

How to Communicate with Diplomacy, Tact and Credibility

Lesson Worksheets

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Resource Materials

Goals and Intentions

What are the three things you want to learn from this seminar? Write your ideas below, and be prepared to share them with the class.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

PIE: A Model to Improve Diplomacy, Tact, and Credibility

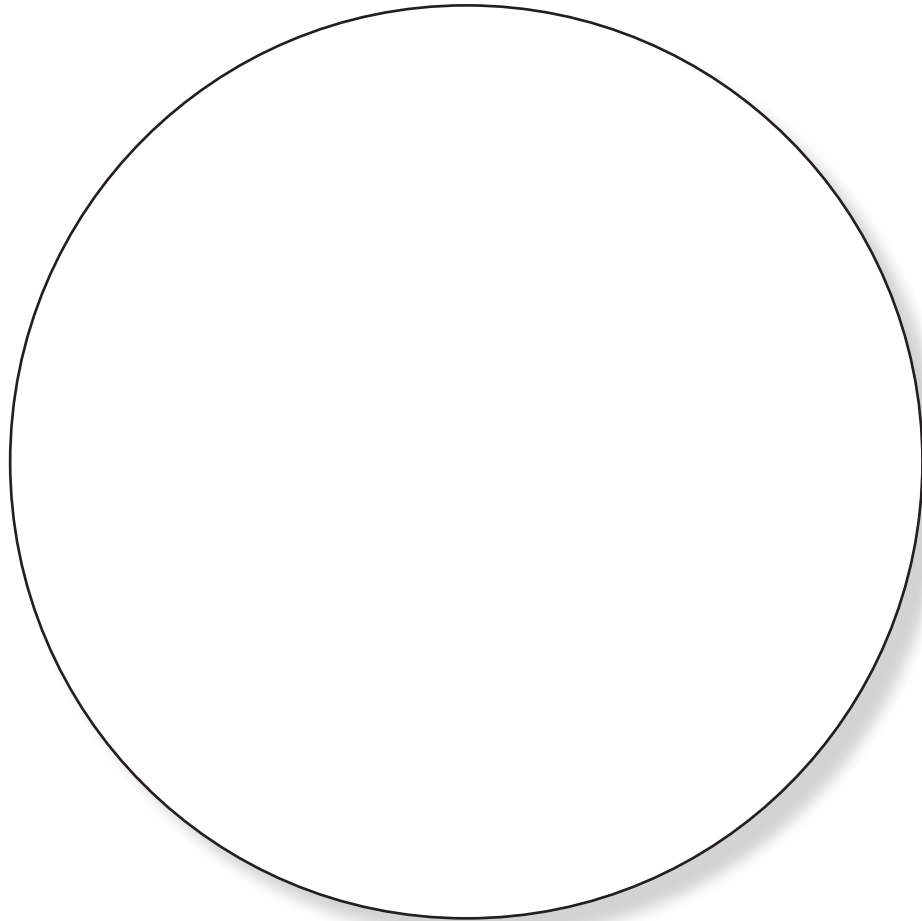
The PIE model demonstrates three segments that impact how others perceive you:

P = **Performance**

I = **Image**

E = **Exposure**

Looking at the chart below, divide the pie into three segments, **Performance**, **Image**, and **Exposure**. How does your pie look? Which segment is the largest?



Sam's Case

You are now going to read a case study about an employee, Sam. (Sam is attending this AMA seminar *How to Communicate with Diplomacy, Tact, and Credibility* for his own development.)

1. After reading the case study to yourself, please work with your breakout group to answer the questions that follow.
2. Choose a recorder to write your answers in the Note Pod.
3. Choose a group leader to facilitate the activity and share your answers with the class.

Sam is a technical manager in the Process Improvement Department of a mid-sized company located in the Northeast.

