

HOW TO BE A CLEAR COMMUNICATOR

To the extent that one shares meaning with another, the two parties communicated. Anyone familiar with the academic side of communication can tell you, it's very difficult for any two people, much less groups, to accurately convey meaning to one another. Our minds are too filled with our own assumptions. For example, suppose I asked you to think of a person riding a horse. Some of you, by virtue of your background or imagination, might picture a cowboy galloping through the mountains. Others of you might instinctively envision a girl, jumping gates in an arena. Your mind's eye colors things differently than others based on your experiences. No two people ever perfectly communicate. However, the more clearly we communicate, the greater the ability to trust.

Clear communication is difficult for another reason. Some studies suggest that over 90% of the meaning we derive comes from non-verbal cues that one person gives to another. That means only 10% of communication is based on words we say! Clear communication is work. As Bill Gates said, "The vision is really about empowering workers, giving them all the information about what's going on so they can do a lot more than they've done in the past."

Tips for Being a Clear Communicator:

- Listen.
- Empathize.
- Avoid manipulation. Don't overstate or understate.
- Speak honestly and without exaggeration.
- Stay focused and avoid distractions.
- Ask questions.
- Glean information from the non-verbal communication.
- Keep an open mind and do not jump to conclusions.
- Do not criticize.
- Simplify the complicated.
- First seek to understand, and then to be understood.
- Mean what you say.