

FROM THE PUBLISHER

One skill can bring out the best in any leader



Don Henninger

I am consistently flabbergasted over how often we fumble when it comes to communicating with each other.

Here in our office, we have a team of skilled professionals in the communications business, and yet we often leave encounters with each other wondering why we're not on

the same page regarding simple messages that we assumed were clearly understood by all. Sometimes it seems like we're not even on the same planet.

We chuckle about it. We should cry about it.

I have a simple reason why the right hand so often doesn't know what the left is doing, and those who have been around me more than 5 minutes over the past 10 years have heard it repeatedly: We don't listen to each other. Well, some of them have heard that repeatedly...

The world would be a better place if people spent more time genuinely listening to one another and less time trying to figure how to shovel in words as soon as there's an opening.

There are a few other things we can do to improve our communications. Roxi Hewertson, an organizational development expert, wrote about them in one of our sister publications. Her article

was about a recent Development Dimensions International study that focused on common problems leaders have in engaging in effective conversations with people, along with some solutions. Here's what she wrote:

“ – Jumping to task before understanding the full picture. One solution: Take the time to gather information and listen carefully.

“ – Unskilled at, or choosing not to have, effective conversations. One solution: Learn this skill or get out of leadership.

“ – Failing to engage others in decisions that impact them. One solution: Ask yourself, ‘Who is impacted by this decision?’ and engage them early in the process.

“ – Failing to demonstrate authentic empathy. One solution: Slow down and truly put yourself in another person's shoes. What might it be like to be them right now? Don't know? Ask them.

“ – Ego- and personal agenda-driven. One solution: Ask yourself, ‘Do I really need to be or prove I am right? Or do I want my team to succeed no matter whose idea it is?’

“ – Unable to facilitate a productive meeting or discussion. One solution: Learn these skills and/or engage skilled facilitators to help you.”

I concur with each. Try any of those tips. They're free, and they all look like they'll work. One warning, though: Each of the six works only when paired with one other critical ingredient.

What's that, you say? You were listening, right?

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