Sam has been with the company for 15 years. He started out as an engineer in the production area, but because of his wonderful technical skills and his ability to work quickly, be a cracker-jack problem solver, and bring order and structure to disorganized situations, he was promoted to first-line supervisor five years ago. Sam was a good first-line supervisor because he was a “working” supervisor. He not only kept track of production indices and solved production-related problems, but actually helped his staff do their work. Sam was promoted again two years ago. This time he was promoted to technical manager in the Process Improvement Department, where he manages eight full-time employees and two interns. In addition, Sam must work cross-functionally with Marketing, Production, Manufacturing, HR, and R&D, utilizing a team approach to problem solving in order to improve processes at the plant.

Sam has begun to experience numerous problems in his new position. In the past, when a problem occurred, he was the “go-to” man for solving the problem. Now, Sam must know whom to involve in the process in order to solve a problem. Sam feels that it is much more expeditious for him to solve problems alone, and this has gotten him into some hot water with Jim in the Research Department and Tami in Marketing. They don't see Sam as a team player. They felt left out of a recent decision that was made, which negatively impacted them. They asked Sam to meet and talk with them, but he never got back to them. When Sam made his decision it was a “done deal”; he did not seek out Jim's or Tami's ideas about the process or the solution to the problem. This was not well tolerated when they went back to their individual departments to report the results of Sam's solution. Tami and Jim went to Sam's boss and complained about Sam's need for authority and his lack of teamwork.

Sam's boss was not pleased. The company is placing several new products on the market, and it needs continual process improvement input in order to produce and sell quality items. The company's culture has also changed, and teamwork is a core company value.

Sam also had a run-in with the manufacturing manager when he instructed the manager to change a process. The manager wanted Sam to include him in his decision-making process. When the manager questioned Sam's authority, Sam became impatient and sarcastic, and forcefully told the manager that his ideas were “idiotic.”

Sam's last performance appraisal was not great, and he did not receive his anticipated bonus or raise. Sam felt that, although he could not dispute that these two negative events occurred this past year, he believed that his good work was tainted because of them. In addition, he believes that these events colored how his boss perceives him. Sam went to his boss and argued with him about the appraisal—and the meeting ended on a negative note. Sam is concerned because his boss has several new engineers that are “eyeing” the promotional ladder and fears that he will be overlooked for future promotions and projects. Sam's boss has always been quiet and self-contained, but now he is somewhat distant with Sam; Sam feels out of the “loop” and is concerned about his future with this company.

Case Study Questions

Instructions: Working with your breakout group, answer the following questions.

1. Why was Sam promoted to the position of technical manager?

2. What was the boss's perception of Sam before he was promoted? What was Sam's image?

3. What is Sam's image now?

4. What factors have influenced the boss's changed perception of Sam?

5. How has the change in Sam's image negatively impacted him?

6. Has Sam's actual work performance changed?

7. What does Sam's PIE look like now? Specifically, which of Sam's behaviors negatively impacts his image?

8. How has the boss's perception become Sam's reality?

9. What steps can Sam take to improve his image?

10. How could this class help Sam in his new role?

Video: Effective Communication

Instructions: Consider the following questions as you watch the video of a team meeting.

- Was the leader credible?

- Was she looking to accuse people?

- Would you trust this leader?

- What went wrong?

- How did her communication affect her credibility?

- Who else in the group was credible? What behaviors did he/she exhibit?

- Who in the group was not credible? What behaviors did he/she demonstrate?

Style Demonstration

Below, please write your name once, using your preferred hand.

Now, write your name again, this time using your non-preferred hand.

How did it feel to use your non-preferred hand?

Working with Styles

Instructions: With your group, discuss what others can do to work effectively with your assigned style. Be sure to address both intensities for each style (e.g., for Influencing, address both indirect and direct styles). Take notes on the information presented on the other styles during the debrief.

Influencing

Indirect

What works well...

Direct

What works well...

Responding

Reserved

What works well...

Outgoing

What works well...

Pacing**Urgent***What works well...*

Steady*What works well...*

Organizing**Unstructured***What works well...*

Precise*What works well...*

Flexing to Communicate Better with Opposite Styles

Instructions: Refer back to “Sam’s Case”. Review the details of the case, and then answer the questions below.

- What is Sam’s style?

