SALES & CRM MANUAL

IAN HANDRICKS

2006

SALES AND CRM MANUAL

Ian Handricks

Section 1: Objectives

The primary purpose of this manual is to provide the skills needed to make the business better overall. In essence, if you are trained you can help to achieve high quality services in a shorter time period. As a highly skilled team you can provide better customer service experiences and engage more customers for longer periods.

Some things you will already know, some things will be new. You will be encouraged to participate and share your knowledge and hope that this will be the foundation of your own personal development plans.

Immediate efforts will be towards client focus. The most important measure of the service you deliver is how your clients rate it. You must focus on ensuring that every aspect of the client experience is a positive one. If you make the needs of your clients the focus of your business activities and if you can better understand your clients and offer tailor-made services, you can generate more business and grow as a result.

CRM - Client Focus

Professional engagement and our clients
Understanding client needs
Meeting and exceeding client expectations
The importance to the client of meeting expected delivery times
What is client focus in a professional services environment?
Understanding different types of service delivery
Providing information
Delivering bad news
Retaining the client's support and confidence
Delivering complexity and uncertainty
Things to know about people
Dealing with difficult people

Verbal Communication

Negotiation skills
Running and controlling a meeting
Getting what you want (the art of interrogative discussion)
Providing information
Getting information (the art of listening)
Telephone skills
Handling objections and confrontations
Presentations and speeches

Written Communication

How to construct effective written communications
Effective emails
The power of bullet points
Presentation

Management

- What is management?
  - Basic management fundamentals
  - What is good and what is bad management
- Personal management
  - Clean desk theory
  - Boosting your productivity
  - What to do when you feel unproductive
  - Scheduling and timekeeping
  - Personal development programmes
  - How to be more effective and organised
  - Achieving goals and goal-setting
  - Developing personal creativity
  - Planning and work completion skills
- Team management
  - Essential supervision and management skills
  - Working as a team
  - Delegation vs abdication
  - Encouraging and rewarding success
  - Reacting to and solving problems
- Team Planning
  - Developing a team plan
  - Setting priorities
  - Setting measurements
  - Supporting/mentoring the creation of individual development plans
  - Dealing with non performance
- Project management
  - Understanding and setting priorities
  - Information and tracking progress
  - Effective reporting

"NO YOU CAN'T ASK A QUESTION."

Power Solutions

The ideal ~~sales~~ buying script
Dealing with price and discounts
Killer closer
Handling objections
Short and sweet
Basic rules
Value
    How can you add value?
    Keep Track
    Show the Customer
    Benchmark
    Educate
    Document

TRAINING OUTLINE

CRM - CLIENT FOCUS

COURSE NOTES

"The bad news is, our customers hate us. The good news is, we have a lot fewer customers than we used to!"

Professional engagement and our clients

The very nature of our work means that we are regularly in contact with our clients having to communicate difficult concepts, offer solutions, deliver news that is unpalatable, explain and justify significant variances from perceived project parameters, give advice and mediate often volatile situations.

Often it can be difficult to gain attention or an understanding due to

- the presence of others who are intent on taking control
- a general lack of informed knowledge
- pre-conceived ideas on how solutions should be undertaken
- frayed tempers
- egos
- lack of respect for our abilities and knowledge
- inconvenience
- lack of funding
- disregard for the consequences of not undertaking our recommended remedial actions
- our past performance
- and a host of other issues

We are often treated like tradesmen rather than professionals and we are expected to jump to our client's (or their counsel's) tune. Our advice is a valuable asset for the client and we need to develop a method of interaction with our client's that reflects the value of our advice and the level of professionalism we should expect.

It is important that we take control at all meetings with our clients. This requires knowledge, preparation and utilising (and where necessary, learning) skills that will ensure that our clients stay focussed to our message, understand the impact of our message on their circumstances, respect our advice and our professional standing and that they are carefully guided to and make the correct decisions. We need to learn the art of establishing authority.

Leadership and establishing authority

The BIGGEST issue is leadership. We must lead the process. We must not sit back passively and let others take charge or worse ask "what would you like us to do?" !!! When we say “the next step in the process is x, y, z and I recommend that you do a, b, c ... because the best outcome is usually achieved with x because ...” - we have to know what the next step is! We need to know what other people need to do to move the project in the direction we need. i.e. taking leadership with statements such as “we need your adviser to ....” and “we need your management to confirm .....”

Make decisions easy for people. If you need a decision then package it into one Yes or No answer. Do not give three options when part 2 changes depending on whether they choose a, b, or c. If you must offer options ask them to choose between x and y. Never ask for them to choose one out of 6 options.

Don't ask for a letter from the client to confirm something. Give them a letter that covers everything you need and simply ask for their agreement with what is in YOUR letter. This is a BIG issue. We often say “I cannot do x until I get a letter from the you (the client) confirming d, e and f”. The client is not the expert, they don't know all of the stuff that needs to be in a letter, they feel threatened by the process, so take the stress out of it for them. Make it easy and non-threatening - give them a letter that covers everything you need.

“I'm aware that some of us take our leadership role a bit more seriously than others ... ”

Meeting with a client - how it should be done.

1. Prepare

When you have a meeting set up with a client, it is because they need your expertise in solving a problem, creating a solution, understanding project variances, or perhaps even representing them in litigation; all for which you need to prepare. Manage your preparation in correlation with the issue at hand. Know every issue, every detail of the solution being presented by you (and if necessary alternative solutions), a complete understanding of the variances (why they happened and what the solutions are) etc. … before you attend the meeting.

2. Do Due Diligence

The due diligence step goes hand-in-hand with your meeting preparation. In this regard, there are two types of due diligence you must conduct.

First, study the client. Specifically, find out who the client is. Depending on the case or issue at hand, you might want to know about their personality, what are their REAL issues, who is on their team.

Secondly, conduct research regarding the main issues and questions the client has. Normally, before meeting face-to-face with them you've had some type of communication with the client, either by email or telephone. In this first communication, take notes and highlight the key points of the conversation. Analyse each point critically with your professional hat on and put yourself in the client's shoes; come up with questions they might have overlooked and be prepared to talk generally about the issues they are facing.

3. The First Impression: Look and Act Professionally

First impressions count. You only have about seven seconds to make a good or bad first impression. In those first seven seconds, the other person determines if you are "competent, confident, and trustworthy"

Maintaining a professional appearance and demeanour sends a signal that you can perform your job effectively. Also, besides looking professionally, act professionally and engaging. Shake the client's hand, make eye contact, and listen to them actively. This allows the client to assess your openness and trustworthiness. Keep it simple. Use colloquial terms – you don't need to impress your client with your technical vocabulary.

Maintain and exhibit a calm demeanour, do not react to ego or temper, use open-ended questions politely, feel secure in your knowledge and wisdom and show respect.

4. Choose a suitable meeting place

Be proactive. Initiate the meeting. Then people come to the meeting wanting to hear what you have to tell then rather than to vent their own complaints.

Always try to get the meeting at your office because it puts you in an authoritative position, particularly if there are other consultants involved. At times it can be better to go to the clients preferred venue. Remember the client is paying for your time to get to meeting venues so the less travel you have to do the lower the cost for them.

The person who hosts the meeting tends to lead the discussion. Offer your meeting room for the client to meet privately before or after your meeting. Not having that opportunity is often the reason for clients wanting to meet at their place.

Be hospitable, offer a range of drinks, not just tea and coffee, offer a range of things to eat.

You don't want that and the client will get the impression he or she is not your top priority. The client will feel that their business is in good hands and that they have your undivided attention. This not only shows your professionalism but your courtesy towards the client.

Make sure you leave your cell phone behind or at least put it on silent (not on vibrate) mode. You don't want to be caught glancing at your texts, emails, or having your client ask if you need to take that call.

5. Start on Time

Always start your meeting on time. Again, this goes hand in hand with showing your preparedness and professionalism. It's not only your time being invested here, the client also set apart a specific time in their busy agenda to meet with you.

However, we all know that emergencies happen. It is very important that you are punctual with your clients and your work, for the reason that when emergencies do happen, people will tend to "forgive" your need to postpone a meeting or a deadline.

Use ten to fifteen minutes before the meeting to go over your notes and research. And before you meet the client make sure you spell out their name correctly and know how to pronounce their name.

6. Have an Agenda of Key Points: Keep the Client on Track

Time is money, and by now you know how much your time costs the client. Every time you breathe on the client's project it costs them money; the client will appreciate the efficiency with which you handle this meeting and all subsequent engagements, communications, and interactions. Therefore, draft a mini-agenda that serves as a road map of the key points the client had previously touched on; write next to them all possible answers, alternatives, and opportunities you have identified.

Keeping yourself on track keeps the client on track. Generally, clients tend to sit down and start telling you the story of their lives or worse, try and dominate and control the meeting. Of course, the more information you get the better, but maintain control of what is important and what is not. You don't need to cut your client's story short, but when you see them drifting away from the main subject you need to get them back on track.

7. Manage a Client's Expectations

Managing the client's expectations is critical. First, you can manage potential outlooks if you prepare and study the possible outcomes of the issues at hand. Keep in mind, however, that you are not bullet-proof and certain things might be completely out of your control; you need to identify those too.

When you prepare for your meeting, review all main subjects to be discussed with the client. Identify those areas where potential risks or troubles might arise. Second, set appropriate boundaries of what your client should expect from your services. Your preparation before the meeting allows you to offer a rough estimate of what it might cost the client to engage your services.

When you manage the client's expectations there is a greater likelihood that when things don't come out completely in his or her favour, the client will not be surprised. This will preserve and strengthen the bond of confidence between you and the client.

Throughout the meeting ask open-ended questions, if you must make a statement - always immediately follow the statement with an open-ended question.

8. Give the Client Action Items and Follow-Up

Through the course of the meeting it is very likely that you'll identify other issues that can be resolved at the meeting and discover others that will take research and time. Make a list (write them down) of these issues and hand it to the client. Give a deadline for when you will respond to these issues. After your meeting, write an email or letter to the client summarising the key subjects touched upon in the meeting. Within a week or so of your letter, follow up with the client regarding any other information you have gathered. It is essential you keep the client up-to-date regarding any progress or issues you find along the way.

9. At the End of the Meeting

Once the meeting is winding down, go over any final subjects and ask the client if they have any questions or doubts. This will assure the client you have their best interest at heart. In addition, thank the client for taking the time to meet you and reassure them you will be in touch if any issues or alternatives come up; encourage two way communication.

"Everyone here? Good. Meeting topic: Setting world record for shortest meeting. All in favor say aye. Ayes have it. Meeting over."

10. Trust Yourself and What You Know

The most important thing you need to remember, not only for meetings with a client, but for any stage and project in your professional career and personal life, is to trust yourself. Confidence is something you need to practice; with practice you will get better.

Other techniques that work include:

- Standing up during a meeting to talk – this will give you an immediate position of authority
- Responding to criticism or negative comments by re-phrasing the comment in the form of a question e.g*. "We have no confidence in your ability to complete this project on time"* - "What level of confidence are you looking for?"
- Use the white board – draw diagrams/pictures – explain complex detail or activity using simple drawings
- Solicit understanding of your message by asking something like - "What else can I tell you about this issue?"
- Pause and silence – when a meeting gets volatile, when tempers are flared when there is discord – stop! Keep silent and wait for the atmosphere to calm. A fire won't burn without fuel.

Handling anger

People get angry all the time and the problem seems to be getting worse. People who grossly overreact to trivial events with violence are suffering from a central lack of confidence. Angry people interpret everything as a personal slight, an insult to their already fragile egos. (Certain events may) exacerbate their sense of vulnerability.

Thank your client for raising the issue.

If they allow you time to talk, thanking them legitimises their concern. Then, as necessary, allow them to vent.

Repeat the client's issue to signal that you empathise.

For example, "I understand that you have been having trouble with our budget." Again, this shows that you acknowledge what they have to say. At this point, the customer should continue to vent, enabling you to record their concerns.

Apologise. Even if it's not your fault.

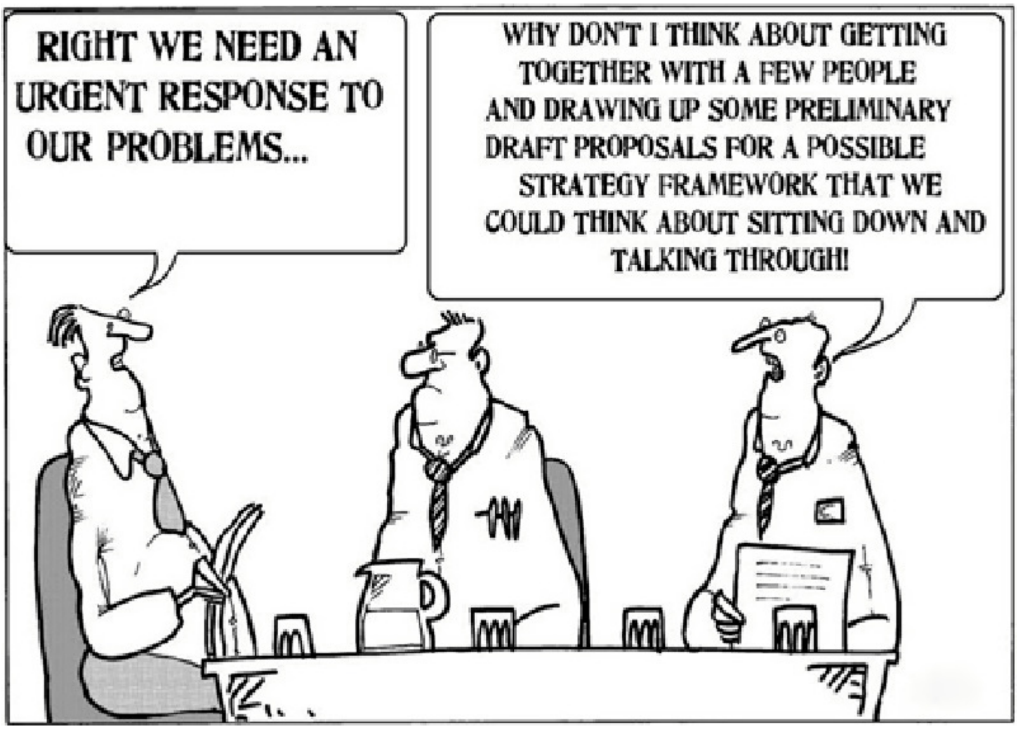
If you didn't do anything wrong, apologise for their pain. For example, "I apologise for any frustration you may have experienced".

Reassure that you're committed to helping them.

By reassuring them, you accept responsibility for the problem. Taking the issue out of your client's hands relieves them of the pressure creating their anger. It also starts both of you on the road to a resolution. If you're lucky, the client will begin to simmer down at this point.

Take action quickly and effectively.

Tell them what you will do, do it and communicate regularly with the client to ensure that they understand that you are being professional and that you can be trusted.



Understanding client needs

Successful businesses are those that clearly understand their client's needs and address them. Businesses have to understand that their most valuable asset is their existing client list and make sure that they maintain a good, lasting relationship with them. When the needs of the clients are understood accurately, appropriate changes may be done to the business such that clients or customers will be satisfied that they got what they needed.

When customers buy a product or a service they do so due to several motivating factors such as a desire to own, fear of loss, for security and protection, comfort and convenience, pride of ownership and to satisfy their needs. When we understand these factors and know how to market our services in such a way as to induce a need for the service, our services will definitely be successful. Presenting the service in such a way as to motivate the client to purchase it is therefore very important. Understanding your client needs will be easier if you look at things from the clients' perspective. Make sure that you provide service of good and lasting quality that customers will want to keep coming back to you for any other purchases. Keep in contact with our customers by sending them permission-based e-mails, making them constantly remember our services so that when they need such services they will consider using you before any other option. Change the quality, features of the service as per the needs of the clients will ensure that customers or clients are satisfied. After sales service will also go a long way in helping retain customers, make sure that the customer is treated well and returns home happy. Word of mouth publicity is the best way to boost sales as well as increase credibility.

You can understand our client needs better by interacting with them more, providing them a chance to give suggestions and incorporating new suggestions as applicable. Certain businesses use surveys on the Internet to gauge their client needs. Thoroughly research our target client and the market for our services, find ways to interact with the clients such as hosting them and coffee breaks, documenting all the information, analysing them and making appropriate changes to improve our services will help in understanding our client needs better. People like to get value for money, good quality services, and good salesmanship and after sales service. When all aspects such as price, quality and presentation of the product are appropriate, the clients will definitely buy the service offered understanding these factors will help improve a business.

Meeting and exceeding client expectations

Surprising a customer by exceeding their expectation is a great way to make sure they'll be back in the future.

1. Empathise

Earning customer trust is vital. Keeping customer interests at heart is an essential mindset for success, and that can be achieved through empathy. Try to think of things from the customer's perspective and be more empathetic. For instance, for a customer service inquiry or complaint, put yourself in the customer's shoes and ask 'how would I like to be treated?' and then figure out the best way to do that.

2. Take ownership of the problem

Customers can be passed around our staff without their problem being resolved. This can be frustrating and time consuming for the customer. It can also damage a company's reputation. But we can stop the cycle of calls and buck-passing by taking ownership of the problem ourselves.

3. Follow up

Even after a problem is resolved we can exceed expectations by following up with the customer. A brief call to check that the service is progressing satisfactorily can show the client that we have taken their problem on board and we are seeking to avoid similar situations in the future. It can also serve as a useful feedback tool for our business – as a check on the effectiveness of our problem-solving.

4. Treat customers fairly

Fair treatment of customers may sound obvious. People often see customer service in a very linear way, as being just the conversation, but it's a lot more. For example, if a customer asks us not to call them again then we have a responsibility to disposition calls appropriately, and if we don't we run the risk of calling them when they don't want to be called. Ultimately, treating customers fairly is about putting them at the heart of everything, and ensuring that we and our support systems can work around their needs.

5. Find a balance

We often struggle to balance our business needs with the needs of our customers. Performance monitoring can place a certain set of pressures upon staff. For example, if a client's query takes a long time to resolve, we may be tempted to provide a simple but not completely effective solution to save time, when the best customer service outcome would be to take time to resolve the client's issue. We should feel able to stay with a client for a longer time than usual if required in order to solve the problem properly.

6. Try to become an expert in your field

Customers can now find answers to their questions online, and only call in when a question is too complicated. We should strive to be expert about the services we represent. Learning about competitors may also help. The more knowledge we have, the more professional we will sound when asked a question. The client will also save time rather than having to look things up.

7. Make recommendations

Customers expect to receive recommendations for products and services – from us rather than from other companies. It isn't a good idea to glow with enthusiasm for a direct competitor but during the course of conversation with a client opportunities arise for us to show our expertise. If you're dealing with a specific issue, for example, and a client seems lost as to what to do, why not tell them about any relevant experiences of your own?. Honesty builds trust, and the client will see that you are not just a company mouthpiece.

8. Ditch the script

Scripted calls and conversations can sound robotic. They also reduce the true engagement possible in a real conversation. Replace jargon with clear, concise language. Be human, not a robot, and say it like it is. Our clients expect us to say what we're going to do, when we're going to do it and to actually do it within that time. We should get a bit of a buzz from being able to call a customer and tell them that an issue has been resolved and that we've been able to achieve that ahead of schedule. That kind of buzz drives great service. A robot could never match it. Robots don't have emotions, after all.

9. Take time to reflect

Regular discussion with colleagues can help us discover their strengths and weaknesses. Exchanging skills and knowledge will make a whole team stronger. If you share an effective way of doing something with the whole team, then customers will receive a higher standard of service consistently – rather than having very different experiences each time they call.

10. Stop trying to exceed expectations?

Maybe trying to exceed customer expectations isn't as effective as simply meeting them. A study published in the Harvard Business Review entitled 'Stop Trying To Delight Your Customers' found that the biggest factor affecting customer loyalty was the amount of effort it took to have their issue resolved. In simple terms, less effort equals happier customers, and everything else is minor in comparison.

The importance to the client of meeting expected delivery times

With today's cut-throat marketing and service offerings from aggressive competitors, trying to compete on price can be a quick road to ruin for a company. Contrary to common perception, customers will not go almost anywhere just to save a buck.

We do not need to be beat up on price, sensible business practice indicates that we should stop trying to compete on price alone. What our business needs to stand out is better customer service and satisfied customers. But don't make it the simple "please and thank you" variety. We should aim higher. Strive for fabulous, standout, outrageously great service to set you apart from the crowd.

Will superior service trump price? Absolutely, says a dramatic new survey of over 100,000 small business and retail customers. According to a four-year, most customers will put service ahead of price - if you give them the chance. Entrenched "wisdom" may be wrong

In another survey, tens of thousands of customers were asked how they like to shop, what they look for in customer service and what it takes for them to buy. For example, when researchers asked customers how far they'd be willing to drive for excellent service , 80 percent said they'd travel four or more kilometers, and nearly half said they would drive 10 Km or more for the right combination of price, quality and customer service.

The surveys indicated that customers are not the finicky, price-conscious bargain hunters they have been made out to be. Consumers will pay for good service with both their cash and their time.

Our job is to deliver superior service that attracts and keeps customers day in and day out. Satisfied customers say they are willing to go a little further for great service, but we'd better make it worth their effort.

Just how many service slip-ups does it take to send a customer packing? According to the survey, 17 percent will bolt after a single service faux pas. Another 40 percent will jump ship after two instances of poor service, and 28 percent more are out the door after three. So for 85 percent of our customers, it's three strikes and we're out.

Fair enough. But what do buyers really want from us? What keeps clients satisfied

Knowledgeable and available staff:

While a customer is making the buying decision, they want knowledgeable assistance, available when they want it . Customers place a high value on accurate information and want to be served by employees who know the service inside and out.

Friendly people:

Customers not only want service/product-savvy people, they want them to be friendly and courteous. We should value each customer more than any individual sale.

Good value:

This is where price factors in. But customers surveyed see price as only one component of the bigger picture of "value" that includes the service, information and follow-up they also receive.

Convenience:

The service rule here is simple: make it easy! Customers want services that are well organised, attractively presented and easy to understand. That's how today's customers define convenience, and the easier we can make the relationship between our clients and us, the more business we will generate!

A fast finish:

This final item is where too many businesses fall flat, right at the finish line. While customers are in the process of deciding to buy or not, they are proceeding on our time. They want thoughtful help making the right decisions. But once the decision is made to proceed with our services, we need to deliver on time because now we are working on their time, and they want to complete the business and be functional again as quickly as possible.

In the end, it may be our service - not our price - that dictates whether or not we secure clients for the long term. If we give people what they want, the way they want it and follow through with a fast finish when it comes time to pay up, we are much more likely to turn them into satisfied clients.

What is client focus in a professional services environment?

Clients are demanding more and more value from the professional services provider. Many leaders of professional services organisations believe that value is defined by greater and greater professional knowledge, expertise and capacity. Therein is the competitive opportunity.

Value is not defined solely by the professional, (i.e. technical) expertise and performance of the company. Certainly, these are necessary to our success. But to borrow from that old expression, they are not sufficient. As in any other industry – it's not just how good the service is – it's how it is delivered that keeps it from becoming a commodity and grows its value.

The professional services business that thrives is the one that not only has world class technical expertise and performance, but knows how to deliver them in the specific ways that loyal, targeted clients value.

We should have a professional partnership mentality. Successful professionals have three characteristics:

- mastery of a discipline;
- solid analytic and problem-solving skills; and
- the confidence to advise clients on how to undertake correct and enduring remediation.

In this context it is crucial that we are investing in educating you as leaders and professionals about the fundamental principles of a customer focus strategy and the financial benefits of executing it.

A key principle to emphasise is the need for the client to experience a consistent, differentiated, valuable relationship (as defined by them) regardless of who they are working with from your company.

Second in importance is the fact that if we all focus on delivering consistent, differentiated value when working with clients, growth will be accelerated and relationships deepened. Finally, the economic benefits of a customer focused strategy need to be clearly communicated.

Professionals tend to build client relationships on an opportunistic basis. Starting out any client or prospect is welcomed by the professional new to business development. The result is a client base that is extremely diverse. On the surface this appears to be a strength, i.e. relationships across a broad range of industries and geographies. However, many professional services firms have difficulty determining the real profitability of any given client, much less the entire client base.

Careful financial analysis of client segments and profitability can be quite revealing. Two examples illustrate this.

In one firm, senior leadership believed that government contracts did not generate sufficient profits. In fact, given the pressures on the firm's fee structure they suspected most government work resulted in a loss to the firm. Fortunately, they invested in a careful analysis of their government sector work. The facts proved that government clients were the most consistently profitable segment for the firm.

In another firm, leadership strongly believed in the value of non-government accounts – and pursued them aggressively. Indeed they were successful. However, financial analysis showed that for the firm's top 10 accounts with average revenue of $1.2M, the firm lost money in 4 of the 10 accounts. Why? First, non-government accounts were being pursued by virtually every professional services firm. Second, these companies know their business is highly valued and demanded fee discounts. Third, non-government accounts clients typically demand additional services during the life of an engagement. Because of the perceived value of the relationship many professionals are hesitant to ask for the increased fees to deliver the additional services.

A critical step in executing a client focus strategy is identifying our most valuable client segments.

Define Value & Service With Science Not Opinion

When firms do decide to pursue a client focused strategy the decision about what clients value is often made in a conference room by the leadership team. The discussion consists of voicing conclusions and recommendations based upon each leader's personal experience. Keep in mind the point made above – professionals usually build client relationships on an opportunistic not strategic basis. A discussion based on personal experience about what clients value is therefore going to lead to decisions based on what has been experienced by chance.

A much more rigorous, reliable process is called for.

- First, it's not what clients value that is important. It is what our most important clients value that causes them to do the things that drive sustained, profitable growth for you.

- Second, we need to provide clients with an unbiased opportunity to tell us what they really value from you.

- Third, the answer to the first question is not a topic for discussion. It is a matter of fact. We can build a statistical model based on our most important client segment, what they value, and what they do in return for this value. The model predicts our client loyalty and sustained business growth based on whether or not we consistently deliver certain very specific sources of value. Science - not debate - is the way to define the value and service that will build client loyalty.

