

# Unit II:

## Interpersonal Leadership Skills

### 1. Communications Basics

Good leaders know how to communicate effectively. When many people think of good leaders and communication, they often initially think about how effective those leaders are in public and persuasive speaking, articulating ideas and plans of action in a way that gets other people excited and interested in being involved. Less obvious from a communication standpoint but in many ways even more important is that good leaders are adept at listening and understanding nonverbal cues. This helps them to clearly understand people's concerns and thoughts. Effective leaders make people feel comfortable giving thoughts, suggestions, or feedback. Great leaders are also astute in listening to and understanding people and, thus, are able to rephrase and relate the common interests among the group. A common direction and vision for the group can then be built using the information.

Through communication, people reach some understanding of each other, learn to like each other, and influence each other. Individuals also learn more about themselves and how people perceive them and build trust with one another. People who communicate effectively know how to interact with others flexibly, skillfully, and responsibly, but without sacrificing their own needs and integrity.

## What Is Communication?

Communication is the exchange of ideas or feelings from one person to another. Talking by itself is not communication; communication involves both speaking and listening (Chacon 1984).

People do more listening than any other form of communication, but most listen at an efficiency level of less than 25 percent. Tests show that immediately after listening to a 10-minute oral presentation, the average listener has heard, understood, properly evaluated, and retained only half of what was said. Within 48 hours, that comprehension rate has dropped to one-quarter. People generally remember:

- 10% of what they read
- 20% of what they hear
- 30% of what they see
- 50% of what they hear and see
- 70% of what they say and write
- 90% of what they say as they do something

When you communicate with other people you need to be aware of how comprehension drops over time and tailor your methods of communication based upon the importance of the information you're conveying. When giving a presentation on a complex or important subject, for example, using visuals (such as a poster, slide, or PowerPoint graphic) means that listeners both see and hear the message, improving their ability to remember. Actively engaging people with the topic, such as having them do a hands-on exercise with the information, improves comprehension and retention even more (which is one major reason the *Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow* program relies so much upon participant exercises and activities as part of its curriculum).

## Productive Presentations

Presentations are the sharing of information between a speaker and an audience and can run the range of delivering a talk without any visual aids to a multimedia demonstration and script. Presenting a project or story in a manner that is coherent, convincing, and aesthetically pleasing takes planning and practice (Peterson 1997).

Every presentation needs a purpose and a clear structure and should be designed to meet a specific need or request for information. Listeners like speeches that have a clear purpose and that are organized and easy to follow, rather than ones that begin nowhere, ramble on, and end in a confused manner. Think through the information you wish to share with your audience. Talk in simple terms, use short sentences, and avoid extraneous information and digressions.

The basic organization of a presentation is simple: an opening or introduction, the main body, and the summary or conclusion.

### Introduction

- Grab the audience's attention.
- Briefly set the stage for your presentation by telling the audience what your purpose is and what you are going to tell them.
- Motivate your audience to listen to you by using a good opening technique. Try a challenging question, quotation, or illustration.

### Tools to Use in an Introduction

- Anecdote: A short story to illustrate a point.
- Humor: A great ice breaker, but use with caution as to not offend listeners.

- Rhetorical question: A question with an obvious answer.
- Shocking statement: It captures audience attention, but again, use with caution.

### The Main Body

- State the facts and be as objective as possible.
- Support your information and be specific in your explanations. Use examples that are concise and relate to the needs and interests of your audience.
- Acknowledge and refute any contrary views, if appropriate.
- Keep your speech moving. Do not spend too much time on one topic.
- Use repetition to emphasize a point.

### Conclusion

- End your presentation on a positive note.
- Restate your main ideas.
- Your goal is to motivate your audience to understand, to agree with, and to act on your proposal. Make it easy to respond—state what you want done.

Almost everyone feels some stress when speaking before a group—here are some tips to help:

- Prepare a written text, but don't read it word for word. Large index cards typed in capital letters work well for many people.
- If you are confronted with questions you can't answer, don't try to "wing it." Say you don't know and offer to find out.
- If you are confronted with hostile questioning, stay calm. Don't try to answer point for point. Try to answer briefly and move on to another question.