- What is the style of Sam’s boss?

- What style(s) should Sam use to communicate with diplomacy, tact, and credibility with his boss?

- Why specifically do you think that Sam’s communication style is NOT working for him?

My Own Case

Instructions: Consider one person at work with whom you interact regularly but also with whom you have interpersonal or communication challenges. Answer the questions below about this person, and be prepared to discuss your situation with the class.

- What is the problem?

- How is this person's Style the same or different from your own?

- How will you approach this person differently in the future, knowing what you now know about styles?

Communication Roadblocks

John is responsible for accounts payable and generating payroll. Payroll takes him a significant amount of time, and for months, he has been waiting for the Information Department (IT) to complete the programming on a payroll generation file. It’s been postponed nine times. John’s confidence in the department and in the feasibility of the programming happening before the end of the year is nonexistent.

Last week, Linda was hired as the new manager of IT. Linda has asked to meet with John to discuss current IT projects as they relate to the HR function. As they talk, it becomes evident to John that the payroll generation file project is not high on Linda’s priority list.

Linda is asking for John’s input on the project, but to John it means starting over after months of work. John shuts down and says, “Just forget the project—it was never going to happen anyway.”

What steps should Linda take to approach the roadblocks?

Instructions: With your breakout group, develop an action plan to move the project forward and gain John’s cooperation. Be prepared to role-play your action plan for the class.

Roadblock	Words to Use and Actions to Take in Order to Overcome the Roadblock

Your Miscommunication—Part 1

Instructions: Think about a recent miscommunication you experienced.

1. What caused the communication breakdown—from your end? What roadblocks did you encounter?

2. How did the communication breakdown you experienced negatively impact the other person's image of you?

3. What could you have done better to improve communication?

The Three Vs of Communication—Visuals

The visual elements of communication consist of five elements:

1. **Eye Contact**—In this culture, eye contact is expected when communicating. Its absence indicates dishonesty, disinterest, a lack of sincerity or concern, and other negative interpretations. Eye contact is for the benefit of the other person; it shows the other person we're listening to him/her.
2. **Facial Expression**—Our facial expressions send messages about our ability and/or willingness to communicate with others. Our facial responses are a visual animation of how we feel about another person and his/her message. Others "read" our face and receive information from our facial reactions. People who are seen as interpersonally sensitive allow others to see some of their emotions and reactions; they do not always maintain a stoic "poker" expression, regardless of the information that is communicated.
3. **Body Language**—Body language is a visual language that primarily supports or contradicts the auditory message we send. If it supports the message, the receiver is most likely to believe us; if it contradicts the message, the receiver is likely to think that our message is dishonest. When there is a contradiction between our words and our body language, others tend to believe what they see rather than what they hear—in other words, body language can carry more weight than the verbal message. Further research has demonstrated that when making a presentation in which establishing credibility, making an initial impression, or building a relationship is the prime purpose, body language will have the greatest impact on what is communicated.¹
4. **Object Language**—This is how we visually present ourselves to others. Dress, hairstyle, and even the way we keep our office send messages to others about us. These messages are then interpreted according to the perceiver's concept of what is appropriate in certain situations.
5. **Proxemics**—Proxemics involve the dynamics of spatial relationships. While personal comfort zones vary according to cultures, the average personal comfort zone in the U.S. is about 1 1/2 to 4 feet. Be careful not to invade another's space when communicating.

¹ Adapted from *Artful Persuasion: How to Command Attention, Change Minds, and Influence People* by Harry Mills. © 2000 Harry Mills. Used by permission of the publisher, AMACOM Books, New York, New York. www.amacombooks.org

The Three Vs of Communication—Vocals

There are four elements involved in vocal communication:

1. **Speed of Voice**—On average, Americans speak at 125–250 words per minute, depending on which part of the country they were raised in. Most people think Southerners tend to speak slower compared to those from the Northeast. When there is a significant discrepancy in vocal speed between two speakers, problems can arise. For public speaking, the rule of thumb is not to exceed 150 words per minute; for one-on-one conversations, proceed with your normal rate, which usually is around 200 words per minute.²
2. **Volume**—People with deep voices are generally perceived as more persuasive than those with voices that are relatively high pitched. This is true for women as well as men. Lowering pitch also tends to minimize a nasal vocal quality, that many listeners find annoying. To have a positive impact, be sure to speak loud enough, because if the audience can't hear you, you will lose your ability to communicate effectively. The key is to vary your volume by stressing the most important words and phrases.
3. **Inflection**—Inflection is the emphasis you place on certain words when speaking. Inflection tells others how you feel about what you are saying. It is the body language of the voice. A powerful message without the proper inflection can lose its impact.
4. **Tone of Voice**—Often, it isn't what you say but how you say it. People actually pay more attention to the tone in which you say something than what you actually say. Tone addresses the character of emphasis used: angry, sad, sincere, sarcastic, etc.

In some research findings, vocals accounted for approximately 35% to 40% of the impact of a message.

² From **How to Say It at Work**, 2nd ed., by Jack Griffin. Copyright © 1998, 2008 by Prentice Hall. Used by permission of Prentice Hall, a division of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

The Three Vs of Communication–Verbals

Verbal communication is one of the major ways that we impact others and one of the major ways we demonstrate our diplomacy, tact, and credibility.

Verbals are the words you use. Your choice of words determines how your communication is likely to come across to others. Words that are considerate of others are likely to help deliver a more sincere message as opposed to random words you might choose without concern for their possible impact. For example, when you disagree with someone, you could say, *"You are wrong"* or you could say, *"I am not sure I agree with you."* The impact of the "you are wrong" statement is a perception of the communicator as undiplomatic and tactless. In addition, such a statement creates defensiveness and an automatic dislike of what is being communicated.

When communicating, avoid words that label and judge. Words that are emotionally charged and value-laden will also cause you, as a communicator, to lose credibility and communication effectiveness. Also, when communicating negative information to someone, it is best to use "I" rather than "you" statements.

Because words are a crucial component of communication, be careful not to use loaded words which can cause a severe emotional overreaction on the part of the listener. Whenever a speaker uses ethnic, racial, religious, or political words or humor, he/she is going to cause an emotional reaction in most listeners. Technical people often focus too much on the verbals and not enough on the visual and vocal components of communication.

Your Miscommunication—Part 2

Breakout Group Discussion

Instructions: As a breakout group, discuss each member's miscommunication, and then answer the following questions:

- What were some common roadblocks identified in your scenarios?

- In what ways were group members' images negatively affected by their miscommunication?

- What actions could have been taken to avoid the miscommunication?

Case Study: Rick and the Lazy Teammate

Let's see how we can use the Know-Feel-Do Model to deal with the following situation:

Rick is a chip designer and team leader who works with a group in which responsibility is supposed to be shared. Rick works hard and has won awards for his design performance. He finds, however, that he frequently ends up doing more than his share of work because John, another group member, works remotely and often fails to respond to the team's requests.

Today is Friday. It's 4:30 p.m. and Rick is looking forward to spending the weekend with his family. He is also looking forward to starting his vacation next week. Suddenly, an email blinks onto his screen saying that the new chip design his team has been working on has been nominated to skip beta testing and go straight to market in two weeks in order to beat the competition. Rick knows his leisurely weekend and lengthy vacation will have to be postponed.

He immediately calls in all his team members and alerts them to the situation. When he calls John, he ends up leaving a voicemail message because John doesn't answer. Then, three minutes later, an email from John pops up on Rick's screen that says, "I won't be available to help get the design to market. I'm starting my vacation next week."

Rick is furious. He picks up the phone and dials John's number but he is still unable to reach him.

Rick ends up postponing his vacation and working two weeks straight with his team to get the chip to market. He left an angry message for John—who never did pick up the phone and went on his own vacation anyway. Rick was a little relieved to have him gone; it was probably easier to work without him than to pretend he might participate.

Rick and John are both back from their vacations and nothing has changed. Rick is sick of doing all the work while John lounges in his remote home office and refuses to answer his phone. He hates John's irresponsibility and loathes having him on the team. He's decided to confront John *in a way that will yield results*.