Achieve Early Wins

> In most situations successful change is accelerated by an early demonstration of results. This is particularly important in professional services firms where people are, again, highly analytical and independent. As one senior leader of a professional services firm recently said to us "…remember who we are. We can find the weakness in any argument - no matter how sound. We take pride in being able to prove anybody wrong. And we're not always aware when this two things work to our detriment."
>
> Once we have scientifically defined the client experience that will drive our growth - prove that it works. Select a team to deliver the new experience. Track and document the results. Key to credibility and the execution of our strategy, capture the lessons learned to allow us to continually improve the delivery of our differentiated and valuable client experience.

Leaders and seasoned professionals (i.e. you) will set the tone for your company. Throughout the process of formulating and executing our client focus strategy we should invest in engaging our people towards a client focussed, professional services environment.

"I thought your presentation was going to be in Powerpoint!"

Providing information

Good customer service is the lifeblood of any business. Good customer service is all about bringing customers back. And about sending them away happy - happy enough to pass positive feedback about our business along to others, who may then use the services we offer for themselves and in their turn become repeat customers.

The essence of good customer service is forming a relationship with customers – a relationship that that individual customer feels that they would like to pursue.

How do we go about forming such a relationship? By remembering the one true secret of good customer service and acting accordingly; "We will be judged by what we do, not what we say." If we truly want to have good customer service, all we have to do is ensure that our business consistently does these things:

Answer your phone.

> If you cannot answer it personally, get call forwarding or an answering service. Make sure that someone is picking up the phone when someone calls you.

Don't make promises unless you will keep them.

> Not plan to keep them. Will keep them! Reliability is one of the keys to any good relationship, and good customer service is no exception. If you say, “Your reports will be ready and delivered on Tuesday”, make sure they are delivered on Tuesday. Otherwise, don't say it. The same rule applies to client appointments, deadlines, etc. Think before you give any promise - because nothing annoys customers more than a broken one.

Listen to your customers.

> Is there anything more exasperating than telling someone what you want or what your problem is and then discovering that that person hasn't been paying attention and needs to have it explained again? From a customer's point of view, we doubt it. Let your client talk and show them that you are listening by making the appropriate responses, such as suggesting how to solve the problem.

Deal with complaints.

No one likes hearing complaints, and many of us have developed a reflex shrug, saying, "You can't please all the people all the time". Maybe not, but if you give the complaint your attention, you may be able to please this one person this one time - and position our business to reap the benefits of good customer service.

Always helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable.

Practice good customer service and what it is (and isn't) regularly. Most importantly, give every member of your team enough information and power to make those small customer-pleasing decisions, so they never have to say, "I don't know, but so-and-so will be back at..."

Take the extra step.

Whatever the extra step may be, if you want to provide good customer service, take it. They may not say so to you, but people notice when people make an extra effort and will tell other people.

Delivering bad news

Never surprise. Bad news should never come as a surprise. Failure to advise clients of impending bad news is a cardinal sin. So ensure regular communication and information sharing is maintained with our clients.

Never delay. Delivering bad news with due speed, or without unreasonable delay, is critically important. Many people sit on bad news, hoping that things will improve. Such delays are costly, as conditions can continue to worsen. Bad news delayed is bad news compounded.

Never hide the facts. Sometimes people withhold information out of fear, or to save face. While this may be a natural reaction, withholding information can cause a wrong diagnosis of the actual problem or an underestimation of the extent of the cause of the bad news. When the hidden facts become public - and they always do – you will look worse than if all the facts had initially been disclosed.

Always put it in writing. In most organisations, it has become mandatory to keep detailed records of any meetings and warnings associated with bad news. This is particularly true for our client project problems. Good records should cover evidence of and causes for the problems.

Always justify. When delivering bad news, it is critical that you justify, justify, justify. Our clients will want, expect, and even demand to know why the bad news is being delivered. Justification should include specific and concrete reasons for the bad news.

Always look for the silver lining. Find positives associated with the bad news. Though this is often criticised as spin, emphasising positive and temporary aspects of the news can increase morale and motivation, particularly with difficult and complex projects. Focusing on positives will help keep clients, upbeat, and future-oriented. Give clients hope or they may get lost. However, that hope must be grounded in reality.

Always bring solutions. When delivering bad news, present solutions or an action plan to solve the problems that led to the bad news. This will keep attention on future improvement and underscore that the situation, however bad, is being addressed in a problem-solving way. Bad news without solutions is truly bad news.

Always remember your multiple audiences. It often gets overlooked in delivering bad news that there are usually multiple audiences involved. Remember when delivering bad news that the news never reaches just one; it reaches many. Others will be listening and watching, and even more will be interested.

Always follow up and follow through. After the bad news is delivered and solutions are identified, track any progress made in solving the problems that led to the bad news. Keep the client updated on the situation and the speed of progress. Early and frequent feedback on progress is critical. Bad news involves cleaning up a mess. After cleaning, let everyone know. Now the news is no longer bad; it is good.

Always treat people with respect and dignity. Respect and dignity not only make moral sense, they make business sense. You are not just communicating bad news; you are communicating it to human beings.

Another perspective on delivering bad news

Giving someone bad news is never easy, but there are right ways and wrong ways of going about it.

Set and manage expectations beforehand if you can

Sometimes, bad news comes completely unexpectedly. Other times, however, if the bad news comes as a complete surprise, it means someone failed to fully prepare the recipient ahead of time. If you believe that something you attempt might turn out unfavourably for a client or customer, let that person know first. Above all, be careful about guaranteeing results or saying that a particular outcome is a certainty. If necessary, outline all the risks and potential issues that might prevent the desired result. You may not always be able to do this. But if you can set expectations, your job of delivering bad news will be much easier.

Do a proper setup for the moment

Don't deliver bad news casually or in passing. Set up a time to talk with the other person. If you need to deliver the news right at the moment, say, "I need to talk with you about [the matter]." In other words, establish a setting and a context for the conversation, instead of just springing the news.

Get to the point

Bad news will not improve with keeping. You could preface the bad news with background information and details of everything you did and everything you tried. Better, though, simply to cut to the chase and tell the person the bad news. Chances are, that person won't even be listening to all your preliminary words anyway.

Explain the background and give details

After you give the bad news, you can provide background and details. In particular, you will want to explain what happened as well as the steps you took. The person who gets your bad news will want to know this information and probably has a right to know it.

Be sitting down

Delivering the news to someone while both of you are sitting offers less chance of the delivery getting emotionally out of control. In plain terms: it is harder to physically fight someone when you're seated than when you're standing.

Be sensitive to physical position

In the same way, be sensitive to how you are seated relative to the other person. If you're behind a desk, keep in mind that that desk can serve as a psychological as well as physical barrier. If you feel comfortable doing so, and if you believe the other person is comfortable, consider sitting on the same side, or at least sitting at right angles. Either way, you will have signalled that are "on that person's side."

Separate yourself from the message

Sometimes the bad news you deliver is not your fault. Even so, the person who hears it will take out his or frustration on you. The classic example, of course, is the help desk analyst who tells a caller that the system or network will be down for another three hours. If you are that hapless analyst, be prepared to be the messenger who gets shot. Unfortunately, it comes with the territory. However, the more you can remind yourself that they aren't upset at you personally, the greater the chances of keeping your stress under control.

Be sympathetic

Remember that when you deliver bad news to a person, you must deal with two issues: the technical matter of the news itself, but also the emotional reaction to the bad news. In fact, this emotional reaction is the aspect of your encounter that is far more critical. To reduce the chances of being the shot messenger, let the other person know that you are aware of their emotional reaction.

Reframe the situation

Maybe the bad news you are delivering concerns your (or your group's) inability to achieve some objective. Nonetheless, is there any silver lining news you can give? In other words, can you reframe the situation?

Offer solutions

If you must deliver bad news, maybe that bad result need not be the end of things. Do you have a plan to address or resolve the situation? If so, keep it in mind and offer to share it with the other person or group after you have delivered the bad news. In doing so, you will demonstrate a willingness to work through the problem and an ability to think and plan ahead. If the person receiving bad news is a key client, planning ahead could be valuable to your future relationship with that client.

"WE HAVE GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS. THE GOOD NEWS IS WE'VE DEVELOPED A CREDIBLE SPIN FOR THE BAD NEWS..."

Retaining the client's support and confidence

The amount of effort put into getting a new client is said to be five-to-10 times the effort required to retain that client. In other words, prospecting is much harder work than generating repeat business.

So what are some of the steps we can take that will ensure our customer stays with us and expands their business with our business? Here are three key activities that will build trust and future business opportunities.

- Tie our services to the customer's bottom line. In today's world the bottom line is a high priority. It was a high priority yesterday too, but more and more companies want to know what we and our services will do to impact their long-term satisfaction. First, keep it simple. Understand our customers' goals such as:

    - How does your business/organisation work?
    - What are your immediate and long-term goals?
    - Is there anything we're not doing that we could be doing to serve you better?
    - What are the most important actions we can focus on to improve your needs?
    - What has changed in your business/organisation since we first started doing business together?

- Build relationships with multiple players in the organisation. Doing this will ensure greater support for our services. Some people miss the opportunity to introduce themselves to others in the businesses they're visiting. Maybe they think the individual is too low on the totem pole to influence any decisions. Everyone within an organisation has significance in future decisions. Who knows when that one person might get a promotion to the position where you need their help? Or, how many times have you met someone in a company and they get hired at another company that ends up calling you. Why would they choose to call you? You treated each contact as the most important person when they're in front of you.

- Let go of accounts that waste our time and money. Cut our losses with accounts that never seem to appreciate the value of our services; they take away from building the accounts that will pay off in the long run. They constantly hammer us on price, ask for everything for nothing and end up sucking the life out of us. We should seek more qualified accounts so we can afford to pick and choose.

Things to know about people

People make things happen. And although this is an era where both quality and service are "expected," we must always remember it is people who create quality and provide service. Here is a list of things to know about people:

- People procrastinate over making any "thinking" decision. If it is going to take brain power, you are going to have to write stronger and say it better, if you are to gain immediate action. You must give your audience a reason (or several) to respond now.

- People are sceptical of anything new. New people. New products. New services. A new offer. Your new idea or way to do something. Know that people are many times happy with just where they are today. If you want them to make a decision in your favour, present your message with a most believable offer.

- People follow leaders - companies and products who are leading. Or, those who are "considered" leaders. Please note, if you can position yourself, our company, our services, our offer as leaders, we will be way ahead of the game—and our competition.

- People prefer the comfort of unity: "Two-Getherness." Meaning that people like to be with other people like them. That's why they group with others similar. It happens all around the world. Schools are where there are families with kids. Restaurants are located where people need or want to be fed. Churches go up where people of that faith live. Know this about audiences: They group "Two-Gether."

- People are sometimes flat-out lazy! Yes, all of us are lazy some of the time. But there appears to be a breed of folk who practice lazy as a habit. Know that when you reach out to your marketplace. And, make it easy to do business with us - so we can catch this lazy bunch, too.

- People glance at, more than thoroughly read, what you present to them. Even when they asked you to send them something, much of the time your message is not read - it is "looked" at instead. Know this fact. Then make your writing as easy to read as your audience wishes.

- People say: "I don't understand this message." Well, of course they don't understand it . . . they didn't read it! What this says is that you must go to extremes to make your message readable, so that when it is read, it will be totally understandable.

- People say: "I didn't ask you to send me this message." Possibly true. What is equally true is that if you don't get your message to your audience, they will then complain they didn't hear from you. Do make certain your message goes to the right people every time . . . and you are much less likely to hear any complaints.

- People say: "And besides, I've had a rotten day and feel really crummy." Everybody has a bad day now and then. Which of course has nothing to do with anything. It is an excuse, not a reason, for not replying to your offer. But people will say just that. So, what do you do? Make your message a happy one!

- People like grooves and formulas and niches. Lists of things that are important work well : The 5 easy steps. The 4-point plan. Ten things to know. Give people a list - directions to follow - and there is a good chance you've got them!

- People like the feeling of power and control. They want to make their own decisions. They want to feel that they are important. And, of course, they are! People are our prospects and our customers. Know that people are important.

- People respond best to limited time offers (which is most interesting, as LTOs take all power and control away!). Offers with limits most often gain more response than those without. Limited time offers urge people to take action now, before the opportunity slips by.

- People do worry over decisions and changes. They do "What if" thinking. "What if I make this change and it's wrong?" or "What if I make a decision in that direction and it doesn't work?" People worry. Take the worry away with a case-history story or two. To allow people to become comfortable with us.

- People avoid risks and threats. There are only a very few leading-edge people out there. Not many who will make a move to something new before it is proven. Be aware of that and be persistent with our message. People don't like to be threatened. You can convince, you can prove it, you can persuade, you can even sell. But do not threaten.

- People give incomplete attention to your message; a message which would help them in decision making and risk avoidance. Simply, this means people don't listen, either! Now we know they are not reading what you are writing, and they are not listening to what you are saying. No wonder they don't get it! Be aware of this about your marketplace and be prepared - in fact plan - to repeat our message over and over, again and again. Until they get it.

- People ask lots of questions. First they ask questions about our offer. We know an offer is over and above features and benefits, and our audience wants to know all about it. Be prepared with answers. Think ahead to what questions are most important - and provide the answers.

- People ask questions about benefits. The WAM Theory: What About Me? What am I going to gain from buying this service from you? What are the benefits to me, my family or friends, my staff at the office, my school, my company? This is not a selfish act, it is an honest response to our presentation. So, what do we do? Talk about what they will earn, save, make, enjoy, learn. Talk benefits.

- People ask questions about a Guarantee of Satisfaction. There are two parts to every guarantee: First is that the service will work, do what it is suppose to do, or the service will be supplied. That much of the guarantee is "assumed." The second part of the guarantee is the personal part: "What if I buy, and you provide, but I'm still not happy? What will you do to make me happy?" A Guarantee of Satisfaction is mandatory.

- People ask questions about facts and figures to prove our statements. They want to believe us . . . they really do. Show our marketplace that you have the proof at your finger tips. Hide nothing. Prove your presentation with facts and figures.

- People generalise from what they consider "acceptable fragments." They draw conclusions based on incomplete information. Partly because they have not read nor listened to our message. Partly because they want to believe us - no matter what we say. You must realise that many times people make a decision they regret later. And it will be OUR responsibility. Know this about people.

- People are suspect of perfection. If something is "perfect," people look immediately for the imperfection. Research has taught us that people are most comfortable with an 85% level of knowledge; this is where things are most believable. This does not mean people don’t want the best. It does mean you don’t have to be perfect to be successful.

- People prefer a little less information; not so much knowledge. Why? Because there is so much to know, many people have decided to be selective. And because they want to make their own decisions. They want to seek out what is important to them and then ask for the details. So they can come to their own conclusions; so they can feel that they are in charge of the situation. We must be prepared for a dialogue with our customers and prospects at the level they wish to communicate.

- People do want to trust us . . . they really do! People want to believe. Which puts the burden of proof and believability on us. Testimonials and references will help us build trust. Other people saying good things about us. We must perform up to standards. Sometimes we set them - always our customer does. We must know what our audience expects.

- People want the heart and warmth and emotion and feel-good of the sales process. They want the touch. Reach out and touch our marketplace. Let them know we care. Be personal. Communicate. And do it often. Hold their hand. Be their teddy bear. Be their security blanket. Touch our customers.

- People’s responses to any message are in direct proportion to their personal identification with us, our service, our company. If you are known in our marketplace, you will gain more new business and keep more current business than if you are not. Be active. Be seen. Let your audience know who you are.

- People then ask questions about the next step. "Okay, I agree. What happens next? What do you do? What do I need to do?" People want to know the process. We must make certain they do.

- People ask questions about timing. They want to know how long this process is going to take. They say: "If I make this decision today, how long will it be before something happens?" Tell our audience all about the timing.

Dealing with difficult people

We've all encountered our fair share of difficult people. People who don't turn their work in as promised, people who don't show up for meetings, people who stick vehemently to their views and refuse to collaborate, people who push back on work that they're responsible for - and more. There are times where there are difficulties in getting a consensus because everyone is so firm in their views.

No matter where you go, you can never hide from them. Hiding isn't a permanent solution. What's more, in the context of work, it's usually difficult to avoid or hide from someone, unless you quit from a job totally. Here's some tips in dealing with such people:

Be calm.

Losing your temper and flaring out at the other person typically isn't the best way to get him/her to collaborate with you. Unless you know that anger will trigger the person into action and you are consciously using it as a strategy to move him/her, it is better to assume a calm persona.

Someone who is calm is seen as being in control, centred and more respectable. Would you prefer to work with someone who is predominantly calm or someone who is always on edge? When the person you are dealing with sees that you are calm despite whatever he/she is doing, you will start getting their attention.

Understand the person's intentions.

No one is difficult for the sake of being difficult. Even when it may seem that the person is just out to get you, there is always some underlying reason that is motivating them to act this way. Rarely is this motivation apparent. Try to identify the person's trigger: What is making him/her act in this manner? What is stopping him/her from co-operating with you? How can you help to meet his/her needs and resolve the situation?

Get some perspective from others.

In all likelihood, your colleagues, managers and friends must have experienced similar situations in some way or another. They will be able to see things from a different angle and offer a different take on the situation. Seek them out, share your story and listen to what they have to say. You might very well find some golden advice in amidst of the conversation.

Let the person know where you are coming from.

Let the person know your intentions behind what you are doing. Sometimes, they are being resistant because they think that you are just being difficult with them. Letting them in on the reason behind your actions and the full background of what is happening will enable them to empathise with your situation. This lets them get them on-board much easier.

Build a rapport.

With all the computers, emails and messaging systems, work sometimes turn into a mechanical process. Re-instill the human touch by connecting with your colleagues on a personal level. Go out with them for lunches or dinners. Get to know them as people, and not colleagues. Learn more about their hobbies, their family, their lives. Foster strong connections. These will go a long way in your work.

Treat the person with respect.

No one likes to be treated as if he/she is stupid/incapable/incompetent. If you are going to treat the person with disrespect, it's not going to be surprising if he/she treats you the same way as well. As the golden rule says, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Focus on what can be actioned upon.

Sometimes, you may be put into hot soup by your difficult colleagues, such as not receiving a piece of work they promised to give or being wrongly held responsible for something you didn't do. Whatever it is, acknowledge that the situation has already occurred. Rather than harp on what you cannot change, focus on the actionable steps you can take to forward yourself in the situation.

Ignore.

If you have already tried everything above and the person is still not being receptive, the best way might be to just ignore. After all, you have already done all that you can within your means. Get on your daily tasks and interface with the person only where needed. Of course, this isn't feasible in cases where the person plays a critical role in your work.

Escalate to a higher authority for resolution.

When all else fails, escalate to your manager. This is considered the trump card and shouldn't be used unless you've completely exhausted your means. Sometimes, the only way to get someone moving is through the top-down approach, especially in bureaucratic organisations. Be careful not to exercise this option all the time as you wouldn't want your manager to think that you are incapable of handling your own problems.

" Oh, just thinking up new ways to avoid everyone I work with. And you?"

CUE CARDS

MEETINGS WITH CLIENTS - Take control!

- Prepare
- Do due diligence
- Look and act professionally
- Always try to get the meeting at our office
- Start on time
- Have an agenda of key points
- Keep the client on track
- Manage a client’s expectations
- Take control
- Stay focussed to our message
- Understand the impact of our message on their circumstances
- Ensure that they respect our advice and our professional standing
- Guide them to and make the correct decisions
- Establish authority.
- Lead the process.
- Do not sit back passively and let others take charge
- Make decisions easy for people.
- If you need a decision then package it into one Yes or No answer.
- Do not give multiple options
- Don't ask for a letter from the client to confirm something … instead …
- Give them a letter that covers everything you need
- Ask for their agreement

HANDLING ANGER

- Thank your client for raising the issue.
- Repeat the client’s issue to signal that you empathise.
- Apologise - even if it’s not your fault.
- Take action quickly and effectively.

MEETING AND EXCEEDING CLIENT EXPECTATIONS

- Empathise
- Take ownership of the problem
- Follow up
- Treat customers fairly
- Find a balance
- Project your expertise
- Offer a solution
- Do not give options

WHAT KEEPS CLIENTS SATISFIED?

- Knowledge and availability
- Friendliness
- Good value
- Convenience
- Completion on time

DELIVERING BAD NEWS

- Never surprise.
- Never delay.
- Never hide the facts.
- Always put it in writing.
- Always justify.
- Always look for the silver lining.
- Always bring solutions.
- Always follow up and follow through.
- Always treat people with respect and dignity.

TRAINING OUTLINE

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

COURSE NOTES

"I wish I could be more helpful, but when we give good customer service, it just confuses people."

Negotiation skills

When it comes to entrepreneurial talents that spell success in the world of startups, the ability to negotiate well is one of the most vital attributes you can possess. Take care to develop this skill. Some people think they are good negotiators, but in reality are not. From bringing in good people, to arranging financing or nailing that technical solution, sound negotiating techniques will be essential.

Prepare, prepare, prepare.

Enter a negotiation without proper preparation and you've already lost. Start with yourself. Make sure you are clear on what you really want out of the arrangement. Research the other side to better understand their needs as well as their strengths and weaknesses. Enlist help from experts.

Pay attention to timing.

Timing is important in any negotiation. Sure, you must know what to ask for. But be sensitive to when you ask for it. There are times to press ahead, and times to wait. When you are looking your best is the time to press for what you want. But beware of pushing too hard and poisoning any long-term relationship.

Leave behind your ego.

The best negotiators either don't care or don't show they care about who gets credit for a successful deal. Their talent is in making the other side feel like the final agreement was all their idea.

Ramp up your listening skills.

The best negotiators are often quiet listeners who patiently let others have the floor while they make their case. They never interrupt. Encourage the other side to talk first. That helps set up one of negotiation's oldest maxims: Whoever mentions numbers first, loses. While that's not always true, it's generally better to sit tight and let the other side go first. Even if they don't mention numbers, it gives you a chance to ask what they are thinking.

If you don't ask, you don't get.

Another tenet of negotiating is "Go high, or go home." As part of your preparation, define your highest justifiable position. As long as you can argue convincingly, don't be afraid to aim high. But no ultimatums, please. Take-it-or-leave-it offers are usually out of place.

Anticipate compromise.

You should expect to make concessions and plan what they might be. Of course, the other side is thinking the same, so never take their first offer. Even if it's better than you'd hoped for, practice your best look of disappointment and politely decline. You never know what else you can get.

Offer and expect commitment.

The glue that keeps deals from unraveling is an unshakable commitment to deliver. You should offer this comfort level to others. Likewise, avoid deals where the other side does not demonstrate commitment.

Don't absorb their problems.

In most negotiations, you will hear all of the other side's problems and reasons they can't give you what you want. They want their problems to become yours, but don't let them. Instead, deal with each as they come up and try to solve them. If their "budget" is too low, for example, maybe there are other places that money could come from.

Stick to your principles.

As an individual, you likely have a set of guiding principles — values that you just won't compromise. If you find negotiations crossing those boundaries, it might be a deal you can live without.

Close with confirmation.

At the close of any meeting — even if no final deal is struck — recap the points covered and any areas of agreement. Make sure everyone confirms. Follow-up with appropriate letters or emails. Do not leave behind loose ends.

Running and controlling a meeting

There are good meetings and there are bad meetings. Bad meetings drone on forever, you never seem to get to the point, and you leave wondering why you were even present. Effective ones leave you energised and feeling that you've really accomplished something. So what makes a meeting effective?

Effective meetings really boil down to three things:

- They achieve the meeting's objective.
- They take up a minimum amount of time.
- They leave participants feeling that a sensible process has been followed.

If you structure your meeting planning, preparation, execution, and follow up around these three basic criteria, the result will be an effective meeting.

1. The Meeting's Objective

An effective meeting serves a useful purpose. This means that in it, you achieve a desired outcome. For a meeting to meet this outcome, or objective, you have to be clear about what it is. Too often, people call a meeting to discuss something without really considering what a good outcome would be.

- Do you want a decision?
- Do you want to generate ideas?
- Are you getting status reports?
- Are you communicating something?
- Are you making plans?

Any of these, and a myriad of others, is an example of a meeting objective. Before you do any meeting planning, you need to focus your objective. To help you determine what your meeting objective is, complete this sentence:

At the close of the meeting, I want the group to ...

With the end result clearly defined, you can then plan the contents of the meeting, and determine who needs to be present.

2. Use Time Wisely

Time is a precious resource, and no one wants their time wasted. With the amount of time we all spend in meetings, you owe it to yourself and your team to streamline the meeting as much as possible. What's more, time wasted in a meeting is time wasted for everybody attending. For example, if a critical person is 15 minutes late in an eight person meeting, that person has cost the organisation two hours of lost activity.

Starting with your meeting objective, everything that happens in the meeting itself should further that objective. If it doesn't, it's superfluous and should not be included.

To ensure you cover only what needs to be covered and you stick to relevant activities, you need to create an agenda. The agenda is what you will refer to in order to keep the meeting running on target and on time. To prepare an agenda, consider the following factors:

- Priorities – what absolutely must be covered?
- Results – what do need to accomplish at the meeting?
- Participants – who needs to attend the meeting for it to be successful?
- Sequence – in what order will you cover the topics?
- Timing – how much time will spend on each topic?
- Date and Time – when will the meeting take place?
- Place – where will the meeting take place?

With an idea of what needs to be covered and for how long, you can then look at the information that should be prepared beforehand. What do the participants need to know in order to make the most of the meeting time? And, what role are they expected to perform in the meeting, so that they can do the right preparation?

If it's a meeting to solve a problem, ask the participants to come prepared with a viable solution. If you are discussing an ongoing project, have each participant summarise his or her progress to date and circulate the reports amongst members. Assigning a particular topic of discussion to various people is another great way to increase involvement and interest. On the agenda, indicate who will lead the discussion or presentation of each item. Use your agenda as your time guide.

When you notice that time is running out for a particular item, consider hurrying the discussion, pushing to a decision, deferring discussion until another time, or assigning it for discussion by a subcommittee.

An important aspect of running effective meetings is insisting that everyone respects the time allotted. Start the meeting on time, do not spend time recapping for latecomers, and, when you can, finish on time. Whatever can be done outside the meeting time should be. This includes circulating reports for people to read beforehand, and assigning smaller group meetings to discuss issues relevant to only certain people.