- Emphasize your most important points very quickly at the end of your presentation.
- Practice in front of a mirror, smile at the audience, and speak clearly.

## Developing the Content

Content is the “what” of the presentation and answers and supports the “why” of your objectives. The following process is designed to help you develop the content for your presentation.

## What to Say

Think of as many key issues or points as possible to support your objectives. This will create the framework for the presentation.

1. Review your presentation objectives and write down as many main ideas as possible on 3 x 5 cards, large sticky notes, or notepaper. Write down one idea per card and, at this point, don't try to edit or organize.
2. Narrow the objectives to three to five main points.
3. Build the subpoints on 3 x 5 cards.
  - List supporting ideas or statements.
  - Give explanations, data, or evidence.
  - Use enough subpoints to verify your main ideas.
  - Arrange cards to best suit your needs. Keep in mind your audience and objectives.

## Ten Deadly Sins for Presentations

There are ten deadly sins that people should avoid when making a presentation. They include:

1. Appearing unprepared.
2. Being late.
3. Improperly handling questions, including putting them off until later or looking exasperated when the same person asks many questions.
4. Going overtime. Running past the scheduled time limit makes audiences crazy!
5. Being unfamiliar with available information, including not knowing the names of key people or upcoming events.
6. Botching the use of audio-visuals or not using them at all.
7. Appearing to be off-schedule.
8. Starting late. Start late and you subliminally train your audiences to show up late, but you also penalize people who are on time.
9. Appearing disorganized and fumbling everything you handle.
10. Avoiding looking at the audience—people want to feel connected.

## How to Say It

The next step is to plan “how” you are going to say what you want to say—not only the style and approach you want to use, but also what visuals and handouts you will use. Remember, “it's not what you say, but how you say it.”

Graphic images are not required to be part of the presentation, but they can be a powerful addition. If they will be used, they need to be relevant to the message. Graphics are strongest when they reveal something words cannot, yet directly correlate to what is being said. (See the “Effective Visuals” section on page 4 for more information.)

If you are going to use a slide projector, select only visually pleasing, in-focus pictures. Do not include an image that is unclear; you do not want to have to apologize for a bad slide.

For charts and tables, remember that charts can be indecipherable from a distance and should be broken into easily viewed and understood parts. Most material that appears in a book must be reworked for a larger format presentation.

If you or a meeting facility has a computer and a projection unit, technology offers some exciting options for presentations. Using presentation software still requires good design and production decisions. For instance, resist the urge to have bullet points or text on the screen and then proceed to read them verbatim—this is boring and insulting to the audience's intelligence.

No matter what format is used (slides, overhead projector, posters, or computer generated), limit graphic images to the ones that make the biggest impact and pace how the images are changed to create an interesting and memorable impression (Peterson 1997).

It can be very helpful to have supplemental materials available like brochures or newsletters or even copies of the presentation's key points and important charts or tables. Just be sure not to distribute handouts until after the presentation. If information is given in the beginning, people will read instead of listen to the speaker. If information is passed out during the presentation, paper rustling and people talking will create a disruption. If the information is passed out at the end, but before the speaker concludes, any chance for a strong, stirring finish is lost as the audience shifts its attention to the handouts. Many professional conferences request copies of speeches for audience members ahead of time. If the purpose is for attendees to write notes, prepare an outline that highlights key points but does not steal the presentation's thunder. However, if the remarks will be compiled in a compendium, then provide a full text (Peterson 1997).

## Effective Visuals

The use of graphics or concrete examples has a number of advantages. Concrete examples provide a focus of attention for an audience. When people focus on a visual presentation, they share a definite point of reference. Too often work groups get caught up in abstract word play, losing sight of the real issue. Charts, maps, and even simple lists of information can help keep discussion focused.

Visuals also help the facilitator or discussion leader prepare for a meeting. The simple exercise of preparing a series of charts, diagrams, or maps forces you to organize information and anticipate the course of the group's deliberation. When the meeting planner shows up prepared and ready to begin, the group members will know what to expect.