Rick wants John to **Know**: He will no longer tolerate his nonparticipation, he has documented previous occurrences, and he will contact their manager the next time he fails to respond or participate

He wants him to **Feel**: Concerned about the impact on his keeping his job given this ongoing behavior

He wants him to **Do**: Either work as a team player or get off the team

Working with your breakout group, decide what Rick should say to John when he calls him, using the Know-Feel-Do Model:

If he says this, how do you think John will react? Will it change his situation? Why or why not?

Prepare to role-play your plan based on the Know-Feel-Do Model for the class.

Direct Application: Know-Feel-Do

1. With whom do you want/need to communicate?

2. What do you want him/her to KNOW?

3. How do you want him/her to FEEL?

4. What do you want him/her to DO?

5. Based on your answers, what will you say to this person?

Applying Listening Skills

Instructions: Capture notes about what you would suggest be done differently to address each situation with diplomacy, tact, and credibility.

- Listening when you are getting attacked:

- Listening when the content of the discussion is against your core values:

- Listening when you are not interested:

My Credibility

Think about your own credibility.

List one or two situations in which you believe you are credible, and explain why others believe you to be credible in those situations.

1. _____

2. _____

List one or two situations in which you believe you are NOT credible, and explain why others may think you are not credible in those situations.

1. _____

2. _____

What would it take for you to regain your credibility in each situation?

Be prepared to discuss your responses.

Helping Sam Communicate with Diplomacy, Tact, and Credibility

Instructions: Refer again to “Sam’s Case” at the beginning of this *Case Study Action Planner*. Working with your breakout group, answer the following for Sam’s case.

- Three things Sam could do to be more tactful:

- Three to five recommendations/actions Sam should take to become a more credible and diplomatic communicator:

Be prepared to defend your recommendations!

My Story

Instructions: Think about a situation at work that helped to lead you to enroll in this course. Using the details of that situation, list recommendations you have for yourself to become a more credible, tactful, and diplomatic communicator. Also note the actions you will take to implement the recommendations.

1. **Recommendation**

Action

2. **Recommendation**

Action

3. **Recommendation**

Action

My Action Plan

From the lists of key learning points you have completed throughout the program, choose three key behavioral changes you believe will make the greatest impact on your job performance.

Change #1:

Types of support I will need and how I can request it:

Change #2:

Types of support I will need and how I can request it:

Change #3:

Types of support I will need and how I can request it:

How to Communicate with Diplomacy, Tact, and Credibility

Resource Materials

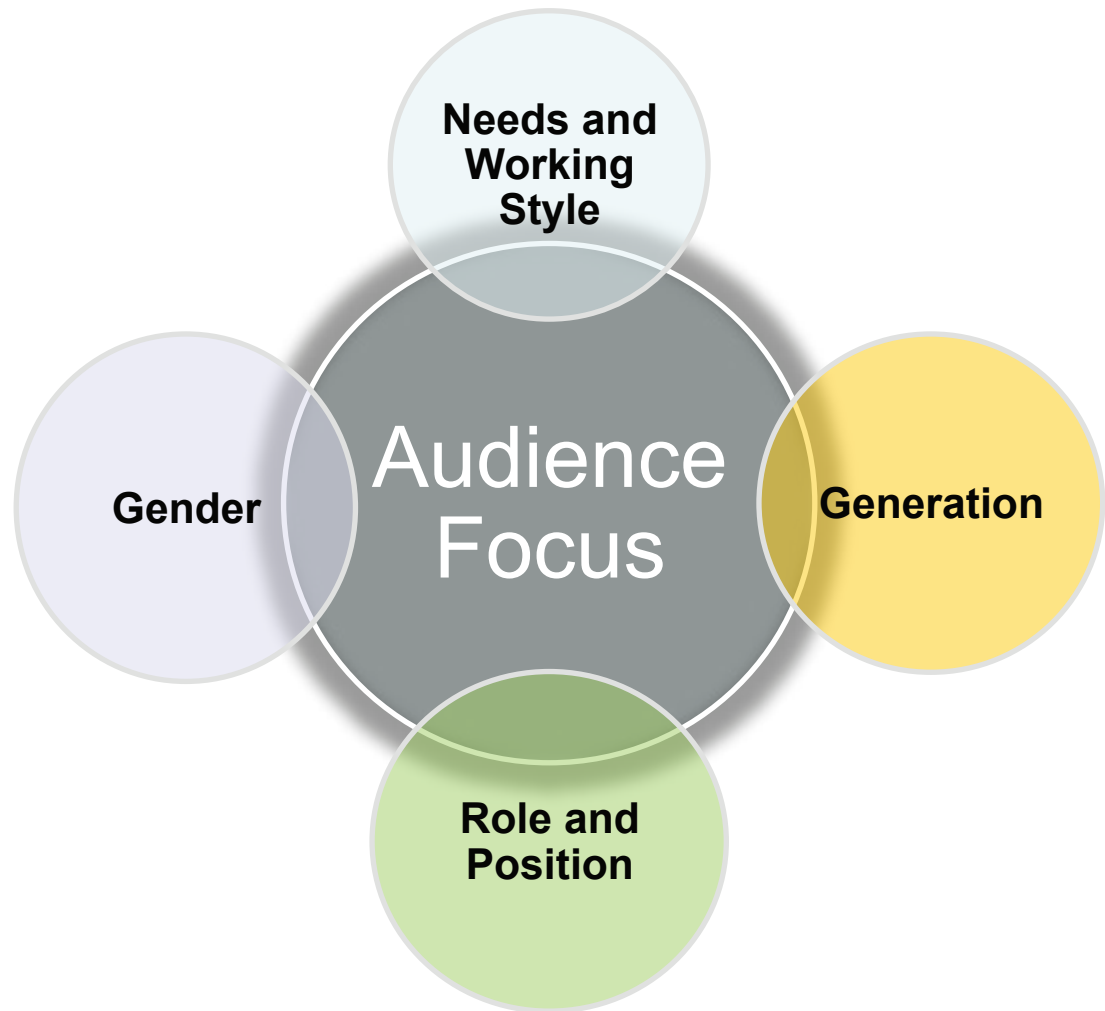
A Communication Model



Flexing for More Effective Communication

Remember to flex your communication by considering the following about the receiver of your message:

Audience Focus



Know-Feel-Do Model

- Want others to **KNOW** something: “What is the one thing I want people to know, understand, learn, or question?”
- Want others to **FEEL** something: “How do I want people to feel when I’m done?”
- Want others to **DO** something: “What do I want people to do as a direct result of my communication?”

Effective Listening

1. Show respect.

- Let those around you know that you believe each of them has something worth sharing.
- Give them your full attention when they speak.
- Encourage and ensure the free and open flow of communication and ideas.

2. Keep quiet.

- Invoke the 80/20 Rule: Let your conversation partner speak 80% of the time, while you speak 20% of the time.*
- Make your speaking time count by posing more questions instead of trying to have your own say.
- Keep your ego/agenda out of the conversation.
- Work to control the urge to speak, and improve the quality and effectiveness of your conversations by weighing in at the right time.
- Practice using silence more effectively—to observe nonverbal cues and to allow space for others to speak.

3. Challenge assumptions.

- Seek to understand—and challenge—the assumptions that lie below the surface of every conversation.
- Listen for and absorb new information that may change your response.
- Get what you need from your conversation by challenging your long-held and cherished assumptions.
- Seek to uncover what both parties need from an interaction to make it meaningful.
- Embrace disagreement and alternative viewpoints.
- Alter, if appropriate, a single fact or assumption to see how that changes the other person's response.

*Bernard T. Ferrari, "The Executive's Guide to Better Listening," *McKinsey Quarterly* (February 2012).

How to Maintain Diplomacy, Tact, and Credibility When...

