



## Top Communicators Apply These Principles

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Who among your network of colleagues and friends do you consider to be “great communicators?” What characteristics do they have in common that make them great?

Consider the following principles underlying one’s ability to communicate effectively:

**Keep it simple.** Break every message down to a simple, easy-to-digest concept. Avoid too much detail or trying to jam too many concepts into a single interchange. Use basic, short words. Assume your subject has a minimal attention span.

**Be brief.** The more you say, the more likely it is that your essential message is lost or muddled amid a sea of extraneous verbiage. Know when to stop talking. Leave thoroughness to your attorney friends who get paid by the hour.

**Identify a clear objective.** Consider the objective of your comments before you utter a word, then state your objective in just those words (as in, “My goal is...,” etc.). When you state a feature (e.g., your hours of operation), advise the prospect why it is of value to them. Constantly associate a “why” with a “what.”

**Focus on your message.** Stay “on message.” Continually return to your basic objective. Be wary of diversions, whether they are initiated by you or by the object of your communication.

**Master pace.** Conduct every communication like a fine symphony orchestra. Vary pace, volume and emphasis in a well-crafted and confident manner. Pause frequently (and usually right after key points) and don’t be afraid of silent moments. Above all, avoid droning on in a monotone.

**Maintain eye contact.** One’s eyes say as much as the words they are speaking. Concentrate on eye contact and learn to interpret signals from your subject’s eyes as a guide to alter, maintain, or cease your communication.



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**Ask questions.** Listen more than you speak, but maintain control of the conversation by leading the subject where you want to through artful and effective questioning. Broad, open-ended questions are invariably more effective; e.g., “In a perfect world, what type of relationship do you envision between your company and our clinic?”

**Articulate a win-win.** Fashion a win-win scenario prior to a meeting or conversation and then focus on articulating the win-win early, often, and convincingly. Get to the heart of the matter by using the phrase “win-win.” A statement such as, “It seems to me that our clinic’s relationship with your company is likely to be a ‘win-win’...” sets things out in clear terms.

**Probe.** Constantly probe in order to obtain more specific and insightful information. Classic probes such as, “Tell me more...,” “Exactly what do you mean by...,” or “Why do feel that way?” provide greater clarification and more specifics.

**Repeat key points.** Pause often and repeat key points. If an idea or point is twice as important as everything else you are saying, say it twice. Ensure that the most important thing you have to say is the one thing that the subject remembers.

**Involve your subject.** Involve your subject continuously throughout your discourse. In addition to asking numerous questions, pepper your comments with frequent “mini-closes” (e.g., “Do you agree?”), and make the subject think and act throughout the conversation. Keep the message fluid and active rather than static and stiff.

**Summarize.** The first and last things you say are likely to become your most impactful comments. Hence, your opening comment should clearly articulate your objective and your last statement should provide a summary of key points.

Becoming a great communicator is not complex. Indeed, just the opposite is true: the more simple, controlled, and focused the process, the more effective the communication stream. Yet even the most dedicated sales professional frequently assumes a defeatist manner when it comes to being a strong communicator. With adherence to a relatively short and simple array of principles, your communication skills will improve multifold. ■