3. Satisfying Participants that a Sensible Process Has Been Followed

Once you have an agenda prepared, you need to circulate it to the participants and get their feedback and input. Running a meeting is not a dictatorial role: You have to be participative right from the start. Perhaps there is something important that a team member has to add. Maybe you have allotted too much, or too little, time for a particular item. There may even be some points you've included that have been settled already and can be taken off the list for discussion. Whatever the reason, it is important you get feedback from the meeting participants about your proposed agenda. Once in the meeting, to ensure maximum satisfaction for everyone, there are several things you should keep in mind:

- If certain people are dominating the conversation, make a point of asking others for their ideas.
- At the end of each agenda item, quickly summarise what was said, and ask people to confirm that that's a fair summary. Then make notes regarding follow-up.
- Note items that require further discussion.
- Watch body language and make adjustments as necessary. Maybe you need a break, or you need to stop someone from speaking too much.
- Ensure the meeting stays on topic.
- List all tasks that are generated at the meeting. Make a note of who is assigned to do what, and by when.
- At the close of the meeting, quickly summarise next steps and inform everyone that you will be sending out a meeting summary.

After the meeting is over, take some time to debrief, and determine what went well and what could have been done better. Evaluate the meeting's effectiveness based on how well you met the objective. This will help you continue to improve your process of running effective meetings.

You may even want to get the participants' feedback as well. Depending on the time frame, this debriefing can be done within the meeting itself or afterward.

Finally, prepare the meeting summary. This will be forwarded to all participants and other stakeholders. It is a record of what was accomplished and who is responsible for what as the team moves forward. This is a very crucial part of effective meetings that often gets overlooked. You need a written record of what transpired, along with a list of actions that named individuals have agreed to perform. Make sure someone is assigned to take notes during the meeting if you think you will be too busy to do so yourself.

Key Points:

Running an effective meeting is more than sending out a notice that your team is to meet at a particular time and place. Effective meetings need structure and order. Without these elements they can go on forever and not accomplish a thing. With a solid objective in mind, a tight agenda, and a commitment to involving the meeting participants in the planning, preparation, and execution of the meeting, you are well on your way to chairing great meetings. Given the frustration most people feel when their time is wasted, gaining a reputation for running efficient and successful meetings is good for you and your career.

"Now will everybody please turn to page 5 of the hidden agenda."

Ways to Get Control of Your Meetings

Meetings, when done properly, should be to the point, smooth, and only as long as they have to be. Having a good and efficient meeting takes planning and firm execution. While there are not too many ways to have a great meeting, there are plenty of ways to have a bad one. Some potential pitfalls are inflated agendas, having a meeting when an email would suffice, and inviting the wrong people. If you have a necessary, well-planned meeting with the right people and it's going well, what do you do when it gets derailed? How can you prevent that from happening?

- Preventing a meeting from being side-tracked actually begins well before start time. By using an agenda, you provide the structure upon which the meeting is built. The more detailed and planned the agenda, the smoother the meeting. Another way to use the agenda is while passing it out. When you communicate with each participant about the meeting, make sure to tell them that it will begin and end exactly as scheduled. Once you have set the stage, however, you have to follow the agenda exactly. If you don't respect the schedule, no one else will.

- At the beginning of the meeting, clearly state that your time – and everyone else's – is valuable and that you only have enough time for the meeting as scheduled. If the meeting runs over, you will have to leave. This subtly leads your fellow participants to stick to the schedule.

- Often when beginning meetings, we pass out materials that will help to guide our participants and re-emphasise certain points. The tendency is to simply hand over everything so as not to disrupt the flow later. However, people's instincts in these situations dictate that they rifle through the handouts, pulling their attention away from your opening remarks. The best course is to hand out materials as needed.

- A major potential derailment of your meeting comes from your speakers. The can ramble on and on, they can get bogged down in questions, or they could simply go off topic for who knows how long. There are several ways you can combat errant speakers. First, make sure they know how long they have to speak and have them submit their notes ahead of time. If you see any potential split-away points, bring them to their attention so they can avoid going off-topic in the meeting. If they do split anyway, a gentle reminder of their previous or next point can set them aright.

- If your speaker knows their specific time to speak, they are less prone to go over. However, unless you provide a clock or timer of some kind, their best intentions will be for naught. If a timer isn't feasible, work out a system of cues ahead of time. For example, you could put a blue pen in front of you for the "five minutes left" signal and a red pen for "one minute left."

- You can help your speaker with Q&A by stepping in as their personal moderator. If you are the one to pick who is to ask a question, then you can easily step in after questions have gone on too long. Simply say "that's enough questions for now," instead of picking the next person. Also, you can suggest that the speakers will be able to personally answer questions after the meeting.

- Another big detractor from an efficient meeting is excellent, important discussion topics… that are not on the agenda. These topics can derail a meeting faster than anything else. The difficult part is that usually these discussions need to happen, but you don't have to let them ruin your meeting. First, acknowledge that the topic is a good one. Then you can derail the derailment in several ways. You could tell the major players in the discussion to table it for now and meet amongst themselves after your meeting. You could announce that your meeting will go on, but there will be another meeting after this one to discuss the new topic.

- If the off-topic point is a good one, but not worthy enough for the solutions above, create a "bin list." This list holds all points that need to be discussed, but not right then. You can schedule meetings for each one, or all at once. You can also take the two most invested people in the discussion and assign them to work out the details and take care of it personally. The point is that you don't have it interfering with your meeting.

- There are times that a meeting gets off track, but not for a good reason like an important off-topic point. Often, the problem is simply rude participants that slow down a meeting. Taking care of these situations falls almost completely on you, but it doesn't have to be too big a chore. Start at the beginning of the meeting with confidence. Keep your posture straight throughout the meeting. Monitor your body language and make sure your voice is solid and carrying. Make them want to listen to you. Watch your participants' body language as well. If you see slumping or boredom, jump in with a request for their opinion to get them mentally back into the meeting. If the distracted are wide spread, call for a quick five minute break. Your participants will return refreshed and rejuvenated. If you have people talking amongst themselves instead of listening, simply smile politely and wait until they are done or have noticed that the entire meeting is waiting on them. They will quickly come to task.

- A good strategy for keeping your meetings on track is to schedule them to end right before lunch or quitting time. However, these particular end times can cause hazardous derailments, because your participants are beginning to think about what they will be doing after the meeting. This is the point in the agenda where you should place all of the controversial topics. Not only will it liven up the meeting and banish daydreaming, it will prevent the subjects from being discussed too long as lunch is just over the horizon.

If you craft a good plan and tight agenda you are prepared to have an efficient meeting. All it takes after that is to have a firm hand, stick to the schedule, and take care of your participants.

"That better be an arm twitch."

Getting what you want (the art of interrogative discussion)

The following can improve your verbal communications skills, whether in planned or unplanned situations:

Read more

Simply increasing what you read (business texts, novels, newspapers etc) can improve your vocabulary, help you express ideas clearly and eliminate weaknesses in your language skills.

Think about the words

Too many words will bore your listener, take up too much time and result in you losing credibility. There is no need to waffle! Remember not to use words that people don't understand (they may not even tell you that they don't understand what you are saying), as you may appear intimidating and make them feel inferior.

Ask open-ended questions

No conversation technique is more powerful than using open-ended questions. Open-ended questions use 'how', 'when', 'where', 'who', 'why', 'what' and 'which'. Don't ask questions that can only give you a 'yes' or 'no' reply. An open-ended question is designed to encourage a full, meaningful answer from your conversation partner using his or her own knowledge and/or feelings. Unlike closed-ended questions, open-ended questions require more than a one or two word response. Open-ended questions have an inviting quality and they encourage authentic responses and two-way communication in both personal and professional relationships. e.g. "Do you have a problem?" is not a good question (closed) – "Where is the problem located?" is a good and open-ended question.

Reward statements with and open-ended question

If during your conversation you are asked to make a statement, by all means make the statement but without delay immediately follow the statement with an open-ended question. This will ensure the conversation continues and will ensure that you remain in control. e.g. You are asked whether you can complete a report by month-end, you may reply, "yes" and immediately ask, perhaps, "How many additional days after month-end have you allowed for discovery of unforeseen issues?"

Prepare (if you can)

You would spend time planning what you would say if you were writing. You would also think about how to make it accessible to as many readers as possible. If you know of an approaching situation, take time out to think about the questions you may be asked and what answers you may need to give. If you are delivering a presentation, you should be prepared for awkward questions and situations where you may need to explain something in a different way.

Listen and be interested

Listening more and talking less means you will understand and bring your listener into the conversation. This helps them to trust you and make them feel that you really understand their needs. When they talk, be interested and show your interest. This will improve the rapport you are trying to build.

Be aware of non-verbal communication traps

The impact of the words you say is only a small element of the communication you are giving. You should make sure that your words, their tone, the gestures you make, facial expressions and body language you use, are all relevant to your conversation.

Honesty is the best policy

Promising something that is not possible will break down any trust that you have developed. Telling someone that you "don't know – but can find out" is more positive than just trying to give an answer you hope is effective.

Show and seek some understanding

Look for understanding from your audience. It's easier to back track at certain points in your conversation than revisit the whole conversation again – or you risk getting the wrong results because your audience did not understand! You can use this when delivering or receiving a message. Occasional summaries and confirmation questions can be extremely useful.

Think about perspectives

Think about what you are saying from the other person's perspective. Just because you understand what you mean, it doesn't mean that they will.

The killer question ….

> “What can I do …?” This will give you significant control and will most often get you what you want. For example, “Can I start the project on March 1st”? has a 50/50 chance of getting you a “No” reply, however “What can I do to allow me to start the report on March 1st”? – can only get you a response which will be designed by the listener to enable this to happen.

Providing information

In providing a service to clients, it is very important to provide them with as much information as necessary to involve them in all the decisions that are being made at every stage of the support process. When you are planning with clients, it is important to give them information concerning:

- The initial assessment of their needs. Use ordinary language that they can understand; avoid using jargon.
- The options normally available to meet these needs, e.g. the types of programs or services available.
- The expectations on the client regarding these options.
- Information about the implications of each option, i.e. the process and legal issues, the practical steps required.
- Information about options which will not be considered and why.

Remember that you may need to provide information in a range of ways. Some people prefer information given verbally, while others need to be able to read the information. Sometimes a combination of verbal and written information gives people a better chance of understanding it.

Check that the client and significant others understand what you have said or the written material you have provided. Also, when people are anxious they do not always remember what has been said to them. You may need to check understanding and repeat information where necessary.

Think about where you provide information to clients and significant others. Options include your office, their location or a neutral location.

Getting information (the art of listening)

"We have two ears and one mouth, so we should listen more than we say." - *Diogenes Laërtius*. Listening is deliberate. So how can we really listen? Here are the things we should learn to do:

Prepare yourself to listen.

Just as you get ready to do a job by getting the tools or information ready, you need to set yourself up to listen.

Get rid of the distractions.

Shut down, put away, or face away from your monitor, smart phone, agenda or anything that might take your focus away from your conversation. You cannot truly listen to anyone and do anything else at the same time.

Look at the person.

Make regular eye contact, but don't stare.

Pay attention to the body language.

Shifting around signals discomfort, do what you to try and reassure the person you are open to hear what they have to say and won't judge. Crossed arms and sitting back indicate a withdrawal.

Make sure your body language conveys your openness.

Relaxed posture, open limbs, leaning or head titled slightly forward helps show this. Nod in encouragement for the person to continue. "Mirroring" or having/using similar gestures, is interpreted as empathy.

Speak when asked

Speak when asked a direct question, or only if the silence goes on to long, to paraphrase something indicating you are engaged, or ask an open-ended question. Man's inability to communicate is a result of his failure to listen effectively.

Be mindful.

Don't just broadcast anything. Ask yourself if the information you are about to share has meaning or value for others.

Telephone skills

Great telephone skills are the building blocks of every business and it is easy to see why. Many of the important experiences that our existing, new, and potential customers are having are based upon the level of customer service they are receiving from us while we are on the phone. We can use our telephone skills to effectively deliver excellent service that will grow and maintain a thriving business.

Telephone Responsibility

It is important to identify and clarify whose role it is to answer the phone to avoid confusion and chaos.

Smile

Before picking up a phone to make or receive a call – smile! The listener will notice the difference.

Stand

Try making and receiving all calls standing rather than sitting. The calls will be shorter and you will be in greater control.

The Greeting

It is much more than a "hello" or "good morning." Use your greeting to warmly welcome existing and potential customers to your business. Say your first name twice and your surname once … “Good morning, you are speaking with Paul, Paul Hanson ….”

Telephone Etiquette

It's not so much "what you say," but "how you say it," that truly matters to your customers - continue to provide important information but focus on the delivery.

Placing Callers on Hold

Establish a customer - friendly manner to place callers on hold without offending the customer.

Transferring Calls

Don't leave the caller hanging: let him or her know when and why you are transferring their call to another person.

Leaving and Taking Messages

Identify what an appropriate message is to leave for a customer, as well as, how to gather all the necessary information when taking a message for other people on their behalf.

Handling the Unhappy Caller

It is important that you keep their own cool when talking with an unhappy caller and work towards a mutually acceptable answer to the caller's concern.

Handling Tough Questions

Recognise how much information is okay to provide and when it is time to seek the assistance of another person.

Handling objections and confrontations

How many real objections do you actually get? What exactly is an "objection"? Is it a roadblock to be overcome? Is it a mountain to be climbed? Webster's dictionary defines "objection" as "an expression of opposition or disapproval." If you disapprove of or oppose someone or the company they represent, you are not going to do business with them?

When the customer says your price is too high, or your delivery is too long, or the specifications don't meet their needs, or they're happy with current suppliers, does that mean they disapprove of or oppose you? Probably not.

So what you might consider to be objections aren't really objections at all, but are realities or simple expressions of concern on the part of the client.

Of course the customer is concerned about the price because he's not convinced of the value. Of course he's concerned about long delivery because that will cause him delays or problems. Of course he's concerned about the specifications because your solution isn't going to do the job.

Are there any real "objections?" Probably. How about, "The last time I used you delivery was eight weeks late," or "Every time I try to get service, no one calls me back."

And, As the client's relationship continues to evolve, their research of facts, pricing, and general understanding becomes more sophisticated. This means our support process must start sooner and therefore, we can anticipate an increase in objections.

Expect more and more objections to arise in the following areas:

Need Category

We all know multiple initiatives are sitting on everyone's agenda the remainder of this year and the urgency and need for your solution may easily take a back seat. What to do:

- Qualify our clients to uncover the impact of their organisation to determine potential for a need
- Create a strong phone introduction that creates urgency
- Determine if the client really knows what you are calling about
- Call wide at different levels

Relationship Category:

Relationship: Although customers are more open to change than ever before, they also want to strengthen existing relationships with current vendors and partner with them in new ways. It may be tougher to displace the competition now. What to do:

- Establish trust and rapport
- Learn how to sell against our competition
- Determine if the prospect needs to be sold or educated first
- Call wide at different levels

Service Category:

Although customers know more than ever before, they have less patience with anything too complicated and that lacks scalability and integration. What to do:

- Provide opportunities to educate on our services
- Provide a cost-effective solutions for easy entry
- Ask precision questions
- Neutralise their fears by providing added value for what you can deliver

So what's the secret to handling objections? The secret is to manage the communication process so as to avoid them. That's it. First of all, remember that people buy solutions from people they know, people they like, and people they trust. So build rapport, be likeable and be trustworthy. Do what you say you'll do when you said you'd do it. Secondly, listen to your customer's concerns. Find out what's standing in the way of his buying from you. What is he unsure or uncomfortable about? If you've spent the major part of the communication process asking questions, probing and qualifying the client, you will probably have a good idea of what situations have to be solved or clarified before they will feel comfortable moving ahead. Sometimes there's no simple solution to the customer's concerns. That's when the customer will hesitate to move forward. If you can't find a solution, maybe you can negotiate a resolution. Perhaps a delayed delivery can be offset in some manner. Maybe no one's service will meet the customer's required specifications and your task is to help the customer accept your solution as the closest match he's likely to find.

Overall Process to Handling Any Objection:

Listen

Stop! Do not try to jump in at the beginning - this may cause further objection. When you interrupt them, you are objecting to their objection. If you refuse to listen, then their next steps may well be towards the door. Use active listening methods, nodding and physically showing interest. They are trying to tell you something, which is a gift from them to you. If you do not listen, then their next step may well be towards the door.

Question

As appropriate, ask some open-ended questions. This not only shows you are interested in them, but it also gives you more information with which to resolve the objection. As you question them, watch carefully for body language that gives you more information about what they are thinking and feeling. Remember that this is not an interrogation, and that giving them the 'third degree' will turn them off. So keep your questions light and relevant. You might also tip the bucket at this time, asking them if there are any more concerns (=objections) that they have, and which, if you can resolve them, you might bring a solution. It is not always necessary to ask questions but be deliberate about what you are doing if you do.

Think

Now before you dive into objection-handling, think! What methods will work best with them? Should you take a direct and confrontational approach or should you use the soft-soap to finesse the situation? Or maybe you should put it off to another day. Thinking is a good thing where you are adding a little pause into the proceedings, thus demonstrating how you are taking their objection seriously.

Handle

This stage may sometimes only be a few seconds after they object or it may require more time in the previous three steps. Now, when you are ready, use the objection-handling method that you believe will work best. Or make up your own. You are under no obligation to try and force-fit a method where it is unlikely to work.

Check

Finally, check to find out whether your objection-handling worked! Ask if you have answered their question. Ask if there are any more concerns. As necessary, handle outstanding objections.

Negotiating a Resolution

Whatever it is that's keeping the process from moving forward, it's your job to identify it and to address it in a professional, non-confrontational manner. You're not trying to overcome the objection; you're working with the customer to resolve the situation in a mutually beneficial manner.

When you do this in a spirit of friendly co-operation, you're partnering with the customer and coming across as a problem solver, not a peddler.

So, by treating what is often considered objections as simple requests for more information or clarification, you can reduce the stress of the situation and keep the process moving, hopefully to a successful conclusion.

Presentations and speeches

Before you can start writing your speech, you need to have a clear purpose. What are you trying to achieve? If you can't write your purpose in a single clear concise sentence… you will struggle with the rest of your speech. Your purpose could be anything:

- To inform people about a project
- To entertain people at a social gathering
- To persuade people to use our services

To clarify what you are trying to achieve, and to remind you when you start to wander, at the top of your script write… "The purpose of this speech is…………..". Everything you write should be written with your purpose in mind.

The common knowledge divides presentations by various purposes. Traditionally, the big three are speeches to inform, speeches to entertain and speeches to persuade. The uncommon knowledge is that everything you say involves persuasion.

Beginning your speech

Beginning your speech should have impact, be inspiring, be dramatic and creates a demand for full audience attention. It should grab the audience and hold their attention and it has to do it from the beginning. Try some of these…

- Use a famous or unusual quotation
- Ask a question
- Use a startling statistic or fact
- Relate a short story or anecdote
- Make a promise
- Use humour

Whatever method you use it has to grab the attention of the audience and make them listen. Psychologists have shown that the first 30 seconds have the most impact. So don't waste time. Don't say, "Ladies and gentlemen, it's a pleasure to be here." Come out punching.

Once you've grabbed the attention of the audience, you have to do a few other things before you dive into the body of your speech. Traditionally the beginning of your speech should:

- Allow the audience to get used to your voice – make sure that you speak slowly
- Provide reasons for listening… what's in it for the audience – describe the benefits
- Give the audience an idea what your speech is about and what you'll cover – provide a route map

The middle of your speech.

This is the meat and potatoes of your speech, and if it's a good speech… you might throw in a few vegetables! This is where you present your information, facts and figures, statistics, quotes to prove your point, humorous stories to illustrate a point. Your speech should be arranged around a number of main points and these points should be arranged in a logical order.

When you start to write your masterpiece, you'll want to tell people everything. Don't! Limit your main points to three, almost everyone agrees that three is the best number. You can add sub-points to your main points but limit your main points to the tried and trusted triad, stick to three.

Use a strong pattern to structure your speech. Make sure that your main points are in a logical order. This helps the audience follow your speech and it helps you to remember. Traditional patterns to structure your speech are:

- Numerical order eg. first point, second point, third point.
- Time related eg. past, present, future.
- Geography eg. in the UK, in Europe, in the USA.
- Problem, cause, solution.
- Extended metaphor e.g. and article which compares writing a speech to say, a walk in Rome

Put your best material last.

If your speech has three main points and you're not sure what order to put them in, arrange them in ascending order of importance with your best material last. The audience tend to remember your final point the most, so make it a good one.

Mix the facts with emotion

Don't be afraid to use emotion in your speeches. Plain old facts and logic can only go so far, we often make our decisions using emotion and feelings. As the old saying goes… "Facts tell, feelings sell." The best speakers move us to action via our emotions. Open with a laugh – close with a tear.

Ending your Speech

Your ending has to be signaled and it can't just peter out, it has to make all that listening worthwhile. If the beginning of your speech has to grab the attention of the audience, the ending has to leave them with something memorable to do, to act on, to think about, to give them hope. The ending is the part of your speech the audience will remember. It's been said that a speech is like a love affair: Anyone can start one, but it takes a lot of skill to end one well. The conclusion must do two things. It must remind the audience of your main points and it must satisfy the listeners, leaving them in the proper mood or frame of mind.

Use voice music to let us know it's the end

When you deliver your final words, it should be obvious to the audience that you've finished… it's the cue for the audience to applaud. If the audience don't know that those were your final words, there is an embarrassed silence and the speaker has to say "Thank you" to let the audience know it's the end.

Always end on a positive note

No matter how sad the occasion, how bleak your message, always leave the audience feeling good. Even if all you can do is give them hope for the future – motivate the audience to take action.

Use transitions to link your speech

Transitions are the phrases that tie the pieces of your speech together. They let the audience know that you are moving to a new section of the speech or to a new point. They're the glue that holds the whole thing together. Any short phrase can be used as a transition but here are a few to give you the idea:

- Let's take a look at those points in turn…..
- Moving on to my second point……
- Another reason for…..
- Those are the arguments in favour, what about the arguments against……
- So what are people saying about…..
- That brings me to my final point…..

Don't just change direction… use your indicators and let the audience know where you're going!

Bonus Speech Writing tips

- Make sure that you write your speech to be spoken, not read.
- Use the showbiz formula – strong opening, strong close.
- To give your speech impact, cut out the adjectives and adverbs, use nouns and active verbs.
- Get the proportions of your speech right – The beginning should be about 10 to 15 percent of your speech, the ending should be about 5 to 10 percent.
- Write the introduction last – after you've written the body and conclusion, you'll know what you're introducing. Then write the introduction.
- For a great finish to your speech, tie it in to the beginning – by repeating at the end of your speech the idea, quotation, image or whatever you offered in the introduction, you give the audience the feeling of coming home again – this gives a wonderful sense of completeness to your speech.
- Work and rework your speech. All good speech writers will tell you that there's no such thing a good writing, only good rewriting.
- Learn to judge the length of your speech by the number of words – after you have written and delivered a few speeches, you will be able to correlate the number of words to the time taken.
- Give your speech an interesting and enigmatic title and don't decide on your title until you have written your speech.

And always remember the golden structural rule of all spoken and written communication:

1. Tell them what you are going to tell them
2. Tell them
3. Tell them what you have told them

Negotiation

Negotiating is a part of everyday life, but in business it's absolutely critical to your success. Poor negotiation can cripple a company just as quickly as losing key customers. While most negotiating strategies seem like common sense, it's not uncommon for people to get caught up in the emotion of the moment and ignore their basic instincts. Emotion, luck and magic have no place in a successful negotiation. It takes an iron gut, homework, street smarts and unblinking discipline. These keys will unlock your ability to get the best deal possible under any circumstances. Check your ego at the door and keep your eye on the big picture at all times. This is all about business.

Preparation is Key

Know about the party you're negotiating with so you can capitalise on your strengths and the party's weaknesses. If the other party is very experienced, that means he also has a history that could contain useful information. If possible, talk to business associates who have dealt with this person before. Many negotiators develop patterns and certain styles that you may be able to use to your advantage.

If you are a buyer, make sure you are thoroughly familiar with the product or service that will be the subject of the negotiation. If the other party senses you are weak on such details, you may be a prime target for a bluff or another technique designed to create anxiety and uncertainty. Psychology plays a crucial role in your ability to make the most of the other party's lack of preparation and anticipate their next move.

Most negotiators have a price target or goal in mind before they start. It should be based on realistic expectations considering all the constraints that will undoubtedly surface. These may include budget limits, direction from management, pressure to make sales goals, and a myriad of other external forces. During the course of the negotiation, the goal may change based on changes in scope and other unforeseen actions by either party. While your ultimate goal should be realistic, this should not constrain your first offer or counteroffer.

Before you start the negotiation, ensure that the other party is fully empowered to make binding commitments. You don't want to find yourself in a position where you believe you've struck a deal, only to discover that your agreement must be approved by someone higher in the chain of command.

Have a Strategy

There are basic principles that apply to every negotiation. The first offer is usually the most important and the benchmark by which all subsequent offers will be judged and compared. You'll never get what you don't ask for, so make your first offer bold and aggressive. The asking price is just that, and will typically include a pad or margin to give away during negotiations. You want to take all of that and hopefully more, so start lower than the seller expects. Don't worry about insulting the other party. As long as your offer is not ridiculous, the other side will continue the negotiations in hopes of settling at a better number.

As a buyer, do not disclose your budget or other limitations in your negotiating position. A favourite ploy of salesmen is to reshuffle the product specifications, schedule and other parameters in order to sell you an inferior product to fit your budget. You want the best product you can get for the money you have to spend, so employ an approach that maintains the possibility of spending less than you had originally planned.

Always have something to give away without hurting your negotiating position. If you're submitting a price proposal to a buyer, consider inserting decoys and red herrings for the other party to find. For example, if you are bidding a project, consider including some nice-to-have items that aren't critical to the success of the project. You could also include spare parts that may or may not be needed in the end. If the buyer takes those items out to reduce the overall cost, you haven't lost anything but it may help the buyer reach his price target. Such distractions will help to divert the other party from attacking the meat of your proposal. Employing this strategy must be viewed in the context and in consideration of what other bidders may be doing. If you know that the only way to win the bid is to provide a bare bones cost, then this strategy may not be appropriate.