Some good actions may include any of the following:

Unprepared

- **Flex to the listener's style.** Identify how to frame your response in a way that will have the greatest impact on and value to the listener.
- **Take your time.** Don't respond quickly or begin mentally responding before the question is completed. Hasty reactions can erode your credibility, leading to inaccurate information and an incorrect response. The results could be very damaging.
- **Speak slowly and concisely.** When under pressure, physically making yourself speak slowly forces you to think more slowly and to keep track of the other dynamics occurring around you. It also reduces the likelihood of a spontaneous reaction instead of a thoughtful response.
- **Think through the motives behind and the underlying issues** of the hot seat question, and address them. Ask questions and focus on identifying how best to respond and to provide information to meet the need. Don't focus on feeling embarrassed, put on the spot, or awkward. Instead, see the situation as an opportunity to shine.
- **Say, "I don't know," when necessary, instead of guessing.** Ask for time to research and get back to the person if the question is complicated and you don't have the information at hand.
- **Respond with timely, accurate, relevant information in a concise and confident manner.** Keep your response directed to the inquiry, not the big picture. Provide additional information, if requested, but don't overload your listener with extraneous information.

Publicly and Verbally Challenged

- **Prepare/practice your delivery.** Whether delivering a proposal one on one or to a larger group, the more you practice, the more polished and professional you will sound. Also, nervousness and uncertainty are overcome with practice.
- **Provide setup remarks and statements.** Begin with an attention-getting statement or question. Draw listeners in by immediately addressing their needs. It helps if you know their "style" and what interests them.
- **Present with dynamism.** Don't give a dry recital of facts and statistics. People are enthused when you are dynamic about an idea. Your goal is to gain support of your ideas. If you don't demonstrate enthusiasm for your own ideas, how can you expect differently from others?
- **Make sure your facts are correct.** Bring your backup information and research. Provide copies and visuals for pertinent documents and backup.
- **Ask questions of others.** Ask for input and ideas as part of the presentation. When you involve others, they feel empowered and become committed to your ideas. Peter Drucker, a famous management guru, once said, "People cooperate to the extent to which they participate." Have others participate in your meetings to gain their cooperation.
- **Line up an advocate in advance.** Discuss and practice your delivery with someone else before the actual presentation. Get the person's input on how you can improve your delivery and your proposal. Ask permission to use the person as a resource and support during your presentation.

- **Listen carefully.** Even if you disagree with what someone says, listen completely to the person before responding. People often just want to be heard—and to vent. Then, when the person finishes, he/she will listen to what you have to say.
- **Delivery, delivery, delivery.** Make sure you deliver the message concisely and at a time and place suitable for everyone attending your presentation.
- **Summarize.** Be sure to summarize what others say and what you want as your final outcome.
- **React professionally and appropriately.** Don't lose your cool, and stay calm.

Meeting New People

- **Smile.** Enter a room smiling, and be aware of your body language. Make yourself look comfortable, approachable, and friendly.
- **Remember people's names.** Begin by introducing yourself to someone, and say the person's name two or three times within the course of a few minutes in order to remember it. People like when their names are remembered—it makes them feel important.
- **Be dynamic.** Watch your tone, volume, and inflection—and present your ideas concisely and with enthusiasm. People become enthused when you are enthused about an idea—and people like others who generate enthusiasm and self-confidence.
- **Ask questions about others.** People like to talk about themselves—so you should ask them questions about their lives and interests. Also, asking questions of others helps build rapport.
- **Circulate.** Network and meet others. You never know when you will meet someone who will end up helping you or with whom you will interact later in life. The bigger your circle in life, the greater your credibility. Don't stand in one place the whole time—mingle!
- **Prepare.** Before the party or event, think about three or four issues you feel comfortable discussing, and plan your ideas and discussion in your mind. You will feel more able to open up and share ideas if you do some preplanning.
- **Build in rest stops.** If being with "strangers" exhausts you, figure out ways to build in one or two small breaks, so you can recharge yourself before continuing your networking. Maybe go into the library and look at some books—or walk outside for five minutes for a breath of fresh air. Then, return back to the social gathering renewed and ready to create rapport.

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