Stainless Steel Food Carrier

Hello, your Web site says that volume discounts are available. How much would it cost to purchase 35 food carriers?

Thank you, Mary Cain

Calculate the discounted price for 35 food carriers and respond to Mary Cain's e-mail.