Watch for clues such as body movement, speech patterns and reactions to what you say. Be prepared to suspend or cancel negotiations if you feel things are getting nowhere or the other party seems stuck in their position. Indicate your reluctance to continue under those conditions and make the other side wonder if you are ever coming back. If they are on the hook to cut a deal, they will feel the pressure to move.

Be patient even if the other party isn't. This can be difficult for those with a passion for instant gratification, but the last thing you want is for the other party to think you're under the gun to finish quickly.

From a contractual standpoint, a counteroffer automatically rejects all previous offers. Once an offer is made, you should expect an acceptance or rejection of your offer, or a counteroffer that keeps the negotiation open. If your offer is rejected and you are asked to submit a new and better offer, do not fall into that trap. That would be tantamount to negotiating with yourself, and you should never do this. If the last offer on the table is yours, always insist on a counteroffer to force the other party to move his/her position before you make another offer.

Find the Leverage

In addition to exploiting the other party's weaknesses, concentrate on taking maximum advantage of your strengths. If you're the only source available for a particular product, you have tremendous leverage across the board. If economic conditions have created a market in which the product you're selling is in great demand and low supply, that gives you more bargaining power to name your price. If you are the buyer in a depressed economy, you normally have the advantage of too much supply and lower demand.

Establish a strong foundation early in the process by demonstrating your knowledge and expertise of the negotiation subject matter. This may intimidate those on the other side and put them on their heels before they've a chance to establish their own credibility. Playing catch-up in a tough negotiation can be challenging, so it's much better to take the initiative and steer the process in the direction you want.

The Offer

An offer is more than just a dollar amount. It must encompass all of the elements of the bargain and will normally comprise the basis for a contract that formalises the agreement. If you make an offer without nailing down all of the specifics, you may find out later that there was no meeting of the minds with the other party. The basis of the bargain should include: offer price (in proper denomination), statement of work (scope), identification and quantities of goods or services, delivery schedule, performance incentives (if any), express warranties (if any), terms and conditions, and any documents incorporated by reference.

Trading one element for another - such as a lower price for a more relaxed schedule - is a common tactic. These bargaining chips should be kept in your hip pocket until you need them to close the deal and get the price you want. While your primary focus is normally on price, you should always keep all the other components of the deal in the forefront of your mind. Don't be pressured into accepting boilerplate contracts represented as the "standard of the industry" or something that "we always use." Everything, including the fine print, is open to change. If the other party refuses to alter onerous terms, consider taking your business elsewhere.

To avoid misunderstandings, offers should be presented in writing and include all elements of the bargain. It's a good idea to keep notes containing the rationale for each offer. While these notes won't be disclosed to the other party, they will prove to be invaluable should things go awry and you need to restart negotiations. Part of the process is benefiting from lessons learned and refining your approach and technique. If you work for a company or the government, those notes are usually required to document the negotiated outcome and complete the contract file.

Go For a Win-Win Solution

Throughout the negotiation, try to determine what you believe to be an acceptable outcome for the other party. It may be a combination of different things that aren't necessarily tied solely to price. For example, the delivery date may be the most important thing to the other party, while product quality may be your primary driver.

Understanding the other side's priorities is just as important as understanding your own, so figure out what you would do if you were in his shoes. When constructing your offers, attempt to satisfy some of his priorities if doing so doesn't weaken your overall position. Be prepared to give up the little things in exchange for the big things you don't want to concede. Know your limits and how far you're willing to go on all aspects of the deal.

While you have the power to influence the negotiation process in your favor, your goal should be to secure a good deal without extracting the last pound of flesh from the other party. This is especially true if you will be negotiating with the same party on a recurring basis.

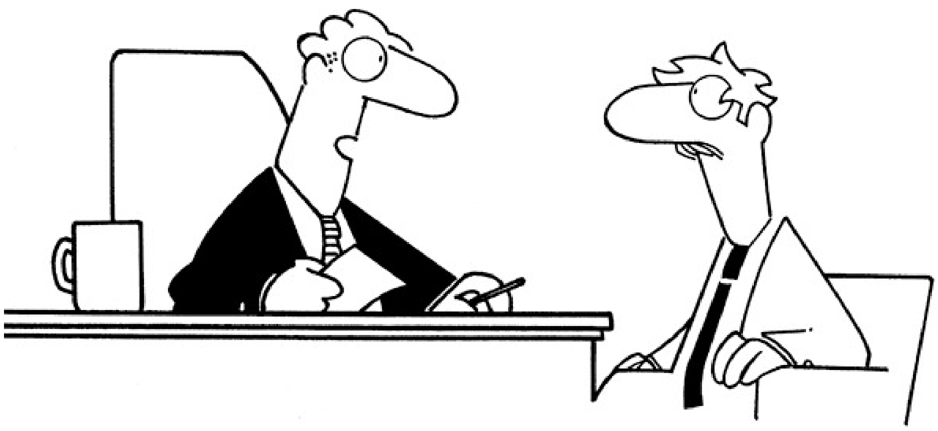
The most effective negotiators are professionals who know their business and don't let personalities and irrational behavior interfere with their mission. They are capable of making the other party believe they got the best deal they could under the circumstances.

Once the negotiation is completed, you want to be able to work effectively with those in the other party during contract performance. If they are threatened and pounded into submission, they probably won't negotiate with you again, possibly cutting off any future business. While heated confrontation is a common occurrence during negotiations, at some point collaboration and compromise are needed to get a deal.

Closing the Deal

Successful negotiation is like horse-trading in that it requires a sense of timing, creativity, keen awareness and the ability to anticipate the other party's next move. Negotiation is also like chess in that each move should be designed to set up not only your next move, but several moves down the line. Generally, your moves should get progressively smaller, and you can expect the same from the other party.

Always have the endgame in mind as you plot your strategy, and be prepared at some point to split the remaining difference. It's almost inevitable when the parties are close but can't seem to make that last leap to a single number. It's completely arbitrary, but it gets the job done. That's why all the offers leading up to that point are so important: they will set the stage for the final handshake.



"Okay, this is my final offer. You get an office with a window, but you're not allowed to look outside."

Ways to Become a Better Negotiator

- Accept the fact that you need to negotiate. You may not like it. It might make you feel awkward. The fact is, we all negotiate whether we want to or not. And if choose to ignore it, then you will lose. Very few people will try to create an outcome that is harmful to you, but almost all people will do what is in their best interest. If their best interest and your best interest don't align, then you lose. That's where knowing the basics of negotiation – and learning how to use them – prevents you from getting stepped on and pushed over.

- Forget about the price tag and focus on what you are willing to pay. Economics 101: an item is worth what someone is willing to pay it. There is no reason to accept the given price if you're not willing to pay for it. The agreement between buyer and seller happens during every purchase. There is nothing wrong, cheap, or immoral about asking for a lower price.

- Know how much value you hold. Do you know how valuable your business is? For many businesses, the cost of acquiring a new customer is very high. Companies pay for advertising, marketing, shipping, packaging, and a whole host of other costs all just to get a product in front of you. Even if you buy a product or service for 50% of the regular price you are making all of those costs worth it to the company because they got a new customer. And if they do a good job, then maybe you'll be a repeat customer. So that first 50% was totally worth it. Negotiate for a discount, your business is worth it.

- Know what you are willing to accept. Not every negotiation can be planned ahead of time, but you can prevent a dumb mistake by knowing where you are going to call it quits before you start talking things out. Know what options are out there. How much does that car usually sell for? What is a typical rental rate? Do your homework and, if you can, bring proof.

- The way you enter a room can dictate how the rest of an interaction will be. Ever see someone slump through a doorway with a scowl on their face? Not very inspiring. Keep your head high and smile when you enter. Starting things off with a positive vibe is very important, no matter how small it is.

- Find a person who can help you. The first person you talk to will not always be in a position to deal with your situation. If they don’t have the ability to make the changes you need or give you the discount you want, then politely ask to talk with someone that does.

- Don’t dismiss someone on a bad note. If you do need to switch to someone else, then remind the person you are currently talking to that you’re happy with their service and you appreciate their help, but you would like to talk with a manager.

- Kick things off by talking about a mutual interest, making a true compliment, or finding common ground. Talk about something you both like before starting to ask for what you want.

- Use the other person’s name. It’s so basic that almost everyone forgets.

- Focus on creating a co-operative discussion instead of an adversarial argument. Use the word, “We” to signify that you’re working through this together. For example, “You know, $100 is a good starting place. Now we just need to work out the details.”

- Ask about alternative options. Most places have all types of discounts, reduced rates, secondary options, and other alternatives that can be applied. You’ll never know what options exist if you don’t ask. There is almost always more than one way to solve a problem.

- If you have a bill with multiple items, always negotiate each individual item first. Go line by line and see if there is an alternative option, a discount, or if you can simply eliminate that item altogether. Then, when you have made it through the full list, you can ask for a group discount.

- Ask open ended questions. For example, avoid asking, “Do you offer a discount?” The obvious answer is, “No.” Instead say “What is your discount for…” as it requires more of an explanation.

- Give yourself an out. Negotiations often go south because blame gets assigned to one side or the other. Make it easier on both parties by referring to someone off the scene. A simple, “I’ll have to run this by my spouse/business partner/lawyer,” can make it a lot easier. It prevents you from looking like the bad guy.

- Listen more, talk less. You don't need to say much. Typically, the person that talks more ends up saying something they regret. Silence can make some people feel awkward, but a well timed pause can say a lot.

- Don't offer an ultimatum. "This is my final offer." "Take it or leave it." "I demand 20% off." Nobody likes being told what to do.

- Acting like price is the only thing you care about is disrespectful. Saying, "What's the most you will pay?" or "What's the lowest price you can offer?" totally eliminates any human element of the conversation. Think about the person on the other end of the phone, other side of the screen, or other side of the counter.

- Ask for what you want. The world is a good place with good people, but most of them are too busy with their own jobs to figure out what you want for you. People are willing to help, but you need to show them what to do by asking for what you want.

- Don't be vague. Stop beating around the bush or trying to tiptoe your way to a discount. Instead of hinting at what you want and hoping they figure it out, just clearly ask for your desired outcome. You'll be surprised by how often you get it.

- Ask the other side to help you. The "what-would-you-do-in-my-shoes" question – use a question such as, "Here's the main issue… [restate problem plainly]… what would you do in my shoes?" Asking questions like this is an effective way to generate all sorts of creative ideas that you would never even thought to ask.

- Don't put all that work in and blow it at the end. It's easy to get nervous and panic when you're on the verge of getting what you want. If you're excited and don't know what to do, then just ask for what you want and be quiet. Talking to much or play it carefully at the end rarely works out well.

- No deals on a handshake. If you get a new price, a discount, or any other benefit, then ask for it in writing. Don't just take their word for it unless you want to negotiate for it again later. Just make it easier on everyone and get them to write it down.

- Call back or come back. Sometimes you get the wrong person. Sometimes you start off on the wrong foot. Sometimes you catch an employee on the wrong day. Getting someone with the right personality can make all the difference in the world. If your conversation isn't getting anywhere, then hang up, head out, and try it again some other time.

- Treat people with respect. No discount is worth burning bridges, ruining relationships, or making people feel disrespected. In the long run, you are better off paying a higher price and keeping the good will.

- Don't take it personally. Maybe you'll get what you want. Maybe you won't. Life will move on either way. Most people will never have a negotiation that will make or break their life. Keep it real and don't get emotionally involved.

1.

"It's ok, he's signed - release his children."

TRAINING OUTLINE

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

COURSE NOTES

"To be understood by another person, one must not authorize validity to the very prospect of invalidation which has the potential to assume its own assumption of deficiency within the very milieu of the message. *That is the key to clear and effective communication!*"

How to construct effective written communications

As business becomes more complex, people have more distractions and less time to thoroughly read documents. Therefore, the ability to communicate effectively in writing, especially email and on the web, becomes more critical than ever.

Write with a clear purpose in mind, and state that purpose at the very beginning of your written communication. Readers should know at a glance what your email, report, or letter is about, why you are sending it, and what action you want them to take. Here are 10 tips to help you write more effectively:

Keep it simple.

You may think complex sentences make you sound impressive, but they can prevent your ideas from getting across. Use “during” instead of “during the course of.” Don’t say, “Is it possible to meet with you at your earliest possible convenience in order to discuss the project?” Instead, say “When may I talk with you about the project?”

Avoid jargon and overuse of big words.

Sometimes you need a complex word or phrase to express your ideas clearly. But if a shorter word can do the job, use it instead.

- Use “speed up” instead of “expedite.”
- Use “plan” instead of “strategize.”
- Use “assume” instead of “postulate.”
- Use “use” instead of “utilisation.”
- Use “try” instead of “endeavour.”
- Use “sent” instead of “transmitted.”

Use concrete, specific words rather than vague, general ones.

For example, say, “I have completed three phases of your project in November,” instead of “I have completed some aspects of your project over the last few weeks.”

Write as you talk.

Ask yourself, how would I say it if the reader were sitting across the desk from me? Use contractions where appropriate; use the words “you,” “me,” “us,” and “I” to make your writing more people-oriented. TIP: Keep a file of the best-written letters, memos and reports that you have received and model your writing after them.

Use active verbs to bring writing to life and make it sound conversational.

In talking we almost always use active verbs: “James hit a water main during his repair process.” But in business, we too often say: “A water main was hit by James.”

Vary sentence length, but avoid overly long sentences.

Try for an average sentence length of 17 words. Introduce no more than one or two ideas per sentence.

Use short paragraphs to break up business letters and increase readability.

The average paragraph in a business letter is two sentences long. Long paragraphs often contain more than one idea and can be split so that each idea has its own paragraph.

Be careful of gender usage.

Although it’s grammatically correct to use the male pronoun, “his,” when referring to both sexes, this may offend some people. Make sentences plural to eliminate this problem. “Technicians should turn in their call reports weekly.”

Always edit and proof-read your communications before sending them.

Remember “Spell Check” doesn’t catch everything. And don’t forget to check all property name spellings; the computerised spell checker will miss them. Misspellings and incorrect grammar reflect poorly on you and our company.

Tips for writing with a positive tone

Establishing the right tone in written communications can make the difference between a positive response and a hostile one. To help create a positive tone:

- Avoid “I.” Instead use “you” as the subject of sentences to get the reader involved.
- Use the reader’s name, if the correspondence is addressed to one person.
- Replace negative words with positive ones. Instead of saying “Don’t hesitate to call me,” try “Feel free to call me.” Words with negative connotations include: delay, doubt, difficult, fail, problem. Words with positive connotations include: glad, improvement, service, happy, contribution.
- Present ideas as possibilities, not as difficulties to be overcome.

- Give your written communications the human touch; imagine you're writing to your best friend.

Writing as communication.

Don't just write ……

Communicate

Efficient writing must be:

Structured	:	Organisation aides understanding.
Concise	:	Never write an unnecessary word.
Accurate	:	Provide accuracy to preserve credibility.
Complete	:	Deliver what the reader needs and state the next steps.
Appropriate	:	Know the reader.
Checked	:	Never send out unchecked writing.

- We are in the business of reporting facts. Our writing must be <u>direct</u> and <u>factual.</u>
- We are not concerned with whether our client likes the content.
- We do not dress bad news up to sound favourable.
- We must take into account all of the facts and circumstances that we know about so that the reporting is <u>balanced.</u>

"Baxter...about this report...your punctuation, spelling and grammar are perfect. No one can understand it!"

Use of email

- Email is a fast and convenient method of communication. It is very helpful socially but it is causing significant problems in a business environment.

- Transporting documents electronically is fine but writing on email header pages can be a problem. In a business environment, emails should be limited to:

- making enquiry
- making arrangements
- acknowledging receipt
- communicating expectations of delivery

Be aware of and avoid the following:

(a) Creating long trails of question and answer that are more appropriately addressed in a proper letter format where all of the issue is addressed in one place and within an appropriate business framework.

(b) Losing important instructions of legal importance amid a sea of trivial emails.

(c) Casual styles of communication often occurring in emails that can more easily cause offence or misunderstanding.

(d) Damaging the company brand by inappropriate levels of informality.

(e) Failing to consider a matter properly by making a “quick” reply to an email without thinking through the issues.

(f) People have come to expect instant replies to emails when that may not be appropriate for the subject at hand. Do not fall into the “instant reply” trap! Communicate about expectations. Telling people when they can expect to have a considered reply to the issue raised is a good use of email.

“This is gobbledygook. I asked for mumbo-jumbo.”

Effective emails

Write a meaningful subject line.

Before you hit "send," take a moment to write a subject line that accurately describes the content, giving your reader a concrete reason to open your message.

Email is different from text messaging. In a text message conversation, two parties expect to engage in multiple, rapid back-and-forth exchanges, asking for clarification and providing corrections when necessary. Generally, you are texting somebody you already know well, about a shared interest, and the subject of the conversation will change as your time together progresses.

But email is part of most people's work routine. Most professionals who get 20 or 50 or 200 emails a day do not want to engage in a leisurely back-and-forth; they want to clear out their inbox and move on to their next task.

If your subject line is vague - or even worse, if it's blank - you have missed your first opportunity to inform or persuade your reader.

Remember - your message is not the only one in your recipient's mailbox. A clear subject line will help a busy professional to decide that your email is worthwhile.

Do not leave the subject line blank.

If you don't put a subject line on your email, you are sending the message that your name in the "From" line is all your recipient should need in order to make it a top priority. That could come across as arrogant, or at the very least, thoughtless. Take advantage of the opportunity to get your recipient thinking about your message even before opening it.

Do not have "Important! Read Immediately!!" or similar in the subject line

What is important to you may not be important to your reader. Rather than brashly announcing that the secret contents of your message are important, write an informative headline that actually communicates at least the core of what you feel is so important.

Keep the message focused.

Often recipients only read partway through a long message, hit “reply” as soon as they have something to contribute, and forget to keep reading. This is part of human nature. If your email contains multiple messages that are only loosely related, in order to avoid the risk that your reader will reply only to the first item that grabs his or her fancy, you could number your points to ensure they are all read (adding an introductory line that states how many parts there are to the message). If the points are substantial enough, split them up into separate messages so your recipient can delete, respond, file, or forward each item individually.

Help your reader focus on your message: keep your text readable.

- Proof-read, especially when your message asks your recipient to do work for you. All-caps comes across as shouting, and no-caps makes you look like a lazy teenager. Regardless of your intention, people will respond accordingly.
- Write short paragraphs, separated by blank lines. Most people find unbroken blocks of text boring, or even intimidating. Take the time to format your message for the ease of your reader.
- Avoid fancy typefaces. Don’t depend upon bold font or large size to add nuances. Your recipient’s email reader may not have all the features that yours does. In a pinch, use asterisks to show *emphasis*

Avoid attachments.

Rather than attaching a file that your reader will have to download and open in a separate program, you will probably get faster results if you just copy-paste the most important part of the document into the body of your message.

Email works best when you just copy and paste the most relevant text into the body of the email. Try to reduce the number of steps your recipient will need to take in order to act on your message.

If your recipient actually needs to view the full file in order to edit or archive it, then of course sending an attachment is appropriate. If it’s the message that matters, recognise that attachments

- consume bandwidth (do you want your recipient to ignore your request so as to avoid paying for a mobile download?)
- can carry viruses
- don’t always translate correctly for people who read their email on portable devices.

Identify yourself clearly.

When contacting someone cold, always include your name, occupation, and any other important identification information in the first few sentences.

If you are following up on a face-to-face contact, you might appear too timid if you assume your recipient doesn’t remember you; but you can drop casual hints to jog their memory: “I enjoyed talking with you about the destructive testing we are undertaking while we were in the cafe the other day.”

While formal phrases such as “Dear Dr. Sneedlewood” and “Sincerely Yours,” are unnecessary in email, when contacting someone outside your own organisation, you should write a signature line that includes your full name and at least a link to an online profile page (something that does not require your recipient to log in first).

Be kind. Don’t flame.

Think before you click “Send.” If you find yourself writing in anger, save a draft, go get a cup of coffee, and imagine that tomorrow morning someone has taped your email outside your door. Would your associates and friends be shocked by your language or attitude?

Or would they be impressed by how you kept your cool, how you ignored the bait when your correspondent stooped to personal attacks, and how you carefully explained your position (or admitted your error, or asked for a reconsideration, etc.).

Don’t pour gasoline on a fire without carefully weighing the consequences. Will you have to work with this person again? Do you want a copy of your bitter screed to surface years from now, when you want a letter of recommendation?

Proof-read.

If you are asking someone else to read your email, take the time to make your message look professional. While your spell checker won't catch every mistake, at the very least it will catch a few typos. If you are sending a message that will be read by someone higher up on the chain of command), or if you're about to mass-mail dozens or thousands of people, take an extra minute or two before you hit "send". Show a draft to a close associate, in order to see whether it actually makes sense.

Don't assume privacy.

Unless you are John Key, praise in public, and criticise in private. Don't send anything over email that you wouldn't want posted - with your name attached.

Email is not secure. Just as random pedestrians could easily reach into your mailbox and intercept the envelopes that you send and receive through the post office, a curious hacker or a malicious somebody can easily intercept your email.

If you stretch the truth in an email (downplaying a problem, leaving out an important detail, etc.), you're creating a written record that your recipient can (and will) use to determine whether

- you are uninformed about the truth
- you are informed but deliberately misrepresenting the truth
- you're confusing emails mean you aren't a reliable source for determining the truth

Distinguish between formal and informal situations.

When you are writing to a friend or a close colleague, it is OK to use "smilies" :-) , abbreviations (LOL for "laughing out loud," etc.) and non-standard punctuation and spelling (like that found in instant messaging or chat rooms). These linguistic shortcuts are generally signs of friendly intimacy. However, don't use informal language when your reader expects a more formal approach. Always know the situation, and write accordingly.

Respond Promptly.

If you want to appear professional and courteous, make yourself available to your online correspondents. Even if your reply is, “Sorry, I’m too busy to help you now,” at least your correspondent won’t be waiting in vain for your reply.

Show Respect and Restraint

Many an email war has been started by someone who hit “reply all” instead of “reply.” While most people know that email is not private, it is good form to ask the sender before forwarding a personal message. If someone emails you a request, it is perfectly acceptable to forward the request to a person who can help — but forwarding a message in order to ridicule the sender is tacky.

Use BCC instead of CC when sending sensitive information to large groups. The name of everyone in the CC list goes out with the message, but the names of people on the BCC list (“blind carbon copy”) are hidden. Put your own name in the “To” box if your mail editor doesn’t like the blank space.

Be tolerant of other people’s etiquette blunders. If you think you’ve been insulted, quote the line back to your sender and add a neutral comment such as, “I’m not sure how to interpret this… could you elaborate?”

“You’d get a lot more work done if you didn’t reply to every spam email with ‘Thank you for your kind offer ...’ ”

The power of bullet points

When you're writing about a subject or point that has a variety of "angles", alternatives or options you can list the various points in conventional paragraphs, however, sometimes you can help make your document more readable by splitting up paragraphs into smaller text blocks. So how can you best display the points you want to make most clearly? Certainly use carefully constructed headings and sub-headings where appropriate to create important signposts. Plus, ensure that your document has a logical flow of information from start to finish. But for your text pointers, usually the best solution is to use bullet points and numbered lists.

There's nothing quite so enlightening for your reader - or when creating presentations, your viewer - than to spread each of your key points on a separate line with some kind of contrasting marker inserted at the start of each key point line. Furthermore, you can indent these lines from the rest of the text to further illustrate hierarchy of importance with any previous and following bullet points.

Such a layout also provides additional ease of use for skimmers and scanners - those folks who tend to read headings first and then only read what they consider to be relevant. Bullet points combined with the surrounding white space also allow for better focus on individual points. These visual clues help make a logical sense and provide your reader with a much needed "time-space" to help absorb each of your points more easily.

Essentially, that is the power of the bullet point.

Even today, bullet points are one of the simplest, most effective, yet often under valued writing or communication aids.

Therefore, especially when you seek to put over a complex or multi-layered sentence, longer paragraph, consider breaking your sentence or paragraph into smaller chunks.

For example, consider using bullet points, like this:

- Point 1.
- Point 2.
- Point 3.

Also: considered use of bullet points helps your reader absorb and understand your message more easily - especially when providing outlines and summaries.

Consider the following additional tips and guidelines:

- The pace of living today, encourages speed and impatience. In today's busy work environment, an ever-growing number of people are expected to examine ever increasing quantities of documents. As writers, you may think there's little we can do about such "external factors". However, we can help simplify the task of absorbing new information by carefully considering the layout of our publications. Bulleted lists can help.
- Creating bullet lists during the writing process can help clarify and separate our thoughts into distinct blocks. Through better clarification, we can more easily avoid introducing any unnecessary repetition.
- Impatient readers tend to scan documents first, paying particular attention to headings, sub-headings and indented text such as bullet lists. Therefore, including key information in bullet points can be particularly helpful to members of this reader profile.
- Your readers and viewers may be made up many different kinds of people, each with their own issues, problems, preferences, like and dislikes. Often, your audience may have several thought patterns occupying their mind space concurrently, so their concentration may already be "cloudy." Bullet points help make learning new information easier.
- New information presented using bullet points can help ensure your points are understood first time.
- When illustrating a sequence from one condition to another, use numbered lists instead of conventional bullet points. Why? Numbered lists show a path, specific sequence or progression from one state to another in a more meaningful way than a series of points that use only plain bullets.
- Your bullet points can use more than just conventional bullet symbols at the start. You can experiment with different kinds of arrows, tick marks or other kinds of icon.
- Make sure that your bullet points and numbered lists are consistent in their design and application. You most likely wouldn't want varying amounts of vertical space between bullet points and numbered lists on the same page.
- Key tip: use smart technology and good design techniques to minimise how you apply different styles of bullet and numbered lists.

Use the power of the bullet or numbered list whenever you can.

Presentation

Most business presentations range from incredibly boring to, well ... just plain boring. It doesn't have to be this way, though. Here are 21 ways to make certain that your presentations hold your audience's interest–and help them make the decision you want them to make.