Clipart and other graphics to brighten visuals are readily available on the Internet, but be aware of copyright laws. Simply using someone else's graphics without permission is unethical and illegal—only use copyright-free graphics.

Make sure your graphics are readable, especially if they will be projected on a screen (such as with Microsoft PowerPoint and an LCD projector). This includes appropriately using colors (make sure the background and text contrast), avoiding distracting background graphics, and only using large font sizes (font size 24 or larger). Readability also includes limiting the amount of information on any individual slide. Some graphics experts recommend having at most four lines of text on any one slide. Also try to avoid using too many different fonts on any one graphic since they can appear confusing or distracting.

Be aware that around 8 percent of men and 0.5 percent of women are color blind and may have difficulties seeing the color red. Thus, it is good practice to avoid the frequent use of red lettering because it can cause problems for many of the people who will view the graphic.

When using a pie or other graph, readers will understand the information more easily if you label each component of the graph rather than relying upon a legend. Have each label directly next to its corresponding series or information. This is particularly important if the graph is in color since the colors can be very hard to interpret in a black and white Xerox copy, making a legend useless.

## Effective Listening

Listening is more than just hearing—that is only the first part of listening. Three other parts are equally important:

1. Interpretation—Interpreting what was heard leads to understanding or misunderstanding. Your brain absorbs and comprehends what you hear.
2. Evaluation—Weighing the information helps you decide how you will use it.
3. Reaction—Based on what you heard and how you evaluated, you act on it.

Good listening takes a lot of serious practice. One way to practice is to try to concentrate for one minute out of every hour on one specific sound or on what any one person is saying. At the start many of us will only be able to concentrate for a few seconds. Keep practicing until you can hold complete concentration for at least one minute. This will be harder than you think, but it can improve your listening proficiency.

Practicing improved concentration methods may not make you a perfect listener, but it can make you a good listener. The payoff is in better understanding, increased efficiency, and closer friendships.

Good listening requires that you concentrate on the speaker. Consider the following questions next time you listen:

- What is the speaker trying to say? Listen to understand, not to refute.
- What point is the person trying to make?
- Are the facts accurate, unbiased, and complete?
- Is the source reliable?

- What ideas are being expressed?
- Are you thinking while you're listening? Learn to eliminate distractions by concentrating on the ideas the speaker is presenting rather than pretending to listen.

As a person is speaking, think about relationships between facts and you will find that the person may be using several facts to develop one or two main ideas. If you take notes, write down just enough to let you recall the ideas. Avoid taking everything down word for word, or you may miss the ideas that are presented. When researchers interview a person, for example, they often do so as a team; one researcher focuses on asking the questions and clarifying the responses, while the second focuses solely on writing down the responses. Trying to do both simultaneously and accurately is very difficult.

Control your responses. Try to listen without judging by not arguing with the speaker's words in your mind and dismissing the speaker's ideas in advance. Avoid judging the speaker's appearance as well. You can judge later, after you have heard the information the speaker is giving. Ask questions. If you can't interrupt, make a note so you can remember what to ask when the speaker is finished. Maintain careful attention to both content and feeling. Content refers to the meaning of a word while feeling refers to the emotional state of the person. Feelings may include anger, frustration, fear, joy, sadness, domination, and affection. To focus on content and feeling, try the suggestions below.

- Try to anticipate the speaker's main point.
- Do not form conclusions or begin to construct your reply until you first understand the speaker's position.

- Pause and consider what you heard before replying.
- Assume you don't completely understand and ask for feedback on what you think you heard.
- Reflect and restate in your own words what you understand the other person to have just said, making sure to include both content and feeling.
- Repeat what you heard. Do not judge, question, argue, or evaluate. At this stage, simply repeat your understanding of the information and encourage the other person to continue talking.

## Using Feedback

Feedback allows a listener to tell the speaker whether the message was understood. When done with care and consideration, it is an important tool for good communication. Feedback lets you describe your reaction instead of evaluating the other person's performance and is very helpful in specifying and addressing a behavior the listener can change.

