Communication & Problem Solving
How can I do it?

By Al Cobos, MS
Owner & Lead Consultant, Dychelon
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Communication

One of the needed skills for managers and supervisors is the ability to connect with our people. We have goals and responsibilities when it comes to achieving team objectives. Communicating with our team should not be solely about performance. We should be building a relationship with our people so we can understand their perspective while reaching objectives.

I have taught executive level managers who are incredibly busy and have immense responsibilities placed upon them by their organization. While they are skilled at executing their responsibilities, each of them has room for improvement when it comes to communicating their vision and goals. We all have room for improvement in this area.

I provide the following best practices which can be implemented in your everyday conversations with your people and the stakeholders to whom you are accountable. It is a concise version of what is offered in Dychelon courses. However, the concepts are valuable.

Questions and Communication

Consider an "Ask versus Tell" approach to when engaging our differing audiences. The ability to ask a question instead of providing the information to an audience creates engagement and thought. Ultimately, as speakers, we are trying to lead our audience down a specific path to meet a goal, objective, or purpose.

The ability to engage our audiences can be achieved through the following process:

- Intent: What direction is an audience being directed towards?

- Dialogue: How does the question create a conversation which moves the audience in an intended path?

- Relationships: How do the questions being asked build relationships with your audience?

Developing the "Right" Questions

When creating questions for the "Intent ➡ Dialog ➡ Relationships" process, consider the following:

- Open-ended: These questions cannot be answered with one word or a simple phrase. These questions challenge the listener to think about the topic being discussed/presented.

- Avoid the word "you" in the question: The use of the word "you" in a question can be perceived as accusatory in nature. This is of particular concern when asked in a group setting.

- Avoid the word "why" in question: The use of this word in a question can create a response that must be justified. It does not allow for a thoughtful and informative response.
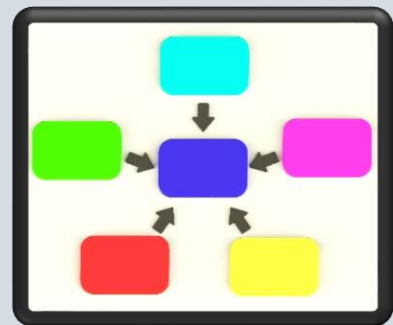
Problem Solving

Another aspect for executive level managers is the prospect of problem solving. Many times, we reach for the most obvious part of the problem to solve. But there are usually underlying causal factors which are triggering the problem. These causal factors may not be initially perceptible. Mind-mapping can be a useful, and very visual, tool for tackling a problem. It offers the ability to assess the problem from all sides. It is a flexible assessment which can dig deep into what is causing the problem. This process ultimately leads to a potential solution. Give it a try.

Mind-Mapping & Visual Problem Solving

Mapping out a problem can give an individual or a group a visual representation of a problem. The following is a good guide for using a mind-map:

- Place the topic/problem at the center of the map

- Consider causal factors first, not potential solutions. You want to have a good grasp of what is causing the problem.

- Identify those impacted by the topic/problem.

- Be creative and dig deep.

- Diversity of perspective will help in creating a comprehensive mind-map.

Give yourself a challenge and apply these concepts at work. The effort will help you connect with your teams and problem solve too.

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Al Cobos is the owner and lead consultant for Dychelon which improves team performance and promotes successful team building. Al has successfully built teams over the past two decades. He has over thirty years of public sector experience in addition to teaching for several universities. His focus is to improve people in their personal and professional lives.