Preparation

Build a story. Presentations are boring when they present scads of information without any context or meaning. Instead, tell a story, with the audience as the main characters (and, specifically, the heroes).

Keep it relevant.

Audiences only pay attention to stories and ideas that are immediately relevant. Consider what decision you want them to make, then build an appropriate case.

Cut your intro.

A verbose introduction that describes you, your firm, your topic, how you got there, only bores people. Keep your intro down to a sentence or two, even for a long presentation. Begin with an eye-opener. Kick off your talk by revealing a shocking fact, a surprising insight, or a unique perspective that naturally leads into your message and the decision you want made.

Keep it short and sweet.

When was the last time you heard someone complaining that a presentation was too short? Make it half as long as you originally thought it should be (or even shorter).

Use facts, not generalities.

Fuzzy concepts reflect fuzzy thinking. Buttress your argument, story and message with facts that are quantifiable, verifiable, memorable and dramatic.

Customise for every audience.

One-size-fits-all presentations are like one-size-fits-all clothes; they never fit right and usually make you look bad. Every audience is different; your presentation should be too.

Simplify your graphics.

People shut off their brains when confronted with complicated drawings and tables. Use very simple graphics and highlight the data points that are important.

Keep backgrounds in the background.

Fancy slide backgrounds only make it more difficult for the audience to focus on what's important. Use a simple, single colour, neutral colour background.

Use readable fonts.

Don't try to give your audience to get an eyestrain headache by using tiny fonts. Use large fonts in simple faces (like Arial); avoid boldface, italics and ALL-CAPS.

Don't get too fancy.

You want your audience to remember your message, not how many special effects and visual tricks you used. In almost all cases, the simpler the better.

Check your equipment ... in advance.

If you must use PowerPoint, or plan on showing videos or something, check to make sure that the setup really works. Then check it again. Then one more time.

Speak to the audience.

Great public speakers keep their focus on the audience, not their slides or their notes. Focusing on the audience encourages them to focus on your and your message.

Never read from slides.

Guess what? Your audience can read. If you're reading from your slides, you're not just being boring - you're also insulting the intelligence of everyone in the room.

Don't skip around.

Nothing makes you look more disorganized than skipping over slides, backtracking to previous slides, or showing slides that don't really belong. If there are slides that don't fit, cut them out of the presentation in advance.

Leave humour to the professionals.

Unless you're really good at telling jokes, don't try to be a comedian. Remember: When it comes to business presentations, polite laughter is the kiss of death.

Avoid obvious wormholes.

Every audience has hot buttons that command immediate attention and cause every other discussion to grind to a halt. Learn what they are and avoid them.

Skip the jargon.

Business buzzwords make you sound like you're either pompous, crazy, or (worst case) speaking in tongues. Cut them out–both from your slides and from your vocabulary.

Make it timely.

Schedule presentations for a time when the audience can give you proper attention. Avoid end of day, just before lunch, and the day before a holiday.

Prepare some questions.

If you're going to have a Q&A at the end of your presentation, be prepared to get the ball rolling by having up a question or two up your sleeve.

Have a separate handout.

If there's data that you want the audience to have, put it into a separate document for distribution after your talk. Don't use your slide deck as a data repository.

TRAINING OUTLINE

MANAGEMENT

COURSE NOTES

"This is a major project of utmost importance, but it has no budget, no guidelines, no support staff, and it's due in 15 minutes. At last, here's your chance to really impress everyone!"

What is management?

Basic management fundamentals

Managers have ONE job – that is to MAKE DECISIONS!

Art and Science

Management is both art and science. It is the art of making people more effective than they would have been without you. The science is in how you do that. There are four basic pillars: plan, organise, direct, and monitor.

Make Them More Effective

Four workers can make 6 units in an eight-hour shift without a manager. If I hire you to manage them and they still make 6 units a day, what is the benefit to my business of having hired you? On the other hand, if they now make 8 units per day, you, the manager, have value.

The same analogy applies to service, or retail, or teaching, or any other kind of work. Can your group handle more projects with you than without? Produce higher value output? Impart knowledge more effectively? etc. That is the value of management - making a group of individual more effective.

Basic Management Skill No. 1: Plan

Management starts with planning. Good management starts with good planning. And proper prior planning prevents… well, you know the rest of that one.

Without a plan you will never succeed. If you happen to make it to the goal, it will have been by luck or chance and is not repeatable. You may make it as a flash-in-the-pan, an overnight sensation, but you will never have the track record of accomplishments of which success is made.

Figure out what your goal is. Then figure out the best way to get there. What resources do you have? What can you get? Compare strengths and weaknesses of individuals and other resources. Will putting four workers on a task that takes 14 hours cost less than renting a machine that can do the same task with one worker in 6 hours? If you change the first shift from an 8 AM start to a 10 AM start, can they handle the early evening rush so you don't have to hire an extra person for the second shift?

Look at all the probable scenarios. Plan for them. Figure out the worst possible scenario and plan for that too. Evaluate your different plans and develop what, in your best judgement, will work the best and what you will do if it doesn't.

One of the most often overlooked management planning tools is the most effective. Ask the people doing the work for their input.

Basic Management Skill No. 2: Organise

Now that you have a plan, you have to make it happen. Is everything ready ahead of your group so the right stuff will get to your group at the right time? Is your group prepared to do its part of the plan? Is the downstream organisation ready for what your group will deliver and when it will arrive? Are the workers trained? Are they motivated? Do they have the equipment they need? Is the information available for them to be able to complete the project? Has purchasing ordered the material? Is it the right stuff? Will it get here on the appropriate schedule? Do the legwork to make sure everything needed to execute the plan is ready to go, or will be when it is needed. Check back to make sure that everyone understands their role and the importance of their role to the overall success.

Basic Management Skill No. 3: Direct

Now flip the "ON" switch. Tell people what they need to do. I like to think of this part like conducting an orchestra. Everyone in the orchestra has the music in front of them. They know which section is playing which piece and when. They know when to come in, what to play, and when to stop again. The conductor cues each section to make the music happen. That's your job here. You've given all your musicians (workers) the sheet music (the plan). You have the right number of musicians (workers) in each section (department), and you've arranged the sections on stage so the music will sound best (you have organised the work). Now you need only to tap the podium lightly with your baton to get their attention and give the downbeat.

Basic Management Skill No. 4: Monitor

Now that you have everything moving, you have to keep an eye on things. Make sure everything is going according to the plan. When it isn't going according to plan, you need to step in and adjust the plan, just as the orchestra conductor will adjust the tempo.

Problems will come up. Someone will get sick. A project won't be delivered on time. A key customer will go crazy That is why you developed a contingency plan in the first place. You, as the manager, have to be always aware of what's going on so you can make the adjustments required.

This is an iterative process. When something is out of sync, you need to Plan a fix, Organise the resources to make it work, Direct the people who will make it happen, and continue to Monitor the effect of the change.

Is It Worth It

Managing people is not easy. However, it can be done successfully. And it can be a very rewarding experience. Remember that management, like any other skill, is something that you can improve at with study and practice. Remember management is all about making decisions.

"OF COURSE I WANT MY EMPLOYEES TO BE HAPPY... JUST NOT WHILE THEY'RE AT WORK."

What is good and what is bad management

The Top 10 "qualities" that make a good manager

1. Choose a field thoughtfully.

   Make it one you enjoy. It's hard to be productive without genuine enthusiasm. This is true whether you're a manager or employee.

2. Hire carefully and be willing to fire.

   You need a strong team, because a mediocre team gives mediocre results, no matter how well managed it is. One common mistake is holding onto somebody who doesn't quite measure up. It's easy to keep this person on the job because he's not terrible at what he does. But a good manager will replace him or move him to a set of responsibilities where he can succeed unambiguously.

3. Create a productive environment.

   This is a particular challenge because it requires different approaches depending on the context. Sometimes you maximize productivity by giving everybody his or her own office. Sometimes you achieve it by moving everybody into open space. Sometimes you use financial incentives to stimulate productivity. A combination of approaches is usually required .One element that almost always increases productivity is providing an information system that empowers employees.

4. Define success.

   Make it clear to your employees what constitutes success and how they should measure their achievements. Goals must be realistic. Project schedules, for example, must be set by the people who do the work. People will accept a ``bottom-up'' deadline they helped set but they'll be cynical about a schedule imposed from the top that doesn't map to reality. Unachievable goals weaken an organization. At my company, in addition to regular team meetings and one-on-one sessions between managers and employees, we use mass gatherings periodically and e-mail routinely to communicate what we expect from employees. take? What's needed?” The answers to these questions help us define success.

5. You have to like people and be good at communicating.

This is hard to fake. If you don't genuinely enjoy interacting with people, it'll be hard to manage them well. You must have a wide range of personal contacts within your organization. You need relationships--not necessarily personal friendships--with a fair number of people, including your own employees. You must encourage these people to tell you what's going on (good or bad) and give you feedback about what people are thinking about the company and your role in it.

6. Develop your people to do their jobs better than you can.

Transfer your skills to them. This is an exciting goal but it can be threatening to a manager who worries that he's training his replacement. If you're concerned, ask your boss: “If I develop somebody who can do my job super well, does the company have some other challenge for me or not?” Many smart managers like to see their employees increase their responsibilities because it frees the managers to tackle new or undone tasks. There's no shortage of jobs for good managers. The world has an infinite amount of work to be done.

7. Build morale.

Make it clear there's plenty of good will to go around and that it's not just you as some hotshot manager who's going to impress others if things go well. Give people a sense of the importance of what they're working on--its importance to the company, its importance to customers. When you achieve great results, everybody involved should share in the credit and feel good about it.

8. Take on projects yourself.

You need to do more than communicate. The last thing people want is a boss who just doles out stuff. From time to time prove you can be hands-on by taking on one of the less attractive tasks and using it as an example of how your employees should meet challenges.

9. Don't make the same decision twice.

Spend the time and thought to make a solid decision the first time so that you don't revisit the issue unnecessarily. If you're too willing to reopen issues, it interferes not only with your execution but also with your motivation to make a decision in the first place. After all why bother deciding an issue if it isn't really decided? People hate indecisive leadership so you have to make choices. However that doesn't mean you have to decide everything the moment it comes to your attention. Nor that you can't ever reconsider a decision.

10. Let people know whom to please.

Maybe it's you, maybe it's your boss and maybe it's somebody who works for you. You're in trouble and risking paralysis in your organisation, when employees start saying to themselves: ``Am I supposed to be making this person happy or this other person happy? They seem to have different priorities.''

"Before I begin, I'd just like to make it known that I didn't volunteer to do this presentation."

6 Other Qualities of a Good Manager

1. Clear Communication

As a manager, it's crucial to aid make the flow of information clear and effective. This can be done by having a clear-cut style of communication, by using accurate words to express facts and ideas, and also assisting the people you work with to do the same.

If as a manager, you say to a member of your team "I want that sales report soon" when what you want to say is "I want that sales report tomorrow by 12PM", you're in trouble. A clear communication style defines good management at its roots.

2. Assertive Communication

Assertive communication is the ability to express your thoughts, ideas, wants and emotions in a straightforward, non-hesitant way, while also being tactful and respectful of the other person.

Communicating assertively often starts with mastering the previous skill, but it goes way beyond this. It means creating a win-win blend in the communication with a wide range of individuals, which is very powerful and, unfortunately, very rare.

3. Creating a Connection

Business may ultimately be about results, but it is still an exchange between individuals and it has a very human component. Thus, an important part of what makes a good manager is their ability to connect with others, to build rapport and trust.

Good managers know how to be authentic, open and friendly with other people, especially their subordinates. They demonstrate interest in others and they can make interpersonal interactions informal and relaxed. Thus, others find it highly enjoyable to work with them or for them.

4. Integrity

Integrity is the alignment between thoughts, words and actions. A manager with a lot of integrity is the one who says what they think and does what they say they'll do.

As a result, the subordinated employees know they can count on their manager and it's easy for them to trust their manager. Team transparency, constructive attitudes and performance naturally arise from there. And if you're wondering why such conditions are so rare in many organisations, it is because high integrity is also rare.

5. Motivational Skills

A manager with this quality is able to match the motivations and strengths with the tasks and compensations for each one of their employees. Considering the uniqueness of each employee and the structural complexity an organisation can have, this is quite the skill to master.

6. Decision Making Skills

A big part of the manager's role is putting together a puzzle. The pieces of the puzzle are people, tasks, goals and data. Assembling them means creating strategies, distributing tasks, supervising their execution and providing feedback.

All of these managerial activities involve a lot of decision making, and it is first-rate decision making skills that lead to the best decisions. A good manager needs to think rationally, analyse variables effectively and strategize with skill. Otherwise, when the puzzle is finished, there will still be unused pieces.

Personal management

Clean desk theory

Every day more and more information is thrown at you. New mail, reports from various people and projects, invoices, proposals, and more all hit your desk several times a day. You are too busy to deal with it right away so it just begins to pile up. Your desktop begins to look like a war zone.

The problem here is not that your desk is messy. The problem is that important stuff gets lost. It either gets buried by new material coming in, or it is in the new material, but is not noticed. As a result, you spend too much time on things that are simply urgent rather than those that are important.

When your client wants to know how soon they can have that report, you don't want to tell them you didn't notice the message they sent you requesting the report. Nor will they be thrilled to hear that the delivery for the report is late because you set it aside and it got covered up and you forgot about it.

Some people will tell you the best way to solve this problem is a clean desk. Others say messy is okay. Who's right? Neither. And both.

Cluttered desk, cluttered mind. Not too long ago, there was a popular expression 'a cluttered desk is a sign of a cluttered mind.' That expression gave rise to an entire industry designed to help business executives clean their desktops as a sign of their mental acuity.

No doubt you have seen movies where the boss sits in his office atop a downtown skyscraper. He sits behind a glass-top desk with no drawers. The only adornments are the impressive pen set for signing important documents and a telephone or intercom so he can give orders.

On the other hand many people see nothing wrong with piles of paper covering the desktop, even spilling on to the chair seats and office floor. They quote adages like 'a cluttered desk is a sign of genius' and 'a messy desk is only a sign of a messy desk.'

We all know someone whose desk is that way. You don't see how they can even tell if the desktop is metal or wood. Yet, when you ask them for something, they go right to a pile, leaf through 2 or 3 sheets, and pull out what you asked for.

What works for you. Both sides are correct. The issue is not which is correct. The issue is which will make you more effective. There are a few fundamental guidelines that apply to both approaches, but the key is to work in a manner that allows you to be most effective. Almost everyone needs to get rid of some of the clutter atop their desk, but having no more than a single item on your desk at any one time won't work for many of us.

Many people are working on several projects at the same time (or almost the same time). Creative types feel the need to have inspiration surrounding them. Detail-oriented individuals need volumes of reference material close at hand. Some people feel the piles of work make them look busy and, thus, keep them safer in times of layoffs. Others feel a clean desk shows how efficient they are at getting the work done. What is important is to do what works for you.

How to tame the monster. Whether you are going for the sterile glass desktop, or simply want to bring a little more order to the chaos of your desktop, there are a few fundamental guidelines:

Keep, toss, or move.

> Find three containers. Label the smallest "keep". Label the largest "toss". Have another container labelled "move". The really vital stuff will go into your keep container to be sorted later. Anything that you want to take home or give away goes into the move container. Everything else goes into the toss container. (Ideally your toss container will be two parts. One part will be trash to be disposed of. The other will be paper products, which can be recycled.)

Start with the oldest.

> You can tell by looking at them which pile is the oldest. Usually it is farthest from your chair. It will be the easiest to throw away items from this pile.

Evaluate each piece only once

Look at each item in the pile. Decide which container it will go into. You can't set it back on your desk for later, you have to decide now. Put everything into one of the three containers. There is no other option.

Ask yourself this...

The first question is "do I have this somewhere else, or can I get it from someone?" If you have a copy in email, or in a report, or on the desk of the person who prepared the document, etc., you don't need to keep a copy. Toss it. Then ask "why do I need this?" If the answer is

a) to take action on it,
b) to do something with it when I get more information from someone, or
c) to refer to as I do other work, put it into the keep pile. (After you get rid of the clutter you will re-sort your keep pile by those three categories, so feel free to separate them now. It will save time later.)

If your answer was anything else, toss that item.

Be ruthless. Be brave.

As you progress through each pile, getting closer and close to the things that just arrived, be ruthless in your decisions. Take no prisoners. If you really don't need it, toss it. And be brave. Don't hang on to something just because someone might ask you something about it someday. Don't build a fortress of paper to protect yourself.

Manage This Issue

Your desktop doesn't have to be sterile and completely devoid of paper, although it can be if that helps. Your goal is to organise your desktop so that it maximises your efficiency. If that means a few more piles on your desk than the person next door, that is okay - provided everything you kept helps you meet your goal of increased efficiency.

Rule 1

As you pick up a piece of paper that has just shown up in your inbox, be prepared to make that the last time you touch it. Ask yourself "why do I need this?" If the answer is

a) to take action on it,
b) to do something with it when I get more information from someone, or
c) to refer to as I do other work, keep it.

If the answer is anything else, throw it away.

If it is something you aren't going to deal with, trash it now. Don't set it down to get back to it later. Don't kid yourself by thinking you might do what the paper asks if you know in your gut you won't. Bite the bullet. Get rid of it now and go on to the next piece.

If the paper pertains to something you are going to do, do it now. Don't set the paper down to think about it, or to look at the next one. Take action. Answer it. Send it to someone who can take action. Make the phone call to give the writer the requested information. Deal with it now so you don't have to touch that piece again.

Rule 2

Sometimes you have to bend Rule 1. Sometimes you can't deal with an issue right now and be done with it. Sometimes you have to handle a document more than once. In these cases, the important thing is to handle each piece as few times as possible.

If something comes in that you can't handle because you don't have the information, try to finish it up right now. Call the person who has the information you need and stick with Rule 1. However, if that person isn't available, set it up to minimise the number of times you have to touch it. Don't throw the paper back in you inbox, or into a pile on your desk. Put it into your calendar or date file for follow-up at a specific time.

Some people keep an accordion file that that has a pocket for each day of the month. They put documents they need to follow up on into the pocket for the day they are going to follow up. If the person you need input from is out to lunch, put the paper in the tomorrow pocket. However, if they are on a trip for two weeks, put it in the pocket for the day they return.

The third reason for keeping something that shows up on your desk is to refer to it as you do other work. Minimise the material in this category. Put yourself on a reference diet. Slim down the references wherever possible.

Ask your self whether you really need to keep the document for reference. Is it something you REALLY need or something you MIGHT need? Don't keep it just because you MIGHT need it. Keep as little as you absolutely can.

What documents you do keep for reference should themselves be put on the reference diet. Slim them down as much as you can. If a ten-page report contains a one-page list of currency conversion rates, for instance, that you need for later, keep the one page and toss the other nine.

The reference material you do keep should be filed away right now so you only handle it once. Don't set it in a "to be filed" pile. File it right now with the project with which you will use it.

Be ruthless. Be brave.

As you handle each new piece of paper that comes to you, be ruthless in your decisions. Take no prisoners. If you really don't need it, toss it. And be brave. Don't put something into your reference materials just because someone might ask you something about it someday. Don't build a fortress of paper to protect yourself.

Manage This Issue

You can tame the paperwork monster. Touch each piece of paper only once, if possible. Act now if you can. If it has to be put aside for later, use a sorting system that allows you to minimise the number of times you have to handle any piece of work.

Boosting your productivity

The following ideas don't guarantee you'll find the optimal solution, nor do they generally guarantee a solution at all. But they do a good enough job of solving certain types of problems to be useful. Their strength is that they break the deadlock of indecision and get you into action. As you take action you begin to explore the solution space, which deepens your understanding of the problem. As you gain knowledge about the problem, you can make course corrections along the way, gradually improving your chances of finding a solution. If you try to solve a problem you don't initially know how to solve, you'll often figure out a solution as you go, one you never could have imagined until you started moving. Often you don't even know exactly what you're trying to build until you start building it.

Nuke it!

The most efficient way to get through a task is to delete it. If it doesn't need to be done, get it off your to do list.

Daily goals.

Without a clear focus, it's too easy to succumb to distractions. Set targets for each day in advance. Decide what you'll do; then do it.

Worst first.

To defeat procrastination learn to tackle your most unpleasant task first thing in the morning instead of delaying it until later in the day. This small victory will set the tone for a very productive day.

Peak times.

Identify your peak cycles of productivity, and schedule your most important tasks for those times. Work on minor tasks during your non-peak times.

No-communication zones.

Allocate uninterruptible blocks of time for solo work where you must concentrate. Schedule light, interruptible tasks for your open-communication periods and more challenging projects for your no-communication periods.

Mini-milestones.

When you begin a task, identify the target you must reach before you can stop working. For example, when working on a book, you could decide not to get up until you've written at least 1000 words. Hit your target no matter what.

Timeboxing.

Give yourself a fixed time period, like 30 minutes, to make a dent in a task. Don't worry about how far you get. Just put in the time.

Batching.

Batch similar tasks like phone calls or errands into a single chunk, and knock them off in a single session.

Early bird.

Get up early in the morning, like at 5am, and go straight to work on your most important task. You can often get more done before 8am than most people do in a day.

Cone of silence.

Take a laptop with no network or WiFi access, and go to a place where you can work flat out without distractions, such as a library, park, coffee house, or your own backyard. Leave your communication gadgets behind.

Tempo.

Deliberately pick up the pace, and try to move a little faster than usual. Speak faster. Walk faster. Type faster. Read faster. Go home sooner.

Relaxify.

Reduce stress by cultivating a relaxing, clutter-free workspace.

Agendas.

Provide clear written agendas to meeting participants in advance. This greatly improves meeting focus and efficiency. You can use it for phone calls too.

80-20.

80% of the value of a task comes from 20% of the effort. Focus your energy on that critical 20%, and don't over-engineer the non-critical 80%.

Ready-fire-aim.

Bust procrastination by taking action immediately after setting a goal, even if the action isn't perfectly planned. You can always adjust course along the way.

Minuteman.

Once you have the information you need to make a decision, start a timer and give yourself just 60 seconds to make the actual decision. Take a whole minute to vacillate and second-guess yourself all you want, but come out the other end with a clear choice. Once your decision is made, take some kind of action to set it in motion.

Deadline.

Set a deadline for task completion, and use it as a focal point to stay on track.

Promise.

Tell others of your commitments, since they'll help hold you accountable.

Punctuality.

Whatever it takes, show up on time. Arrive early.

Gap reading.

Use reading to fill in those odd periods like waiting for an appointment, standing in line, or while the coffee is brewing. If you're a male, you can even read an article while shaving (preferably with an electric razor). That's 365 articles a year.

Resonance.

Visualise your goal as already accomplished. Put yourself into a state of actually being there. Make it real in your mind, and you'll soon see it in your reality.

Glittering prizes.

Give yourself frequent rewards for achievement. See a movie, book a professional massage, or spend a day at the beach.

Quad 2.

Separate the truly important tasks from the merely urgent. Allocate blocks of time to work on the critical Quadrant 2 tasks, those which are important but rarely urgent.

Continuum.

At the end of your workday, identify the first task you'll work on the next day, and set out the materials in advance. The next day begin working on that task immediately.

Slice and dice.

Break complex projects into smaller, well-defined tasks. Focus on completing just one of those tasks.

Single-handling.

Once you begin a task, stick with it until it's 100% complete. Don't switch tasks in the middle. When distractions come up, jot them down to be dealt with later.

Randomise.

Pick a totally random piece of a larger project, and complete it. Pay one random bill. Make one phone call.

Insanely bad.

Defeat perfectionism by completing your task in an intentionally terrible fashion, knowing you need never share the results with anyone. Write a blog post about the taste of salt, design a hideously dysfunctional web site, or create a business plan that guarantees a first-year bankruptcy. With a truly horrendous first draft, there's nowhere to go but up.

30 days.

Identify a new habit you'd like to form, and commit to sticking with it for just 30 days. A temporary commitment is much easier to keep than a permanent one.

Delegate.

Convince someone else to do it for you.

Cross-pollination.

Sign up for boxing, start a blog, or join an business group. You'll often encounter ideas in one field that can boost your performance in another.

Intuition.

Go with your gut instinct.

It's probably right.

Optimisation.

Identify the processes you use most often, and write them down step-by-step. Re-factor them on paper for greater efficiency. Then implement and test your improved processes. Sometimes we just can't see what's right in front of us until we examine it under a microscope.

Super Slow.

Commit yourself to working on a particularly hideous project for just one session a week, 15-30 minutes total. De-clutter one small shelf. Purge 10 clothing items you don't need. Write a few paragraphs. Then stop.

Dailies.

Schedule a specific time each day for working on a particular task or habit. One hour a day could leave you with a finished report, or a profitable business relationship a year later.

Add-ons.

Tack a task you want to habitualise onto one of your existing habits. Water the plants after you eat lunch. Send thank-you notes after you check email.

Plug-ins.

Inject one task into the middle of another. Read while eating lunch. Return phone calls while commuting. Listen to podcasts while grocery shopping.

Gratitude.

When someone does you a good turn, send a thank-you card. That's a real card, not an e-card. This is rare and memorable, and the people you thank will be eager to bring you more opportunities.

Training.

Train up your skill in various productivity habits. Get your typing speed to at least 60wpm, if not 90. Learn to speed-read. Develop your communication skills.

Software.

Take advantage of productivity software to boost your effectiveness. Learn a new item every week.

Zone out.

Enter the zone of peak creativity, and watch your output soar.

Denial.

Just say no to non-critical requests for your time.

Recapture.

Reclaim other people's poor time usage for yourself. Visualise your goals during dull speeches. Write out your report outline during pointless meetings.

Mastermind.

Run your problem past someone else, preferably a group of people. Invite all the advice, feedback, and constructive criticism you can handle.

Twenty.

Take a piece of paper, number 1-20, and don't stop until you've listed 20 creative ideas for improving your productivity.

Challenger.

Deliberately make the task harder. Challenging tasks are more engaging than boring ones. e.g. Create a Power Point presentation that doesn't use words.

Asylum.

Complete an otherwise tedious task in an unusual or crazy manner to keep it interesting. Make phone calls using pretend foreign accents. Fill out government paperwork in crayon.

Music.