Feedback allows the listener to relate information back to the speaker about the content or feelings conveyed when talking. The person receiving the feedback is made aware of how his or her behavior affects him or herself and others in the group (Chacon 1984). This also serves as a check for understanding. Some examples of this are:

- "The way I understand you is. . . ."
- "You seem to feel. . . ."
- "You sound as though. . . ."
- "I get the feeling that. . . ."
- "It sounds as if. . . ."

## Write Like a Pro (Written Communications)

Crisp, correct writing is essential to successful leadership communication. When a letter, e-mail, report, or program flyer includes an error, readers are more likely to remember the error rather than the message.

### Better Letters

When you can't be present in person, make sure the letter that represents you will make the best impression possible.

- Date your letter correctly.
- Use the correct address with zip code plus the four-digit add-on number. Mailing lists should be updated on a regular basis, at least once a year. (Zip+four information is available at [http://www.usps.gov/ncsc/lookups/lookup\\_zip+4.html](http://www.usps.gov/ncsc/lookups/lookup_zip+4.html).)
- If you don't know the person to whom the letter is addressed, don't guess. A phone call may be all you need to obtain the correct information. If you can't determine to whom a letter should be addressed, use a job title rather than a generic Dear Sir (for example, Dear Project Director).
- Formal salutations require care: Pat Jones could be a man or a woman. To be safe, use Dear Pat Jones, rather than Mr. or Ms.
- Use block style (not indented); separate paragraphs by one line.
- Group thoughts or topics in paragraphs, but consider limiting paragraphs to no more than eleven lines. Longer paragraphs lose the reader.
- Get a letter off to a good start: Start with a positive. Example: Thank you for agreeing to chair the county committee to evaluate services for the developmentally disabled.

- Close a letter with a specific request for action, a summary of ideas within the letter, or a statement of satisfaction or appreciation.
- When action is needed, be specific about deadlines.
- Close the letter in a professional manner (for example, Sincerely or Cordially).
- Sign your name legibly over your title. The title may not be important to you, but it is important to the recipient so he or she will know how to respond.
- Proofread your letter, and proofread it again. Professional writers read from the bottom up; if not anticipating the end of the sentence, they are more likely to catch errors (Peterson 1997).

### Better E-mail

The use of e-mail has improved the speed and flexibility of communication within and across groups by allowing messages to be quickly and cheaply distributed. E-mail does require somewhat different rules and approaches than other written communication since it can be so immediate. The following are some hints and suggestions for making the most of e-mail.

Be aware that e-mail can sometimes create hurt feelings or exacerbate problems because people respond before they've had enough time to really think about what they should say. This is particularly true when the issue being communicated is controversial or generates strong (angry) feelings from respondents. When you receive an e-mail that makes you angry, take your time in responding rather than just typing something and sending it.

Never send something in an e-mail that you do not want a wider audience to see—messages are too easily accidentally sent to a wider group of

recipients than intended. In addition, you have no control over what the person who receives the message does with it; they can easily forward it on to others without you ever knowing it.

People have a difficult time distinguishing nuance in e-mail messages, particularly with sarcasm or other forms of humor, so e-mail messages can sometimes seem blunt. Humor doesn't always translate well since it can be difficult to interpret whether the person is serious.

Managing mail in your "in" box can be difficult if you tend to receive a lot of mail from different specific groups. An easy way to create some order and help prioritize is to use folders and filters within your e-mail program; create a separate folder for storing mail from each group (or important project that generates a lot of e-mail), and then create e-mail filters that automatically send new messages about that group or project directly to that folder. This works particularly well with listservs since it helps keep your "in" box from getting filled up and makes it easier for you to sort through new e-mail. When you have time to deal with e-mails from the listserv or group, go to that folder and read.

With the abundance of spam and viruses circulating on the Internet, it is essential that you have a good, frequently updated antivirus program on your computer if you intend to use e-mail actively. A good spam filter is less essential but will make your e-mail life easier since it will eliminate much unwanted e-mail.

Even with an antivirus program, there is still the chance that a virus may infect your computer. In addition, hard drives and other computer hardware do occasionally fail. Backup your computer at regular intervals, particularly if you are relying on it for much of your group communication and information.