Experiment to discover how music may boost your productivity. Try fast-paced music for email, classical or new age for project work, and total silence for high-concentration creative work.

Scotty.

Estimate how long a task will take to complete. Then start a timer, and push yourself to complete it in half that time.

Pay it forward.

When an undesirable task is delegated to you, re-delegate it to someone else.

Bouncer.

When a seemingly pointless task is delegated to you, bounce it back to the person who assigned it to you, and challenge them to justify its operational necessity.

Opt-out.

Quit clubs, projects, and subscriptions that consume more of your time than they're worth.

De-caffeinate.

Say no to drugs, suffer through the withdrawal period, and let your natural creative self re-emerge.

Triage.

Save the lives of your important projects by killing those that are going to die anyway.

Conscious procrastination.

Delay non-critical tasks as long as you possibly can. Many of them will die on you and won't need to be done at all.

Timer.

Time all your tasks for an entire day, preferably a week. Even the act of measuring itself can boost your productivity, not to mention what you learn about your real time usage.

Valour.

Pick the one item on your task list that scares you the most. Muster all the courage you can, and tackle it immediately.

Do it now!

Recite this phrase over and over until you're so sick of it that you cave in and get to work.

Inspiration.

Read inspiring books and articles, listen to audio programs, and attend seminars to keep absorbing inspiring new ideas (as well as to refresh yourself on the old ones).

Gym rat.

Exercise daily. Boost your metabolism, concentration, and mental clarity in 30 minutes a day.

Troll hunt.

Banish the negative trolls from your life, and associate only with positive, happy, and successful people. Mindsets are contagious. Show loyalty to your potential, not to your pity posse.

Cut.

Cut corners to save time and money when the outcome is mainly for show anyway. If it looks good, it is good. It's easier to manufacture excuses than results.

Evil eye.

Practice your best evil eye in a mirror, and use it liberally on anyone who enters your space to interrupt you.

Coach.

Hire a personal coach to keep yourself motivated, focused, and accountable. After several months of pep talks, you'll be qualified to start your own coaching practice.

Proactive.

Just do it, and deal with the consequences later. It's easier to request forgiveness than permission.

Blockade.

Slide a heavy piece of furniture in front of your office door. When drop-in visitors complain they can't get in, tell them you're re-factoring your office for greater productivity.

Bait.

Put candy dishes on everyone's desk but your own.

Fasting.

Digest information, not food.

Toddler.

Throw a tantrum until someone finally solves the problem for you.

Armageddon.

Use Overwhelming Force to totally dominate your problem. Treat your molehill like a mountain. Use a bazooka to kill a cockroach.

What to do when you feel unproductive

Feeling stuck and unproductive is natural and it can be caused by overwork, lack of momentum, a bad mood, a success block, the weather and/or dozens of other factors. And, while it's helpful to understand why you're stuck and unproductive, sometimes it's just better to do one or more of the PRACTICAL things which follow!

1. Play the Check-In game.

   Call a friend/colleague and say, "I'm stuck/unproductive. Can I check in with you every hour for a couple of hours until I get cranking again?" This really works! And, your friend may want to play along too! Just share what you want to get done, specifically, between now and the next time you call in. Your friend would listen and accept what you're saying or ask you to increase/decrease the goal for the hour. In either case, keep the check in call to be less than 5 minutes.

2. Take a walk, go to the gym, go running, move your body.

   Increasing your body's metabolism also loosens up your mind and spirit, resulting in a greater energy flow. It's that simple.

3. Take a nap.

   Sometimes, your mind needs a break to work through an idea or block. Take a 1-3 hour nap and see if that helps.

4. Turn up the music.

   Use music as a prompter, especially when you're feeling draggy or alone. Rap, disco, instrumentals work well. And when you're really stuck, Frank Sinatra might do the trick.

5. Eat/drink

   Something that you will respond to emotionally or physically. If you're REALLY stuck, have a couple of cups of coffee - caffeine is a great unblocker.

6. Completely clean up your work space.

   It's said that "stuff" around you that's not in its place, can be a drain of energy. When you get stuck, one of the first things you can do is take 10 minutes and put things in piles or file stuff away or clear your immediate work area so that there's less stuff dragging you down.

7. Work on another task or project.

Don't be too willing to push yourself through a project that you're just not in the mood to work on. Find a project/idea that you DO want to work on and your productivity will pick right up!

8. Have a schedule/routine.

A routine provides momentum and momentum will keep you from getting stuck. So, schedule in an hour or three of dedicated work between appointments/calls/meetings.

9. Play the reward game.

This may not be spiritually healthy, but give yourself rewards when you finish a tough project. Like a holiday, a trip, a shirt, a massage, etc. Hey, whatever works!

Scheduling and timekeeping

It may seem counter-intuitive, but spending time tracking your activities can increase productivity.

Why Track Your Time?

We charge clients for our services, and we must track our time. Understanding how you spend time is the first step in creating a plan to achieve your goals and increase productivity.

There are many good reasons to track your time:

- It allows you to accurately charge for services. Are you taking into account time spent on research and follow-up when you price a job or charge a client?
- It allows you to evaluate how you are spending time so you can change things if necessary. Did you realise that you spent two hours on Facebook last week? Are you checking email when you are most energetic? Do you have very little time to exercise or spend time with your family?
- It brings productivity into your consciousness. The mere fact that you are monitoring your behaviour may help you spend time wisely.
- It focuses attention on important activities. Are you spending time achieving your goals or just doing what is most urgent?

To analyse how you spend your time:

- Add up time spent on various tasks. If you track time by project or client, then also capture detailed activities performed for the project or client. Some categories might include checking email, research, lunch and answering phone calls.
- Calculate time spent in each category as a percent of total work time. For example, if you were at your home-office desk for eight hours and you spent two hours checking email, then 25% of your time was spent on that activity.
- Review the types of activities performed for various projects or clients. For example, is half your time spent answering questions for a client and the other half providing a work product?
- Consider how much time you spent working on important goals?
- Compare time spent on personal tasks versus work-related tasks.
- Does anything unusual stand out?
- What type of work did you do during your peak or most energetic times?
- Did you jump around doing different types of activities (i.e., answering the phone, responding to an email and then returning to writing) for short periods of time?
- Do you have entries where you did two things simultaneously?

As you reflect on how to improve your productivity, ask yourself these questions:

- Can you re-schedule activities to coincide with times when you are most creative or energetic?
- Are there activities or clients that are not worthwhile and can be eliminated?
- Should any activities be delegated or out-sourced?
- Can similar activities be scheduled for the same time block?
- Would additional training in an area be helpful?
- Would a change in procedure streamline a task?

Armed with a wealth of information from your time-keeping and analysis, change your habits, plan your week and watch your productivity soar!

Personal development programmes

For successful personal development, you need exactly two conditions:

- You want to change something about your life
- You're not happy with the results you got so far

And that's it.

Specifically, you do NOT need to know exactly what you want. You'd be surprised by how many people don't know what they want from life – they just know that whatever they have at the moment is not it. As long as you satisfy the two conditions above, making a personal development plan is for you!

Why make a personal development plan?

Making a personal development plan comes down to two main things. Helping you figure out:

- What do you want from life?
- How will you go about achieving it?

You could certainly achieve personal development without a plan. A lot of people have. But a plan vastly increases your chances to move towards a life that you find fulfilling and satisfying every day. Having a plan gives you:

- A much better understanding of what you really want from life (hint: money is almost never the answer)
- A list of specific actions you can take to advance towards your goals in life, so you never feel stuck again
- A clear understanding of obstacles that trip up a lot of people, and how to avoid them
- Durable growth and improvement

How to Make a Personal Development Plan

This first step of making a personal development plan will help you figure out which parts of your life you're happy with, and which could use some change. Then you can pick an area to work on where there's room for improvement and growth.

1. Make a list of the main areas of your life

First, make a list of the main areas of your life which you have been focusing your time and energy on lately. This might include:

- career
- relationships
- fun/social

And anything else you can think of. For example, one of your main areas might end up “guitar playing”, if it’s really that important to you that it deserves its own category.

Note that if there’s an area of your life you haven’t been focusing on but would really like to, that belongs on the list as well. Once you have this list, narrow it down to 4-8 of the main areas. You don’t want to overwhelm yourself with options.

2. Rate each of those areas from 1-10 based on how satisfied you are with it

Next, give it some thought, and rate each of those areas on a scale from 1 to 10, ten being the highest, based on how satisfied you are with your current situation. Note, it’s not how good you are, or how successful, but how satisfied you are with the current situation. For example, if you have almost no social life because you spend all your days working, but you’re okay with that for the next couple of months because it’s a very important stage of your business, then you might give yourself a 10 on your social life.

Chances are, some of your areas did better than others. If you scored a 9 or a 10, you’re doing fine. An 8 is iffy, and anything from 7 below can definitely be improved.

Take a good long look at the areas you’re not very satisfied with, and pick which one you would like to begin improving first.

3. Figuring out your ideal situation

Just start daydreaming about the area you want to begin improving first, and imagine what the ideal situation would be, in the long-term (many years from now). Then pick a medium-term future. Say, somewhere between 3 months and 1 year from now.

Imagine how you would like your ideal situation to be then. Once you have it, start imagining it in great detail. How you would feel when you wake up in the morning. What you would do during the day. The people you would meet. The things you would say to yourself.

Do NOT neglect this step. It might sound small and simple, but it's incredibly powerful. Firstly, it gets you excited and motivated. Secondly, it sets up cognitive dissonance in your mind. That's where your brain holds two conflicting thoughts, gets uncomfortable, and tries to resolve the conflict by changing one of the thoughts.

In the case of imagining your ideal situation, your brain will start looking for opportunities to start moving towards it. Those opportunities are all around you. You just haven't been noticing them until now.

4. Get very specific about what you want

One big difference between a dream and a goal is being specific about what you want. A dream is a vague fuzzy thing you like to think about to make yourself happy. A goal is a specific prospect, and you're going to make it happen!

Recap your goal, and make sure to get rid of any vagueness. You can even talk to a friend about it, and let them help you, if you want. (It always helps to get an outsider's perspective.)

Okay, by now you should have:

- a list of 4-8 main areas of your life
- a number next to each of those areas signifying how satisfied you are with the current situation
- a clear vision for one of your chosen areas, with a clear deadline and specific things that will let you know when you've achieved it

5. Bridging the gap between your goal and your current life

    Now that you know what your ideal situation would be, it's time to compare it to your present situation. That way, you'll know how big a chasm stands between your reality and your dream situation, which will later help you build just the right bridge to cross that chasm. After that we'll have a good hard look at everything you already possess that will help you move towards your ideal situation!

6. How does your current situation compare to the ideal?

    What do you spend your time on, during a typical week?
    Make a list of the biggest categories you spend your time on, like work, sleep, commute, cooking, watching TV, social, and anything else you want to ad. And figure out how much time you spend on each of them, during a typical week. Are you happy with how you spend your time? And now, with the chosen area of your life in mind:

    - How, specifically, will you know that you have achieved your ideal situation?
    - Where are you now, in terms of that goal?
    - What needs to happen for you to move from here to there?

7. What resources do you already have?

    - What skills do you already have, that could help you move towards your ideal situation ?
    - What relevant knowledge do you already have?
    - Who do you know that could help you?
    - What tangible resources do you have that could come in useful?
    - What skills/knowledge do you need to gain?

By now you should have:

- A clear understanding of what needs to change for you to move from your current situation to your ideal situation, in the one chosen area of your life
- A list of assets you already have that will help you achieve that

8. Generating options

You now have an area of your life in mind, and you know what your ideal situation would be and what needs to happen to bridge the gap between the ideal and your current situation. In this step, you will come up with lots of actions you could take that will help you move towards your ideal goal.

9. It's brainstorming time!

make a long list of actions you could take. Turn your sheet of paper sideways, and start with your central theme in a bubble at the centre. Then draw lines branching out to sub-themes and split those down until you get to specific actions

Neither is right with the other being wrong. They are just different approaches, and either of them might be better for you. It's important to drill down until you get to specific actionable steps.

- Who could you ask for help or information?
- Who in your life knows a lot about your chosen area to improve?
- What phrases could you search for online to get some more ideas?
- If you weren't afraid at all, if you were like James Bond, what would you do?
- If money weren't an issue, what would you do?
- What would [insert any character you admire] do?
- What else could you do?

For now, do NOT censor your list, or trim it down. That's a focused thing to do, and would sabotage your creative thinking. Don't worry about writing down crazy and stupid stuff, because we'll trim that down in the next step. For now, just write!

And only when you have loads and loads of possible actions, then it's time to move on to the next step. Where you will move from thinking and planning to setting clear goals and taking action!

10. Goal setting

Pick three actions from your list:

- one that you can take action on within the next 24 hours (ideally immediately)
- one that you can take action on within the next 48 hours
- one that you can take action on within the next week

And set a deadline, a week from now, right down to the minute, by which you will have accomplished all of them. Once you have more experience with goal-setting, and getting things done (or right now, if you already do), you will be able to tweak this model. Sometimes you might choose more than three actions to accomplish in the next week, because you will know how much of what type of action will not leave you overwhelmed. Sometimes you might pick a longer deadline than a week.

11. How to massively increase your chances of getting it done

Make your goals public

Share your goal and the actions you want to take on twitter. On your blog, if you have one. On facebook. Tell your friends. This way, you will have the public pressure on you if you fail… but also the celebration and joy of your friends and acquaintances when you succeed!

Write down your goals and keep them in a prominent place

If you see your goals several times each day, they will get drilled deeper into your subconscious, and you will have a better chance of taking action on them. It helps you keep your mind on exactly when the next convenient time take each of your chosen action is.

Take the first action immediately

And finally, a simple but surprisingly effective advice. Taking action is a habit… and often the most important step is breaking through the activation energy and taking the first step. After that, keeping your momentum going is comparatively trivial.

How to be more effective and organised

Achieving goals in an efficient way is possible when you are well-organised. Here are some ideas that will help you become more organised.

- Use a personal pocket calendar that you carry with you at all times to help keep yourself organised.
- Use check lists and check sheets regularly for those things which must be done in a correct way. Have different-coloured checklists for easy identification. When people come back to you asking the same question they have asked several times before, ask them to set up a standard operating procedure by simply writing down the statement that you are to make about how the situation is to be handled. They can then keep that at their desk, and will not have to ask you about it in the future.
- Create a visible time line for key projects. Make a daily "to-do" list of activities that you must do and set priorities on it every day. Then do the activities in priority order. Use a tickler or follow-up file allowing you to file items until the day that you can act on them. Set up a system to handle repetitive tasks.

- Avoid over organising to the point where your perfectionism interferes with your achieving results. Identify and post reorder quantities on office supplies to prevent running out completely. Carry 3x5 cards or a notebook or notepaper or your pocket calendar to make notes of things that you would like to remember. When doing work on a computer, have a regular routine of backing up your work at least twice a day to ensure it does not get lost. Dictate your notes or thoughts for projects on a cassette, then either have it transcribed by your secretary or personally pay a student to do it for you.
- Work on only one item at a time. Keep only one project on your desk at a time to avoid distractions. Time is lost sorting through other items while you're working on one. If you are working on several projects, keep each one in a clearly labelled file by itself so you do not have to look through a mixed project file to find things.
- Do not schedule every minute of the day; keep flexible for the unexpected items that will come up, When you sense things are out of control - STOP. Sit quietly, relax, re-establish priorities in writing, decide what action to take, then go again. Sit down and do all trivia in one sitting to get it over with. Build flexibility into your schedule by purposely overestimating the amount of time needed on each activity.
- Use a people page - a page that has an individual's name at the top on which you write down the routine things you want to ask this individual. Then call this person once a day, or at most, twice to ask all the questions that have accumulated on the page. If you are responsible for several key projects, use project pages in your calendar or planner. Keep one page on each project. Whenever you think of something that is relevant to that project, jot it down on the appropriate page. This way you will be organising your thoughts as you have them.
- Schedule a meeting with yourself every day. Then during this meeting work uninterrupted on your top priority project. Carry a project with you so when kept waiting in a doctor's office, airport or on a bus, you can be productive. Before leaving the office at night, put the most important project for tomorrow on your desk. It will be there ready and waiting for you in the morning.
- Establish an efficient working routine that matches you and your job. Do a certain activity at the same time each day or on the same day every week. Organise items you reference frequently in a ring binder in protective plastic. It will enhance its usability and present ability to customers or to yourself. Keep a log of requests made. Be sure to note the day and hour they are to be completed.

- Each day make a Call-See-Do list. Who you should call. Who you should see, and what you should do. Consolidate support staff where possible. Create specific useful forms such as time sheets and other record keeping sheets that are helpful to a specific job, but do not bog down the people with redundant paperwork. Keep only one calendar and keep it with you at all times. Combine all personal and work related items into your one personal calendar.
- Gather all needed materials and supplies for a project. Then when you sit and do the project, you won't have to run for this item or that item.
- Capture a few minutes from every activity you do. They accumulate to be extra time for your high priority projects.
- Instead of using a standard form it may pay off to make a customised form for a special customer. Assess the situation carefully.
- Trade days. Work on Saturday when it is quiet and take another day or two half days off.
- Once you are sure you are doing the most important thing, then ask yourself: "How can I do this more efficiently?"
- Use short, simple, written directions for routine procedures.
- Move your in-basket off the desk so it will not be a temptation or distraction.
- As things you must do come to mind, write them down in your pocket planner or calendar immediately so they do not get lost.
- Look for ways of automating office procedures.
- Work four 10-hour days instead of five 8-hour days. It gives you an extra day at home and better concentration at work.
- Make up daily/weekly/monthly/quarterly lists of routine duties with blank spaces to fill in responsibilities and special duties.
- Group like tasks together to prevent job jumping and wasting time.
- Provide adequate private work space as well as central areas and conference space to maximize effectiveness.
- Buy ahead so you have supplies on hand.
- Ask people who are not closely involved with a problem or process how they think it could be done. You will get fresh ideas.
- Use the proper tools for the job even if you have to go out and purchase them.
- Develop personal systems that work for you, then follow them. Be sure to update them periodically.
- At night put classified material in a secure place. Do not leave it out where it might walk off.

- Clean your desk the last five minutes of the day and prepare it for getting started first thing in the morning.
- Keep papers you are not working on in the filing cabinet, not on your desk.
- Keep supplies and materials in a storage cabinet, not on your desk.
- Establish an organised filing system that anyone can use and see that things get into it immediately.
- Save simplistic, repetitious, routine, manual jobs, (folding papers, stuffing envelopes) for times when you choose to simply relax and chat with others, or listen to music.
- List key activities on 3x5 cards, one to a card. Review them in priority sequence several times each day.
- Stick "Post-It-Notes" on projects to show status or progress of a project.
- Role model as an organised person. You will soon convince yourself.
- Schedule a block of time to be dedicated to major projects.
- When you think other people might forget something important, use multiple reminders to jog their memory. Use such things as notes, lists, tickler reports, status reports, briefings, phone calls, special bulletins, and so forth.
- Look for two or more complementary activities that can be dovetailed and done at one time.
- When you receive a person's business card, write notes about your encounter on the back of the card.

Achieving goals and goal-setting

- Life is a journey. Not just any journey, but the most fantastic journey in the universe. Life is a journey from where you are to where you want to be. You can choose your own destination. Not only that, you can choose how you are going to get there. Goal setting will help you end up where you want to be.
- When it comes to setting goals, start off with what's important to you in life. Take out a sheet of paper. Sit quietly, and on that sheet of paper, brainstorm what you want to accomplish between now and the end of your life.
- Second step-use another sheet of paper, and this time consider yourself and your personal goals for the next 12 month period. Some key areas in which you might set personal goals include: family, personal growth, financial, health, social, career, hobbies, spiritual, and recreation. Write down the things that you plan to accomplish or achieve or attain during this one-year period?
- Now, as a third step, go back and compare the two goal lists you have made. Make sure that the items on your short-term list will, as you attain them, be helping you attain your long-term or lifetime goals. It is important that what you are doing short term is taking you in the right direction toward your lifetime goals. Please rewrite your short term goals now if you need to.
- As a next step, looking at the goals that are on your list at this time, if there are any that you are not willing to pay the price for, go ahead and cross them out, leaving only those items you are willing to cause to happen in your life. This does not necessarily mean you have the money or the other resources for attaining the goal right now. However, when you do have it, would you spend it on or trade it for the goals you have on your list?
- Now, on still another sheet of paper, create the job goals that are important to you during this upcoming 12-month period. Identify what outcomes you wish to attain or achieve during this one-year period in your specific area of responsibility and authority. Some key areas in which you might consider writing job goals, if you did not already, include: quality, quantity, cost control, cost improvement, equipment, procedures, training, sales, financial, and personnel.
- As a next step, look for the blending between your job or work goals and your personal goals. Anywhere you notice that you are attaining a goal on the job while at the same time you are attaining a personal goal, note this relationship: it is in these areas you will be most highly motivated.
- For each of the three lists that you have just created, take an additional sheet of paper and list the activities that you must do to attain the most important goal that you have on each of your lists.

- Now on another piece of paper titled "Things To-Do List" identify from the activities you just listed, the ones that you must do tomorrow to move you toward your most important goal.
- Rewrite your goals in these categories at least every three months.
- The only thing in life that is constant is the fact that everything is changing. It makes sense that our goals will change as we change.
- Recognise how focusing on what you do want, what you do intend to accomplish, also defines what you choose not to do in your life.
- Daily rewrite your list of "Things To-Do" after first reviewing your desired goals.
- Success is defined as "the progressive realisation of a worthwhile goal." If you are doing the things that are moving you toward the attainment of your goal, then you are "successful" even if you are not there yet.
- Every step along the way to achieving a goal is just as important as the last step.
- It is not the achieving of a goal that is so important, it is what you become in the process.
- Decide what you should be accomplishing and then stick to your knitting. Do not attempt to be or do all things for all people.
- Dreams and wishes are not goals until they are written as specific end results on paper. Written specific goals provide direction and focus to your activities. They become a road map to follow.
- Being busy with activities does not pay, only results do. As in rugby you only get points for getting to the try-line. Just making it to the 5 metre line does not count.
- It has been said that the amount of information available to us is now doubling in less than 30 months. We must learn to focus on only what is truly important to our self and our job.
- Be sure the goals and activities that you are working for are yours and that you really want and desire to achieve them. The commitment is vital to your success in achieving them.
- When you have a goal that is exciting to you, the life energy flows through you. You are excited about accomplishing it because it is personally meaningful.
- Create a time line or matrix chart on which you display your goals visually and the dates when you will have them accomplished.
- Continually look for ways to integrate or blend personal and professional goals.
- Setting a goal, that you believe is unattainable will result in frustration. To be challenging and motivating, goals must be perceived as realistic and attainable.
- Those people with dreams are the ones most likely to experience them.
- Set goals carefully for you will attain them. This also means if you set none, you will attain that.
- Goals, when thoughtfully set, can provide strong motivational direction.

- Clear cut, understandable and realistic objectives leading to the goal help to maintain the sense of realism and the hope of attainment of the goal.
- Establish measurement criteria to monitor progressive movement toward your goal. Then you will experience progress.
- Set goals that you will be proud to have achieved, then sense your having completed them.
- Have a vision that you know is unquestionably right and you will be internally driven to achieve that vision.
- A goal is "reasonable" when you can see the entire process needed to get to its attainment.
- Good planning assists in sensing reasonableness of challenging goals.
- Use picture goals.
- Develop an emotional reason why you should attain your goal.

Developing personal creativity

Creativity is the ability or aptitude by which individuals or groups generate or conceive new ideas, or adapt existing concepts into new principles. Many ideas have led to successful businesses and innovations. For example, these ideas may be a new solution to a problem, a new business model, a new method or a new product concept. By stimulating the creative process within individuals, new ideas and concepts can be generated that can lead to the achievement of new innovations.

The creative process was first described in 1926. It was a systematic model that usually follows a sequence of phases: preparation; incubation; illumination; and implementation. However, it is understood today that many people do not have the interest or inclination to develop their creative thinking capacity. They feel more comfortable with their analytical or logical thinking.

Creative thinking (or divergent thinking) provides the means to generate new ideas and the identification of new opportunities. However, once ideas are generated they must be captured, screened, evaluated and finally implemented, which takes significant effort. This is reflected in the statement made by Thomas Edison that, “Genius is one per cent inspiration and ninety-nine per cent perspiration.”

So what can we do to develop our creative abilities that will contribute to competitive advantage for ourselves and our organisation?

Connect with people.

Creativity is about people therefore you need to expand your networks through LinkedIn, facebook and twitter and develop creative communities and social networks that can provide creative inspiration. You could also seek a mentor or join a mastermind group with like-minded individuals. A great way of engaging people in the workplace to become more creative is to establish a creativity club.

Take control of your workspace.

Create an environment that is conducive to creative thinking e.g. this could involve setting up a den with a large mahogany desk, a library and a soft leather chair, or it could be a quiet and relaxing retreat to read and think quietly without interruptions

Learn new creativity tools and techniques.

This can be done through self-education or through courses and online resources. You can also attend seminars and workshops on creativity, and become familiar with a selection of creativity tools and techniques that you can begin to implement and use (e.g. brainstorming, mindmapping, random word, force field analysis, creative visualisation, morphological analysis, imagination, intuition)

Expand your mind through reading.

Reading articles and publications on creativity and innovation will help you to better understand the topics and the power the knowledge can bring when applied to your personal and business life. You should also read references on personal development and topics that may be unrelated to your own interests.

Engage in fun and humour.

Engaging in brain games and puzzles is one way of stimulating your creative abilities, however, engaging in outdoor activities, such as bike riding and walking can also have a positive effect. You could also attend sporting events, comedy shows or other live performances. Watching your favourite DVD movies can also create an escape for creative imagination.

Stimulate your artistic flair.

Take up the arts through drawing, painting, music or drama. I don't mean become the next music star or Leonardo da Vinci; just set aside some time to engage with the arts.

Visit inspiring places.

Museums and art galleries provide an excellent environment to stimulate creativity and learning. Visiting awe-inspiring locations of interest around the world, such as the Louvre, Tuscany, ancient Greek locations or the Great Pyramids can also stimulate creative thinking. A simple relaxing holiday location at a beach resort is also a great way to free your mind and think creatively.

Think on paper.

Escape from the current dominance of the digital environment by keeping a journal, an ideas notebook, or just grab a pen and paper and write down the problems you want to solve, or the opportunities you want to develop. You can also apply creative thinking techniques and creative problem solving processes on paper.

Convert ideas into action.

One of the most rewarding activities is to take the ideas you have captured, develop them further and implement them to achieve successful outcomes.

Planning and work completion skills (How to get things done!)

Have you ever felt like your to do list is completely out of control and you're just not getting anywhere? You have jobs piling up and you just don't know where to start?

You're not alone. Many of us spend a large proportion of our time chasing our tails as we strive to get too many things done too quickly. The thing is – there are a couple of very simple things that we can do to make all the difference when it comes to 'getting stuff done'.

Setting yourself up for failure

Have you ever considered that there may be a very good reason why you're not completing some of those tasks on your to-do list? That's right – often we will set ourselves tasks that we don't really believe in and that have little value to us and then we wonder why we never end up getting those things done!

One of the easiest ways to make your to-do list more manageable is to run a full blown assessment. Does every item deserve to be on the list? Or can you cross a few items off knowing that, in the grand scheme of things it won't really impact your life that much. Another mistake people make is prioritising other peoples most important tasks. Make sure you ask yourself who's task it is on your list – is it really important to YOU or has someone close to you made you feel like it should be important – when in reality it's not. Never feel like what's important to others should also by default be important to you!

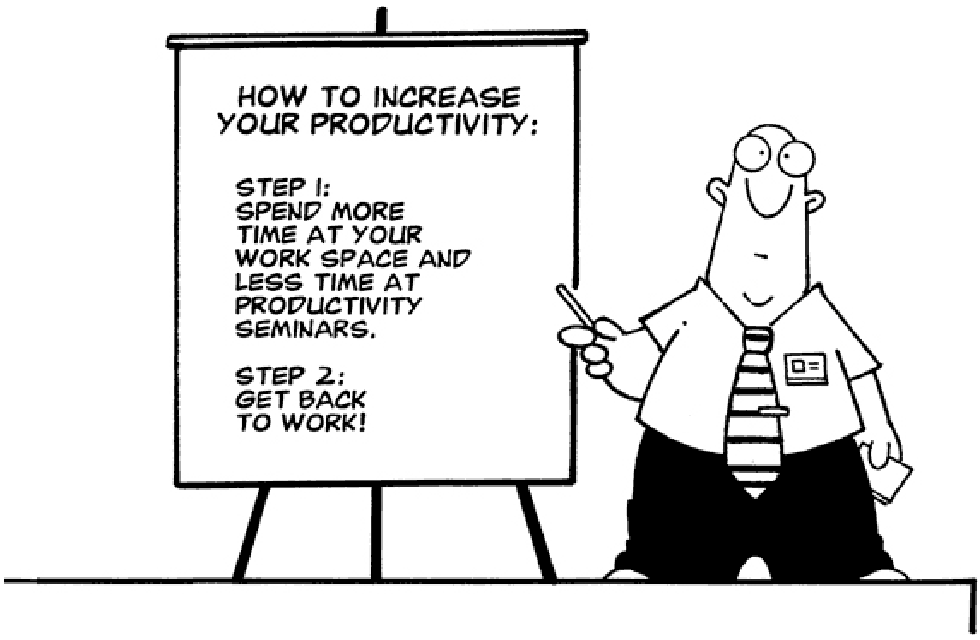
Focus on value and outcome

Consider the value of the tasks on your list before you commit to them. If we focus on the task its-self it's very difficult to motivate ourselves – however if we focus on the outcome or the result of the task – it's much easier to get excited and power through, knowing it will all be worthwhile in the end.

Banish any fear you may have around the tasks – is something stopping you from making a start? Often fear of failure will stop us from attempting things so it's a good idea to adjust your attitude towards this. Understand that failure is a prerequisite for success – as Henry Ford said: "Failure is the ability to begin again, only this time more wisely."

Get comfortable with the notion of failure – knowing that it only assists us on the path to success. Think back to the most successful innovators of our time such as Thomas Edison – if he had allowed a fear of failure to stop him from progressing imagine the consequences. We would be living in darkness! Edison conversely was quoted as saying: "I have not failed. I have just found 10,000 ways that won't work."

- If you find yourself procrastinating – check in to determine if you really want to achieve the tasks
- Identify the true 'value' of the task – how committed are you? Is it really worth it? What will you get by completing it?
- Check that the task is yours and no-one else's! If you're trying to do it for someone else then you should re-evaluate if it's worthwhile
- Focus on the outcome, not the task itself. If you're truly passionate about the task then the result should inspire & motivate you to forge ahead and get it done
- Overcome your fear of failure. Adjust your attitude and know that failure is a prerequisite for success



Another way of looking at it:

Go directly to work

The first battle of the day often determines how the rest of the day will play out. If you can resist the temptation to get sucked into checking email in the morning, you can often get something meaningful accomplished right away. A quick win in the morning sets the right tone for the rest of the day.

Start, often

The hardest part is often just starting. This can be especially hard when a task is difficult or complex. The more importance and weight a certain activity has in life or business, the more it seems easier to put off starting. However, if you can just get moving on it, even for a few minutes, it tends to get easier.

Rather than setting the intention to finish something, resolve yourself to start. The more often you start, the easier things get finished. Overcoming that first bit of inertia is the biggest challenge (just like getting started on a run, or the first push of getting a car moving). Once things are moving, momentum is on your side.

Systems, systems, systems

If you don't have a system in place for getting things done, you're likely losing a lot of productive time to repetitiveness and inefficiency. Get a system!

Holding yourself accountable

It can be hard for me to stay focused on what you really intend to do, and accountability helps with that a lot. Without accountability, fear, uncertainty and procrastination can get in the way. There are two ways you can hold yourself accountable: with your team, and with a small, weekly mastermind. Both will help you stay focused and more importantly, follow through on what you intend to do. Reward and punishment methodology - rewarding yourself for doing something or punishing yourself for not doing something may not work for you. However, knowing that you are going to let someone else down if you don't follow through can be a particularly powerful motivator.

Clearly defined tasks

You need to know what needs to be done, right now. However, if you just have a very vague, nebulous idea of what you need to do — like "writing" — you're not very likely to follow through. The clearer the path is, the easier it is to get moving. Whenever things are a bit fuzzy, ask yourself "What needs to be done next to move this project forward?" Sometimes the answer is planning, sometimes it's making a call or sending an email, or creating an outline. Whatever it is, define it and then get started.

Fire-walling

Every now and then you need to take drastic measures to ensure that you stay focused. Sometimes the battle for my attention is too much, and you need to admit your own weakness. When that happens two things can help:

- Changing your environment. Usually a coffee shop or even moving to another room in the house does the trick. However, if that doesn't work try…
- Firewall distractions. Use an App called Concentrate that allows you to block social media websites and other distractions for a set period of time. It's like training wheels for building focus. It helps limit your number of choices so you can buckle down and do the work.

Giving a damn

If you don't actually care about what you are doing, it's very unlikely that it will ever happen. You can have a very low zero tolerance for doing things you don't like to do. You have to be constantly making sure that what you're doing is in alignment with your reason why and relates to your long-term vision. Without that, what you are doing right now has no context.

As much as possible try to spend the first few minutes of each day thinking about the life that you are creating, the people that you are serving and why you care about what you do. Keeping those things in the front of your mind will help you stay synced with your reason why.

Team management

Essential supervision and management skills

Traditionally, when business leaders talk about "supervision," they are usually referring to the managerial or leadership function of overseeing the productivity and progress of employees – typically those employees who report directly to the supervisor. Supervision is defined as a developmental process designed to support and enhance an individual's acquisition of the motivation, autonomy, self-awareness, and skills necessary to effectively accomplish the job at hand.

All too often, employees are promoted to the role of supervisor because of their strong technical expertise. However, an effective supervisory relationship requires that the supervisor not only be a content expert, but that they also accept the enormous responsibility of mentorship. Unfortunately poor supervision has an enormous impact and cost for both the individual employee, as well as the organisation as a whole. Consider the following facts:

- 89% of managers believe employees leave for more money, while 88% of employees actually leave for reasons having to do with the job, the culture, the manager or the work environment.
- 43% of workers report that they do not feel valued by their employers.
- 71% of workers in the United States rate themselves as either "Not Engaged" or "Actively Disengaged."
- 70% of the reasons employees leave their jobs are related to factors that are controllable by the direct supervisor.
- 66% of workers do not identify with or feel motivated to drive their employer's business goals and objectives.
- The #1 reason employees leave jobs is a poor relationship with their immediate supervisor.

As research clearly demonstrates, it is not only in the best interest of the employee, but also the business to pay close attention to the supervisor/supervisee relationship. This relationship is critical to the success of an individual and ultimately the organisation. We need to have well trained supervisors who are prepared to provide the necessary and appropriate guidance, structure, and encouragement to their staff.

Like all skills, supervision can be taught. However, unlike many simple or basic skills, supervision is best understood as a "process" – requiring both knowledge and experience.

Perhaps even more important, however, developing effective supervision skills requires the availability of effective supervision. In other words, in order for an individual to develop the knowledge and skills to become an effective supervisor of others, they must first go through the process of effective supervision themselves – particularly in terms of being supervised and mentored in the role of supervision.

As suggested earlier, one of the most common approaches to supervision is to view the process simply in terms of knowledge and/or skills acquisition. Unfortunately, this assumes that all individuals learn new information/skills in the same way and at the same pace. However, years of developmental research in the area of human learning has shown that learning typically occurs in spurts and is influenced by any number of individual, as well as contextual factors. As such, it is important to keep in mind that employees many very well be functioning at different levels of development for different aspects of their job responsibilities. This is particularly true in terms of their level of prior experience, training and supervision within each of the various aspects of their job. Naturally, the range of variation across job responsibilities will be less for those who are new to the job than for those who are more experienced overall.

The role/responsibility of the supervisor, therefore, is to create a safe environment in which the employee can work through the developmental issues or challenges of each level in order to gain the necessary motivation, autonomy and self-awareness to successfully move to the next level of development. Successful supervision of the entry level employee will lead to a greater sense of self-confidence in their ability to both understand and complete the responsibilities of their job. Supervision of the developing employee, on the other hand, requires a greater level of skill and flexibility to help these employees negotiate the difficult challenges of this developmental stage. As such, these employees may present a greater challenge for the inexperienced supervisor. For the experienced employee, most of the structure of supervision is provided by the employee themselves, rather than by the supervisor, as they typically know more about what they need from supervision and how they learn best.

Based on this critical understanding that supervision is learned and performed in various levels and varies from supervisor to supervisor, it is important to explore necessary skills and characteristics of supervision. With this developmental perspective in mind, the following keys to effective supervision are recommended:

- Support Growth - Provide support for employees development through:
    - Professional Development Plans
    - Strength Based Performance Appraisal Systems

- Unite Your Team - Building a culture of care and concern by maintaining:
    - Open door policy
    - Regular one-on-one supervisory meetings

- Praise Others - Provide praise and encouragement through:
    - Formal recognition systems
    - Informal compliments - Catching them doing things right

- Expect Excellence - Set high expectations for employees through:
    - Clear position descriptions
    - Regular feedback sessions with staff

- Require Accountability - Uphold individual responsibility by:
    - Creating a culture where staff hold each other accountable
    - Creating a culture where staff hold themselves accountable

- Value What You Believe – Linking actions and behaviours to values by:
    - Ensuring understanding and buy-in to a shared mission and vision
    - Continuously reminding team of goals and desired outcomes

- Instil Independence - Allow autonomy of employee through:
    - Appropriate delegation
    - Encouraging risk taking

- Share Continuously - Establish two-way communication through:
    - Active listening
    - Being transparent

- Optimise Ownership - Create opportunities for employees to contribute by:
    - Participatory strategic planning sessions
    - Encouraging risk taking

- Realign Your Efforts – Evaluate personal strengths and weaknesses by:
    - Evaluating yourself as a supervisor on a daily basis
    - Asking for Input – Reflect on areas of growth that would help staff

Taken all together, the information presented above describes a more positive and strength based approach to supervision. From this perspective, supervision has less to do with teaching and evaluation and more to do with establishing an environment that encourages individual growth and development.

Working as a team

Ten Qualities of an Effective Team Player

If you were choosing team members for a business team in your organisation, who would the best team players be? Assuming that people have the right technical skills for the work to be done, what other factors would you use to select your team members? Teams need strong team players to perform well. But what defines such people?

Demonstrates reliability

You can count on a reliable team member who gets work done and does his fair share to work hard and meet commitments. He or she follows through on assignments. Consistency is key. You can count on him or her to deliver good performance all the time, not just some of the time.

Communicates constructively

Teams need people who speak up and express their thoughts and ideas clearly, directly, honestly, and with respect for others and for the work of the team. That's what it means to communicate constructively. Such a team member does not shy away from making a point but makes it in the best way possible — in a positive, confident, and respectful manner.

Listens actively

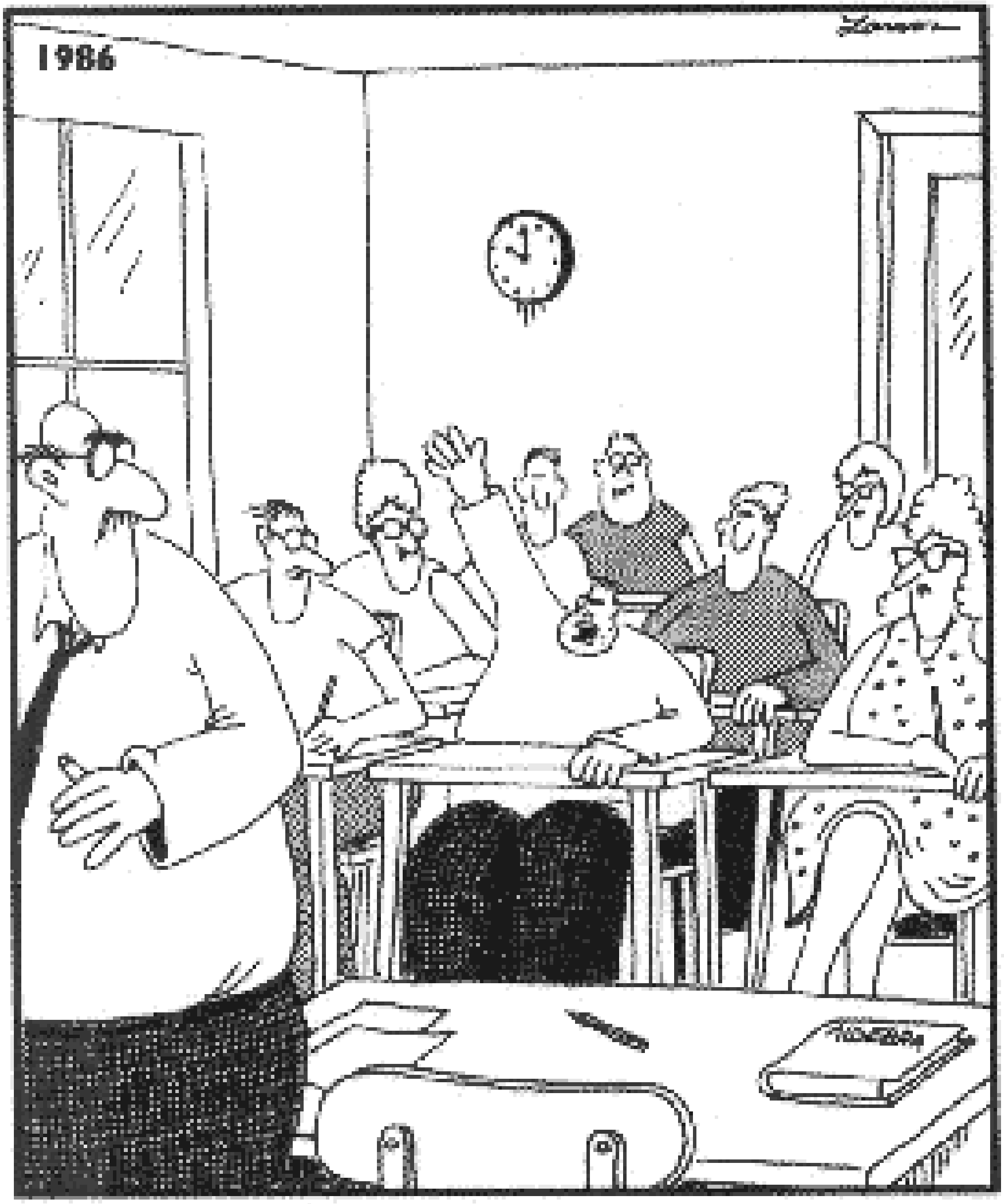
Good listeners are essential for teams to function effectively. Teams need team players who can absorb, understand, and consider ideas and points of view from other people without debating and arguing every point. Such a team member also can receive criticism without reacting defensively. Most important, for effective communication and problem solving, team members need the discipline to listen first and speak second so that meaningful dialogue results.

Functions as an active participant

Good team players are active participants. They come prepared for team meetings and listen and speak up in discussions. They're fully engaged in the work of the team and do not sit passively on the sidelines. Team members who function as active participants take the initiative to help make things happen, and they volunteer for assignments. Their whole approach is can-do: "What contribution can I make to help the team achieve success?"

Shares openly and willingly

Good team players share. They're willing to share information, knowledge, and experience. They take the initiative to keep other team members informed. Much of the communication within teams takes place informally. Beyond discussion at organised meetings, team members need to feel comfortable talking with one another and passing along important news and information day-to-day. Good team players are active in this informal sharing. They keep other team members in the loop with information and expertise that helps get the job done and prevents surprises.



"Mr. Osborne, may I be excused? My brain is full."

Co-operates and pitches in to help

Co-operation is the act of working with others and acting together to accomplish a job. Effective team players work this way by second nature. Good team players, despite differences they may have with other team members concerning style and perspective, figure out ways to work together to solve problems and get work done. They respond to requests for assistance and take the initiative to offer help.

Exhibits flexibility

Teams often deal with changing conditions — and often create changes themselves. Good team players roll with the punches; they adapt to ever-changing situations. They don't complain or get stressed out because something new is being tried or some new direction is being set. In addition, a flexible team member can consider different points of views and compromise when needed. He or she doesn't hold rigidly to a point of view and argue it to death, especially when the team needs to move forward to make a decision or get something done. Strong team players are firm in their thoughts yet open to what others have to offer — flexibility at its best.

Shows commitment to the team

Strong team players care about their work, the team, and the team's work. They show up every day with this care and commitment up front. They want to give a good effort, and they want other team members to do the same.

Works as a problem-solver

Teams, of course, deal with problems. Sometimes, it appears, that's the whole reason why a team is created — to address problems. Good team players are willing to deal with all kinds of problems in a solutions-oriented manner. They're problem-solvers, not problem-dwellers, problem-blamers, or problem-avoiders. They don't simply rehash a problem the way problem-dwellers do. They don't look for others to fault, as the blamers do. And they don't put off dealing with issues, the way avoiders do. Team players get problems out in the open for discussion and then collaborate with others to find solutions and form action plans.

Treats others in a respectful and supportive manner

Team players treat fellow team members with courtesy and consideration — not just some of the time but consistently. In addition, they show understanding and the appropriate support of other team members to help get the job done. They don't place conditions on when they'll provide assistance, when they'll choose to listen, and when they'll share information. Good team players also have a sense of humour and know how to have fun (and all teams can use a bit of both), but they don't have fun at someone else's expense. Quite simply, effective team players deal with other people in a professional manner.

Team players who show commitment don't come in any particular style or personality. They don't need to be rah-rah, cheerleader types. In fact, they may even be soft-spoken, but they aren't passive. They care about what the team is doing and they contribute to its success — without needing a push.

Team players with commitment look beyond their own piece of the work and care about the team's overall work. In the end, their commitment is about winning — not in the sports sense of beating your opponent but about seeing the team succeed and knowing they have contributed to this success. Winning as a team is one of the great motivators of employee performance. Good team players have and show this motivation.

Delegation vs abdication

One of the hallmarks of great leadership is effective delegation. This happens when a business owner or a manager regularly gives responsibility and authority to an employee to complete a task. Doing so develops people who are ultimately more fulfilled and productive. And for the manager or business owner, delegating frees you to attend to the important strategic work of business. There is a critical distinction however, between delegating and abdicating, and it's one that many business owners struggle with.

The dictionary defines delegate as: "To give a task to somebody else with responsibility to act on your behalf. To give somebody else the power to act, make decisions or allocate resources on your behalf." This is good practice.

To abdicate, on the other hand, is simply this: "To fail to fulfil a duty or responsibility." This is not so good.

Giving It Away or Entrusting It - Accountability can be a slippery thing. Some tasks or functions in a business beg to be handed off to someone better suited or qualified. Take financial management for example. Too many business owners want someone else to take on that role, leaving them free to focus on the "fun" stuff of running the business. But if you hand off a task or a function to an employee and completely remove yourself from the picture, you are merely abdicating your role as the business owner.

There's a critical moment in every business when the owner hires his very first employee to do the work he doesn't know how to do himself, or doesn't want to do... And in a single stroke, you suddenly understand what it means to be in business in a way you never understood before. ‘I don't have to do that anymore!' At last you're free. The Manager in you wakes up and the Technician temporarily goes to sleep. Your worries are over. Someone else is going to do that now. But at the same time — unaccustomed as you are to being The Manager — your newfound freedom takes on an all too common form. It's called Management by Abdication rather than by Delegation. In short, like every small business owner has done before you, you hand the books over to Harry...and run.

Abdication can lead to disastrous results. Tasks aren't completed properly or at all, you have unhappy customers, missed deadlines, financial problems — all of which you discover well after the fact because you abdicated those tasks...and ran!

Remember our dictionary definition of "delegate" is to give someone else a task with the responsibility to act on your behalf. Regardless of who has the responsibility for a task or function in your business, you are ultimately accountable for the outcome. Does this mean you must micro-manage employees to ensure things are done correctly? Or should you just do everything yourself to avoid the danger of abdicating the things you are accountable for?

Certainly not!

When you delegate tasks and responsibilities properly, with structure and forethought, it will free you and your managers from the crushing load of tactical work that keeps you from working on your business.

Some Guidelines for Effective Delegation

If you keep doing all the little daily tasks that you've always done, then you'll forever be trapped doing them and never free up the time to work on your business. If letting go of these tasks is a bit daunting (and sometimes it is, especially if you've always done it and have your particular way of doing it) then take gradual steps.

- First, identify a task that you want to delegate.
- Document the correct way to perform this task, step by step, including the quality control standards for each step.
- Clearly specify the expected results of the delegated task. Give information on what, why, when, who, where and how.
- Have someone follow your Action Plan. Maintain open lines of communication. Don't micro-manage, but make sure that you are kept in the loop on progress and performance. Then revise your document until you are both comfortable with it.
- When the new system document is ready, provide it to the employee responsible for that task, train them on how to successfully run this "system" and insert a copy of this process document into your company's Operations Manual.
- Repeat these steps on the next task.

Delegation is a critical component in the development of a business that is balanced and inclusive. It will help you discover the natural place for yourself, your managers and your staff.

Your leadership style is situational. Your leadership style depends on the task, the team or individual's capabilities and knowledge, the time and tools available and the results desired.

As a supervisor, manager or team leader, you make daily decisions about the appropriate leadership style to employ in each work situation. You want to foster employee involvement and employee empowerment to enable your team members to contribute their best effort at work.

Leadership Style Tips:

- Whenever possible, when delegating work, give the person a whole task to do. (If you can't give the employee a whole task, make sure they understand the overall purpose of the project or task. If possible, connect them to the group that is managing or planning the work. Staff members contribute most effectively when they are aware of the big picture.)
- Make sure the staff person understands exactly what you want them to do. Ask questions, watch the work performed or have the employee give you feedback to make sure your instructions were understood.
- If you have a picture of what a successful outcome or output will look like, share your picture with the staff person. You want to make the person right. You don't want to fool the person to whom you delegate authority for a task, into believing that any outcome will do, unless you really feel that way.
- Identify the key points of the project or dates when you want feedback about progress. This is the critical path that provides you with the feedback you need without causing you to micromanage your direct report or team. You need assurance that the delegated task or project is on track. You also need the opportunity to influence the project's direction and the team or individual's decisions.
- Identify the measurements or the outcome you will use to determine that the project was successfully completed. (This will make performance development planning more measurable and less subjective, too.)
- Determine, in advance, how you will thank and reward the staff person for their successful completion of the task or project you delegated.

Successful delegation of authority as a leadership style takes time and energy, but it's worth the time and energy to help employee involvement and employee empowerment succeed as a leadership style. It's worth the time and energy to help employees succeed, develop and meet your expectations. You build the employee's self-confidence and people who feel successful usually are successful.

Encouraging and rewarding success

To inspire people to consistently ... especially over a long period ... give of their best requires far more than any single reward program can deliver. Dangling quick-fix rewards in front of their noses and you'll probably get people to do things differently ... but you won't get them doing it for the long term and it is unlikely you'll ever get them to perform at the peak of their capability.

There are probably two main reasons why you want some employee recognition ideas or are looking for ways to reward your employees.

- Because you want to say thanks for a job well done, or
- To induce people to perform at a higher level than they might otherwise.

Whilst on the surface it may seem, that "to say thanks" is the more noble reason for introducing an employee reward program, both of the above reasons have flaws and challenges. Ultimately, both reasons keep alive the transactional leadership model found in many command and control style organisations: 'Do this and you'll get that'. It's a form of control and manipulation ... it just so happens that the cuffs are golden.

Find Ways To Reward Employees That Don't Involve Someone Standing in Judgement

Of their very nature most reward programs, require someone to stand in judgement over:

- who 'deserves' to be rewarded,
- what should be rewarded ... effort or results,
- whether the team or the individual should be rewarded,
- how much the reward is worth.

How does it feel to you when you are being judged - when you are waiting to find out if someone else has decided if you've been 'good' enough to 'win' the prize?

How much more powerful is it, when an individual takes responsibility for judging his/her own performance, against the goals/standards/targets they've previously set?

There are many ways to reward employees that result in short term improvement

Certainly, from your own experiences you will know that given enough inducement, (or threat), you can generally get people to change their behaviour and their performance. So, in the short-term, absolutely reward programs do work.