Recognize that people tend to read e-mail differently than printed materials; however, they are much more likely to quickly scan through an e-mail rather than a printed publication without really reading it deeply.

### **Hints for E-mail Communication Within or From a Group**

If group members expect to receive communication from you via e-mail, ensuring that members check their e-mail at regular intervals is important. Not everyone with an e-mail account checks it often, so messages sent to group members won't reach them in a timely way if some people check e-mail infrequently. It is good practice for the group to discuss how they'd prefer communication to occur, so everyone knows and expects to receive communications via e-mail. Not everyone has access to e-mail. You need to consider how to include those without e-mail access within the "communication loop" so they don't feel excluded and so their ideas and thoughts can be included in the discussion.

Depending on the size of your group, it may be useful to have your Internet provider (or another group member's provider) develop a listserv for your group. A listserv is a distribution e-mail account with a single address to which people "subscribe." The listserv automatically sends the message to all subscribers. The advantage of a listserv is that it makes it easy for any member to send messages to the entire group without having to worry about knowing everyone's individual e-mail accounts (or accidentally forgetting to include someone, particularly new members).

E-mail can be a useful and cheap way to distribute a group newsletter, either directly in the body of the e-mail message or as an attachment. This can be sent to each individual e-mail address or through a listserv your

group creates specifically for the newsletter (which makes maintaining the e-mail distribution list much easier).

### **E-mail Courtesy**

Choose subject lines wisely. Recipients often prioritize mail using sender name and subject, so make sure they know the message is from you.

When replying to mail, cut out the irrelevant part of the message to which you're responding. This makes it easier for readers to find your message and keeps the e-mail message smaller.

Be careful using attachments in your e-mails. Try to avoid sending large files as attachments since some people have slow Internet connection speeds. If you have a personal Web site, an alternative is to post the large file on your Web site and then e-mail the URL to people so they can download the file when they have time.

When using attachments, be very aware that not everyone has the same software programs loaded on their computers, so they may not be able to open your attachments. It is good practice to use common formats such as RTF (rich text format) that can be opened by all word processors. If readers will not have the need to modify or edit your attachment, a PDF can be very useful because it provides a consistent format across all different kinds of computers and software. PDF's can be especially useful for newsletters.

If you have a slow Internet connection, check whether your e-mail program has an option of only downloading large attachments with your permission. This gives you more control over when (and if) you download such files.

When you "reply" to an e-mail message, be very aware to whom your reply will be sent; if you received the message from a listserv, for example,

many listservs are set to send replies to everyone on the list, not just the person who sent it.

Similarly, many e-mail users loathe unwanted e-mails. Avoid sending out multiple e-mails to people who have no connection with your group without first getting their permission (particularly e-mails soliciting funds or selling something), or you could find yourself accused of being a spammer.

If using e-mail to announce an event or other activity, it is better to include the relevant information directly in the body of the e-mail message so people can quickly read through it, rather than only saying "read the attachment" and requiring readers to take the extra step of opening the file to read your message. With the proliferation of viruses, many people are hesitant to open an attachment. In addition, relying upon such attachments means your e-mails needlessly take longer to download (particularly if you include many graphics in the attachment) than if your message is in the body of the e-mail.

### **Better Web Sites**

Web sites can be an extremely useful tool for groups to communicate information to members, clients, customers, and others. Good Web site construction and use require a clear focus on the Web site's purpose. Who is the intended user and what do they need to know? Why and how often will they visit the Web site? Who will be responsible for updating the Web site content? Some groups form a subcommittee to answer these questions. Including potential users on this committee to make sure you're accurately considering their needs is common.

A Web site does not need to be expensive. Inexpensive Web hosting services with more than enough

capacity for a typical basic group Web sites are available for less than \$75 a year. Registering a formal URL, such as <http://www.yourgroup.org/>, that is specific to your group is also inexpensive (less than \$20 a year) if you shop around. Having such a URL gives the Web site a more recognizable, professional, and permanent identity than using a URL based upon the Web host site (such as <http://www.webhost.com/yourgroup/>) and is much easier to remember.