Ways to Reward Employees That Give Long-Term Improved Performance?

What happens when you run out of rewards? Or when the reward becomes an expectation rather than an unexpected gift... will you continue to get the performance level you desire? Probably not. This is where, and why, the vast majority of reward programs fail.

A leader who is committed to the long-term success of his/her business will dig deeper will want to answer questions such as:

- Why do I need to bribe my people to perform at a higher level?
- What is it in our systems, our procedures, our culture our set-up that is causing us to feel the need to put in a reward program?
- How can I design the work so that people find reward in simply doing the work, rather than needing an external motivator?

Are these easy questions to answer? Of course not! Which is why most organisations look for quick and easy ways to reward employees, and which provide almost instantaneous results ... but generally not long-lasting solutions.

It is far more challenging to look at what may be causing people to under-perform, and then change systems, so that the work people do, provides them with the intrinsic desire to perform at high levels.

Ways To Reward Employees, Go Far Beyond Reward & Recognition Programs:

To encourage your people to be intrinsically motivated, rather than relying upon external bribes, you could look at making sure your work environment has great strength in areas such as:

- Work Content
  - Meaningful
  - Variety and Diversity in what they do
  - Challenging Work
  - Involvement in Decision-Making

- Career
  - Opportunity for Advancement or New Career Directions
  - Regular and on-going Training & Development
  - Employment Security

- Conditions
  - Flexible work hours
  - Ability to Work from Home
  - Excellent Employee Facilities

- Financial
  - Base Salary
  - Bonus
  - Share Ownership

Ways To Reward Employees - Praise

Damned if you do damned if you don't! good-job Praise is a mixed bag. Most people want it, but ultimately they also resent it. Subconsciously they'll be thinking "Who are you to make judgement about me!"

One of the measures of self-esteem, is whether a person requires praise in order to feel good about their performance. Unfortunately, most people's self-worth is so poorly developed that they don't trust their own opinion of their worth, and seek acknowledgement from others. One of the greatest gifts you can give to your people is to guide them in how to value their own opinion. To be able to value their own praise for a job well done. Then they won't need to look for external recognition.

So, even though we'd love it, if people would self-praise more... we still need to do, so use these guidelines, to praise, but in a way that inspires and empowers.

Praise Guidelines

Avoid putting yourself in the judges seat. For example, rather than "I am so pleased with ..." it is far more empowering to say "You must be so pleased with ..."

Praise the person's behaviour not them. Rather than, "You are such a great team player", it would be better to say, "You support the team well when you ..."

Adding to the previous - make it specific! The person should know exactly what it is you are praising. Rather than, "You are well prepared for meetings" it is stronger if you say, "The meetings run smoothly because you have prepared the agenda, posted it early to attendees and you make sure whatever materials are needed are on hand."

Ways to Reward Employees - The Top Watch-outs

Dissatisfaction and poorer performance can often result from reward programs. For example, when an expected bonus level is not achieved, even though a great deal of effort was made. Or, when there is a belief that only the 'chosen few' will be acknowledged and rewards are distributed in an uneven or discriminatory manner.

Rewards work best for short-term behaviour changes. If you want lasting change a rewards program probably won't work - as soon as the reward stops the behaviour will probably cease as well.

Rewards generally don't change people's values, attitudes and feelings. You may get short-term behaviour change, but not long term commitment.

Reward programs don't get to the root cause of, why people may be apathetic or performing at a mediocre level. Which means you will probably need to find more and more goodies to induce people to continue to perform.

Rewarding everyone equally can lead to conflict and resentment between team members. For example, award nights can, in an instant, transform the vast majority of people there into losers. And consequently, can create competition, envy, hostility and distrust between groups and group members.

Rewarding employees for results over which they have limited control can lead to cynicism.

They become an expectation rather than a reward. For example if each week a gift certificate is given for achieving a safety standard, it is no longer viewed as a reward but rather an expectation.

What you reward is what you get - so be very careful about what you reward. For example, there is a huge difference in organisational results between rewarding people for gaining knowledge, and rewarding people for sharing knowledge.

Ways To Reward Employees Who Have to Do Boring Tasks

Many people work in jobs that are not necessarily the best paying in the world, but remain because they love the job they are doing and/or the environment in which they are doing it ... you may have to wonder why.

Certainly in every organisation, in fact in every society, there are tasks that are inherently boring, repetitive or even distasteful. Rather than manipulate a person through rewards into performing the task, it is much more respectful and certainly less manipulative, if you:

- Acknowledge that the task is probably one that is not intrinsically desirable
- Remind the person how this task fits into the bigger picture and its importance
- Empower the person to manage how the task will be performed

Reward and Recognition Programs Are Most Effective When

Finally, if you feel you must have a reward program then keep these guidelines in mind.

- The program is straightforward and easy to understand and with little emphasis given to it (i.e minimise the fuss!)
- The people have confidence in the basis of the acknowledgement i.e. they know exactly what it takes to receive acknowledgement
- Each person has a role in judging his/her own performance
- The individual is clear about the manner and techniques that they used to achieve the outcome (and that the leader/organisation would like to see re-enacted in the future).
- The person contributes to the reward process, and decides upon the type of reward that s/he would most like to receive. One of the best things you can do, is to give the receiver the choice of reward that suits his/her specific circumstances.
- The reward follows closely to the actual performance.

Ways to Reward Employees Summary

Ultimately you need to decide: "Will the program we've decided upon, destroy or build our culture?"

An effective and well thought through rewards program enables you to find ways to reward employees and say thank you, whilst encouraging more of the behaviour, thinking and attitudes that enable your business to be successful.

To successfully reward employees ensure they:

- Come away with an enhanced sense of self-determination and control over what they do.
- Are not being controlled or manipulated.

Reacting to and solving problems

First, ask yourself: is there really a problem here?

Often we create problems in our own heads – Is it something that will matter in 5 years? Or even in 5 weeks? Life becomes so less stressful when you stop making mountain out of molehills (or just out of thin air).

Accept it.

When you accept that the problem already exists and stop resisting then you also stop putting more energy into the problem and "feeding it". Now it just exists (well, more or less, you might still feel a bit down about it). You can use the energy you previously fed the problem with the energy that probably made the problem look bigger than it was to find creative solutions to the challenge.

Ask for help.

You can ask people for advice on what to do and what they did in similar situations. But you can also ask for more practical help. You don't have to solve every problem on your own and sometimes it feels better to have someone by your side, even if it is just for emotional support. If you just ask you may find that people will often be willing to help you out.

Use 80 percent of your time to find solutions.

And only 20 percent to complain, worry and whine. It might not always be easy but focusing your energy, time and thoughts in this way is much more beneficial for you and others than doing the opposite.

Break the problem down into smaller pieces.

Solving a problem can sometimes seem overwhelming and impossible. To decrease anxiety and think more clearly break the problem down. Identify the different parts it consists of. Then figure out one practical solution you can take for each of those parts. Use those solutions. They may not solve the whole problem immediately. But those solutions can get you started and might solve a few pieces of the it.

Find the opportunity and/or lesson within the problem.

There is almost always a positive side to a problem. Perhaps it alerts us of a great way to improve our business or relationships. Or teaches us how our lives perhaps aren't as bad as we thought. Finding this more positive part of the problem reduces its negative emotional impact. You may even start to see the situation as a great opportunity for you.

When you are faced with a problem ask yourself:

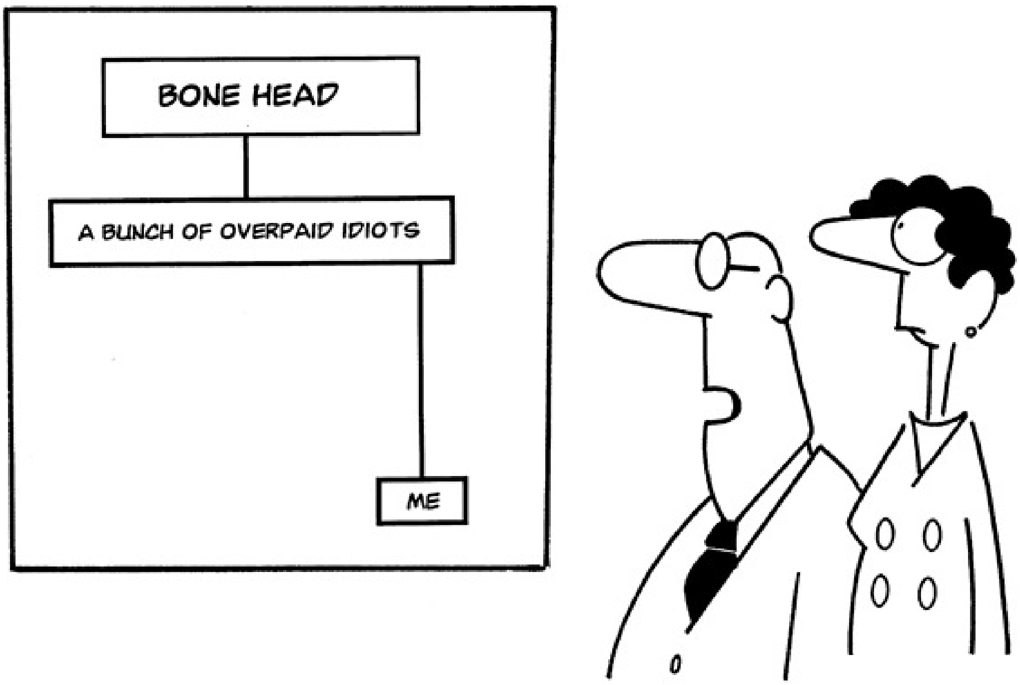
- What is the good thing about this?
- What can I learn from this?
- What hidden opportunity can I find within this problem?

"Do you prefer to speak with someone who knows too much to be easily understood or someone who doesn't have enough info to confuse you?"

TRAINING OUTLINE

POWER SOLUTIONS

COURSE NOTES



"Who was put in charge of making the new organizational chart?"

THE IDEAL ~~SALES~~ BUYING SCRIPT

OPEN STATEMENT: Hi, my name is James, James Bond (of "your company")
What has been your experience with finding a solution?

PROSPECT ANSWER: (Not very good)
(I know there are companies that provide solutions but I'm not sure of their effectiveness)
(I think we have identified a solution provider)

YOUR RESPONSE: I can understand that.
(The first time I tried finding a solution, I was unsure whether they could do the job properly)
(I've heard that others have considered other companies but they were not sure that the results were going to be worthwhile)
(I've found that I couldn't measure their effectiveness)

so I went looking for a solution I found it with "your company".

YOUR QUESTION: In the ideal world, how would you like to deal with your problem?

PROSPECT ANSWER: (I don't)
(I want it removed)
(I need to know that I can afford it)

YOUR RESPONSE: I have an solution for you. How are you placed for getting together next week same time same place where I can show you what we can do and how we can work within your budget?

PROSPECT ANSWER: (Have to check my diary)
(not sure)
(thanks, not really interested)

YOUR RESPONSE: That's fine, I understand, however I'd still like to show you what is possible. How about I give you a call tomorrow morning to find a suitable time for a brief get together to go through what I have to offer?

DEALING WITH PRICE AND DISCOUNTS

When asked how much the service/product costs:

PROSPECT QUESTION	: How much will this cost?
YOUR RESPONSE	: We have a number of packages. Our most popular is $1500.
YOUR OPEN-ENDED QUESTION	: How does that work with your budget?

When asked to give a discount:

PROSPECT QUESTION	: Can you discount the price?
YOUR RESPONSE	: I can do much better than a discount. I can offer ABC in addition to the package.
YOUR OPEN-ENDED QUESTION	: How does that sound?

KILLER CLOSER

This is the one question you can use when all else fails. It can get you out of all sticky problems and it's used primarily to close the sale. Seven little words….

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO…..

…gain an appointment? …present a practical option? …demonstrate an intelligent solution

Then wait for the answer and follow through on a reasonable request.

"Look, I'd like to have a second appointment, but I've just got too much on my plate right now."

HANDLING OBJECTIONS

Objections are stepping stones towards a successful close – over time, you will hear all of the following:

Customer Objection : I'm not interested.

Your Response : I can understand that, I wasn't interested in those issues either. I think our service will benefit your business, and I'd hate for you to miss an opportunity because of a lack of information. How would it suit you if I prepared a complimentary brief report for you and we can discuss it next week, same time, same place?

Customer Objection : I'm already considering using another company

Your Response : I can understand that. I'm pleased to hear that you have already seen the value of dealing with your problem - how would it be if I could show you an alternative and cost-effective solution which offers significant advantages? How would it suit you if I prepared a complimentary brief report for you and we can discuss it next week, same time, same place?

Customer Objection : My mate tried to deal with his problems but the company he chose didn't provide any solution

Your Response : That's unfortunate and I can fully understand how he might've used a company that didn't produce results. I've met others that have been in that position as well. How about if I meet with you both to show you how it can work. What say we meet next week at 2 o'clock?

Customer Objection : I've got it in mind to fix the problems myself.

Your Response : I can understand that. I started doing my own, but then I ran into a lack of time and got stuck on details so I went looking for a solution and discovered you could provide a complete package. I now work for that company! How would it suit you if I prepared a complimentary brief report for you on what you can do and we can discuss it next week, same time, same place?

Customer Objection : Too busy and I have no time I don't need any more problems to deal with

Your Response : I can understand that. I was in the same position. I had too much work and didn't have the time to do all that I needed to do. However I learned that I must do something about the problem or face serious legal consequences, so I went looking for a solution…

Key to handling objections is:

"I can understand that"

Mirror with empathy

"I went looking for a solution" or
"we meet tomorrow, later today, next week on the same day, at the same time, in the same place". n.b. It is critical to confirm this meeting date/time.

SHORT AND SWEET

Sometimes you have to be a little brutal. The nature of the customer objection should indicate that you are being fobbed off and if that is the case, there is little percentage in wasting time. Go straight for the throat, be decisive, but be polite. Preface with standard “I can understand that” intro, then use appropriate request.

Them : I need to talk to the boss
You : I can understand that. Who should I speak to and when can you put me through to them?

Them : This is looked after at head office
You : I can understand that. Who should I speak to and when can you put me through to them?

Them : I had a bad experience with the process
You : I can understand that. What do you know about our processes?

Them : I'm too busy can you call back
You : I understand. When do I call you back today or what time would tomorrow suit?

Them : Call me back next month
You : I understand. Which day and time would work for you?

BASIC RULES

These are non-negotiable and MUST be used as part of all sales or phone scripts

Rule 1 : no closed questions - i.e. questions that get yes or no responses

Rule 2 : use only open ended questions - i.e. questions with: how, when, why, who, which, where, or what in the sentence.

Rule 3 : For responses to questions, remember to always empathise sympathise or agree.

Rule 4 : When forced to give answers to questions then politely but briefly [minimum words one topic per answer] THEN immediately without pause, ask an open ended question back. e.g. Question: “What is that pen made of?”, Response: “Plastic mostly. What do you know about plastic pen construction?” The response requires an answer. Note how the question relates to topic and leads the questioner into a responder-controlled conversation.

Rule 5 : Never tell anyone they made a bad decision and avoid comments reflecting tradition, mediocrity.

Rule 6 : Never argue, never defend, never justify.

Rule 7 : Avoid words like “so’, ‘and’, ‘however’ ‘perhaps’ and ‘etcetera’ especially when opening or closing a sentence. Best to try to eliminate from vocabulary completely.

Rule 8 : Always use one sentence per topic. Make sure to breathe between these as it gives the listener a chance to comprehend what has just been said. Most people are only able to focus on one concept/topic at a time.

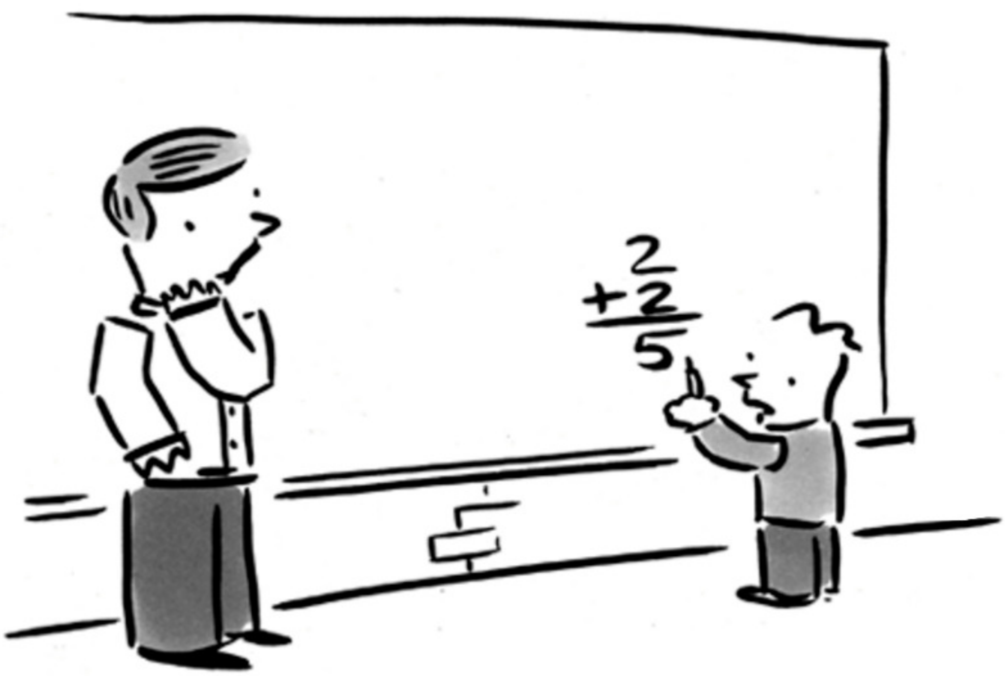
Rules apply on the phone and in person to person pitches.

VALUE

What is value?

Value = Benefits – Costs

- Benefits include tangible needs, intangible wants and quality
- Costs include actual (the total amount of money) and circumstantial (things like time, inconvenience etc)
- The "value" for you are realised through the financial rewards of the sale
- The customer’s "value" is realised from the benefits obtained by using our services



“I prefer to think of it as added value.”

How can you add value?

- Think outcome! - The prospect's outcome.
- Keep your prospect focused on how they will benefit from what you offer.

Show them the results and what it means in terms of their return on investment. Keep in mind that customers don't buy anything. They only invest. Every purchase must result in a return in investment. Customers may argue this is why they need a lower price, but when they do this, they are overlooking the real value of outcomes.

For example, you sell solutions, we should say you help people <u>buy</u> solutions. Your customer may initially believe they should just compare your prices to what other companies sell. You need to help them move past this shortsightedness. What matters isn't merely the cost of the supplies, but the outcome that can be accomplished with them.

- Do the solutions you provide allow for the customer to worry less?
- Do the solutions you help them buy reduce costs or potential expenses in some other area?
- Do the solutions create increased satisfaction and peace of mind?

Each of the above questions can reveal value for the customer that goes far beyond price.

"You have piece of mind... we'll try to locate the rest of it."

Keep Track

Keep track of every phone call, inquiry and contact your customer makes with you. If you are not keeping track of your encounters with a customer, you are likely missing additional opportunities to show them value. Whether the customer is occasionally asking for tips or information, or if you are actively contacting the customer, you need to record each of these encounters.

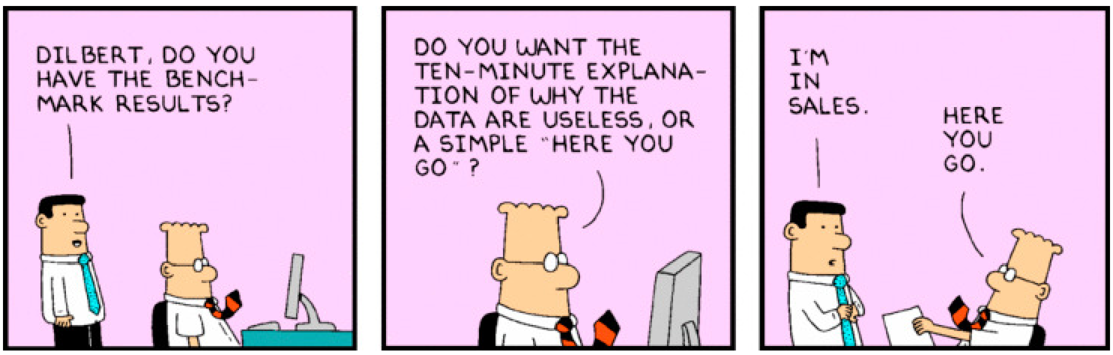
More importantly, record the value the customer receives or could receive from what you sell. An example of how this might work would be a customer asking for assistance in understanding how a your solution can be applied to a particular situation. The cost to you in terms of time might be $150, but the value to the customer might be $5,000 if it provided a solution for a particular condition. Document that value so that you have an on-going list you can leverage with the customer.

Show the Customer

Show the customer best practices you've seen other customers use. Educate your customers every time you're with them, and use the information you have to develop new relationships. Become a diligent student of "best practices" in the industry and record in dollars what the value is worth to customers.

Benchmark

Benchmark their investment in a solution with other similar customers. Keep records and monitor trends, and then find ways to share this information with your customers. Not only does this show you're concerned about their situation, but it also allows you to have conversations with the customer that they likely wouldn't initiate on their own. Not surprisingly, when you are proactive in having these conversations, you often come across new opportunities to help the customer. Also, the benchmarking you do will allow you to create a "savings worksheet" that shows how much less they've spent compared to other similar companies.



Educate

Provide ongoing educational sessions for the customer. A customer might be hesitant to initially have you provide additional education, but this is key to establishing value. The cost of the educational session to you is minimal, but just as with the other items listed above, the value the customer receives can be huge. Record each session and the value in terms of what the customer receives from the program.

Document

Document the value you provide to the customer. Identify and record those activities your recommended procedures do that make it easier for the customer to do business with you. Just as with the other items listed, place a dollar amount on each of the activities from which the customer receives value.

Value is in the eyes of the customer. The customer doesn't always readily look in the right direction, so it's your job to help them see the entire picture. As important as it is to use these methods with existing customers, they can be just as valuable with prospects. The above techniques often can be exactly what you need to help a prospect embrace that low price should never be the sole criteria for purchasing.

WHY DO PEOPLE BUY?

People have only 6 reasons to buy anything:

TO AVOID PAIN

They perceive a problem and they want a way to make that problem go away.

MONEY

They want to save money or make money. Of these two, making money is a more powerful motivator than saving it.

REDUCE RISK OR LOSS

This is the basis for purchasing insurance, a more reliable product, locks, alarm systems, flu shots …

PLEASURE, ENJOYMENT, COMFORT

These are the motivators to buy a vacation, fine restaurant meal, center court seats, a boat or anything else that has no practical value other than fun.

PRESTIGE, EGO

Fine watches, expensive cars and other luxury items provide benefits to the owner beyond pleasure or comfort. Pleasure is within oneself. Prestige is for others to notice.

FOR OTHER PEOPLE

Purchases which benefit family, friends, church & community give us the joy of giving.

To make the sale, you need to know which of these reasons to buy are driving your prospect (there may be several), and then make sure the prospect sees the connection between your product and satisfying those reasons.

THEY MAY ASK THE PRICE, BUT THEY BUY VALUE

All customers ask what the price is, so most salespeople think price is one of the most important factors. Wrong! People ask the price because they need to know how much to pay you, because they want to verify the intelligence of their decision, because they are in the habit of asking, or for any of myriad other reasons. Sometimes customers want to make sure the item or service you are selling is expensive enough (high enough in perceived quality).

To sell value, instead of price:

- Understand the buyers true needs before explaining your product's advantages.

- If appropriate, focus on cost, rather than price: lifetime cost, cost of ownership, cost of use, cost of supplies, etc.

- Know the alternatives - what the customer is using now or is considering buying - so you can talk about relative merits and total costs, in relation to the customer's unique situation.

- Don't quote your price until after you've told those advantages.

- Tell your price confidently, as if you are certain it is a fair price. If you reveal you think it is high, most customers will detect your uncertainty and challenge your price.

- If asked to drop your price, say no the first time. Many buyers, even if satisfied with your price, will automatically ask you to improve it, just in case. If they persist, then the price objection is real.

- If you must reduce your price, take something away from the product. This preserves the integrity of your pricing structure and your belief in the fundamental value of what you sell.

- Never offer to discount your price or throw something extra in unless the prospect first asks for a better deal.

5 WAYS TO REACH THE DECISION MAKER

1. Try Different Approaches

You call and call and call, and never get the live person (or a call back). Some people just hate phone calls and prefer not to do business that way. Others get a constant flow of phone calls all day and are tough to catch between calls. For both of these types of decision makers, the answer is to try reaching them via another channel. Usually, the most effective second choice is email. Type up a quick refresher on your previous conversation and/or the last voicemail message you left, include a benefit or two to motivate the decision maker, and inform him of the time and date you'll next be calling him back.

2 Enlist Inside Help

If you're talking to a gatekeeper every time you call, you're in luck. Why? Because you can't talk the voicemail robot into helping you out, but with a human being you've got a pretty good chance. The first time you talk with a gatekeeper jot down his or her name and hang onto it. When you call back and get the same person, greet her by name – they'll be flattered that you remembered them. Simple courtesy is often enough to get them on your side and actively helping you to reach the decision maker. If they do help you to finally get an appointment with the decision maker, be sure to send them a thank-you note.

3 Enlist Outside Help

The Internet can provide an amazing amount of information about the average person if you know where to look. If your decision maker is a business owner or executive, try LinkedIn. With luck, someone you know will be listed as one of his contacts and you can ask that mutual acquaintance for an introduction. If you're selling to a consumer, try Facebook or other social media sites. If all else fails, reach out to members of your network who might know the decision maker.

4 Arrive In Person

When other contact attempts fail, leave a message informing the decision maker that you'll be "in the area" at a certain time and will stop by their office to say hello. With luck, you'll be able to catch them in person and give a quick presentation. If the decision maker is unavailable you can at least leave your card and perhaps a brochure or two.

5 Use #31#

The next time you call that elusive decision maker, press #31# before you dial their number. This will block your phone number from appearing on their caller ID