### Use of the Web Site

A Web site can easily provide basic information to group members, clients, customers, and others. Common uses by groups include:

- A basic online calendar of upcoming events (potentially including agendas, links to maps, and directions to the meeting location)
- Minutes and agendas from past meetings
- Copies of handouts and other related materials distributed at prior meetings or in anticipation of an upcoming meeting
- Links to background information on issues of concerns and to groups with a similar interest
- Contact information for group officers
- Online registration for group events (either via e-mail or through an online form)

### Maintenance and Updates

Maintenance is the often overlooked requirement for making Web sites effective for your group. The Web site is only useful as long as the information on it is up to date. Discussing who will have the responsibility for keeping the calendar, upcoming events, and other time-sensitive information current is vital.

In addition, if the Web site includes an e-mail address for questions or contact information, make sure that someone will regularly check that e-mail address.

### Design Aspects

One of the most difficult parts of Web design to deal with is that potential users have a variety of different computers and will be using different Web browsers. A Webpage may look great on your own computer, but it may be incomprehensible (or even unloadable) on someone else's computer or in another browser. Viewing sites you're developing in several of the major browsers just to make sure the site works well in each is a good idea.

Surveys of Web site users suggest that most find "cute" graphics (such as waving flags, moving mailboxes, audio "welcome" messages or music, and scrolling banners) distracting and do not like them because they make the Webpage load slower. In addition, something that appears cute the first few times you see it (or hear it) just becomes annoying after the tenth or fifteenth time.

Be very careful whenever you use graphics on a Webpage. The same caveats about copyright mentioned in the "Effective Visuals" section apply equally well on Web sites. In addition, graphics (particularly photographs) are notorious for making Web sites slow to load; this is an inconvenience for users and might also drive away potential users who are waiting for

your page to appear. Make graphics as small as appropriate. In addition, be aware that the quality of graphics necessary for computer screens is much less than that required for printing as a photograph or other use. Thus, it is good practice to use a graphics program to reduce the quality of the graphics down to Web standard, dramatically increasing how fast they load.

A good primer for nonprofit groups on the use of Web sites is available online at <http://www.cas.nercrd.psu.edu/eNFP/index.cfm/>.

## Tips from the Professional

Although there are occasions when, no matter how hard we try, we miss a mistake or wish that we had chosen another phrase or expression, these tips from professional writers can help you sharpen your communication skills (Peterson 1997):

- Never overlook the importance of proofreading. Remember that the person who typed the document is least likely to find the errors.
- Spell checks are not perfect; remain alert—pay special attention to names and words that sound alike but do not have the same meaning; stationary (one place), stationery (as in an envelope).
- Try never to say “never.”
- Avoid beginning a letter or program announcement with a question. The reader can answer the question with a “no” and stop reading the message.
- Choose your words carefully:
  - a) *Should* implies that someone ought to; *will* says you are going to do it.
  - b) *Can* implies ability; *may* gives permission.
  - c) *Accept* means to agree with; *except* means to exclude.
  - d) A capital is a letter or a city in which government offices are grouped; a capitol is the building in which governing occurs.
  - e) That: A word that introduces a clause that is necessary to the meaning of the sentence. Example: The rain that caused the flooding has stopped.
  - f) Which: A word that introduces a clause that is not necessary to the meaning of a sentence. Example: The new car, which is red, is ready for the fast lane.

g) Affect is a verb that means to change or influence; effect is a verb that makes it happen.

h) Effect also can be used as a noun that describes the result.

- Do not begin a sentence with “however” or “nevertheless.”
- When a number is the first word in a sentence, spell it out. Ten members attended.
- Use numerals in tables and when referring to 10 or more of anything. When referring to the number, 1 to 9, spell them out.
- Use a comma to define quantities: 1,000 not 1000.
- Use more than 1,000 entries rather than over 1,000 entries. “Over” describes position, not a quantity. The handouts are on the table over by the window.
- Percent means per hundred. A percentage describes a portion to the whole.
- When a sentence ends with an abbreviation, two periods are not necessary: The meeting will begin at 9:00 A.M.
- Skip slang and local expressions.
- Be specific to get the job done. Instead of “Please return the permission slip ASAP,” try “Please return the permission slip by Friday, November 15, at 4 P.M.”
- Be kind. If you have a complaint, try phrasing it as a concern stated as an “I-message.”

## Communication Difficulties

Individual differences are a major cause of misunderstandings in communication. People want different things to satisfy their needs because of the interests (things wanted or enjoyed), values (things important or believed in), and attitudes (thoughts or feelings about ideas, people, things) they have acquired.

To avoid communication misunderstandings, try to accept and understand individual differences. Examine your own reactions to people and situations so you can imagine what it would be like to be someone else. Practice empathy.

Individuals can misunderstand each other in many ways. For example, people may be preoccupied and unable to listen to what others have to say. Or, people can be so interested in communicating their own messages and formulating responses that they listen to others only to find an opening to communicate their own message. Sometimes individuals listen in order to evaluate and make judgments about the speaker. The speaker may then become defensive and end the interaction. A lack of trust may also cause communication distortion. In a group, misunderstandings can cause a reduction in the information that is shared and an uncertainty concerning the information being communicated. Continued effort and attention is needed to maintain effective communication (Satir 1988).

Cultural, language, or semantic differences are often present. Sometimes we are blocked by our failure to clearly understand the words or terms used. Different connotations and meanings are linked to words in various sections of the country and to different racial, occupational, and other groups. Even within a single organization, these factors often blur understanding between occupational and professional groups.

Mutual trust and respect are the foundation for effective communications. When both of these exist, goals can be developed to which all individuals and groups are committed. Communication systems and procedures based on shared goals and developed cooperatively are those most supported, most adhered to, and, consequently, most efficient.

## Summary

Communication is simply an exchange of information—both giving and receiving. Talking, listening, reading, and understanding face and body movement are communication skills you use every day. Communication also includes what you do and how you do it. Are you aware of the many ways you communicate each day? Most people think of speaking before groups as an important leadership activity, but many other communication skills are just as important in your leadership roles.

Capable facilitators are excellent listeners, careful observers of nonverbal communication, skilled at conversing informally in small groups and on the telephone, able to obtain feedback from others, and proficient at writing. Learning activities in communicating will help you further expand these skills.

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## Productive Presentations

*Extension to Communities: Group Decision Making Tool Kit*. Iowa State University Extension.  
<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/tools/decisions/>.

*Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program*. National Park Service. <http://www.nps.gov/phso/rctatoolbox/>.

## Effective Web Sites

Access eNon-Profit, Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development.  
<http://www.cas.nercrd.psu.edu/eNFP/index.cfm/>.



One of the most critical needs in Pennsylvania is strong local leadership for the future well-being of communities. This includes leadership for civic and nonprofit organizations, youth, the business community, elected officials, and citizens.

The *Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow* leadership curriculum was developed to help individuals develop and strengthen their personal leadership skills so they can play active and constructive leadership roles in their communities. The program focuses on developing and strengthening personal and interpersonal leadership skills, group and organizational leadership skills, and community leadership skills.

The curriculum is designed for use as a comprehensive, multiple-session leadership training program, taught by trained Penn State Cooperative Extension educators. Individual modules can also be used for stand-alone training within existing groups or organizations who want training on specific leadership or group process issues.

The entire *Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow* curriculum includes:

#### Unit I: Personal Leadership Skills

- 1: The Leader within You
- 2: Values and Ethics
- 3: Understanding Your Leadership Style

#### Unit II: Interpersonal Leadership Skills

- 1: Communications Basics
- 2: Facilitation
- 3: Managing Conflict

#### Unit III: Group/Organizational Leadership Skills

- 1: Productive Groups
- 2: Effective Meetings
- 3: Group Decisions

#### Unit IV: Community/Public Policy Leadership Skills

- 1: Dealing with Change
- 2: Public Issues
- 3: Understanding Pennsylvania Local Government
- 4: Active Leadership

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