Understanding Communication Styles – Train the Trainer

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION STYLES MATTERS

Communication style is the key to fostering positive relationships, avoiding miscommunications, and ensuring the message you send is understood by the recipient. The advantages are even more pronounced in a business context, where effective communication is essential to success on an individual, team, and company-wide level.

FOUR PRIMARY COMMUNICATION STYLES

1. **Passive Communication Style.** Passive communicators are typically quiet and don't seek attention. They may act indifferent during debates and rarely take a strong stance or assert themselves. They don't usually share their needs or express their feelings, so it may be difficult to know when they are uncomfortable or need help. **You can identify a passive communicator by these tendencies:**

- Inability to say no
- Poor posture
- Easy-going attitude
- Lack of eye contact
- Soft voice
- Apologetic demeanor
- Fidgeting

Consider these methods to encourage a good working relationship if dealing with a passive communicator:

- Take a direct approach.
- Ask for their opinions.
- Use broad language. Avoid asking "yes" or "no" questions that can be answered with little elaboration.

2. **Aggressive Communication Style.** Aggressive communicators frequently express their thoughts and feelings and tend to dominate conversations, often at the expense of others. An aggressive communicator may also react before thinking, which can negatively affect relationships and decrease productivity in the workplace.

Aggressive Communicators Have These Tendencies:

- Interrupting people while they're speaking
- Invading personal spaces
- Presenting an overbearing posture
- Using aggressive gestures
- Maintaining intense eye contact

Consider these methods when working with an aggressive communicator:

- Be calm and assertive.
- Keep conversations professional.
- Know when to walk away.

3. **Passive-Aggressive Communication Style.** Passive-aggressive communicators appear passive on the surface but often have more aggressive motivations driving their actions. While their words might sound agreeable, their actions don't always align with what they say. Passive-aggressive communicators can quietly manipulate a situation into one that benefits them.

Examples Of Passive-Aggressive Communicators

- Muttering
- Using sarcasm
- Exhibiting denial
- Giving the silent treatment
- Presenting a happy face when they're clearly upset

Consider the following approaches when dealing with a passive-aggressive communicator:

- Make clear requests. Try not to leave room for

misinterpretation or confusion.
   - Confront negative behavior. Talk to them directly about their behavior.
   - Ask for feedback. Directly ask for feedback in one-on-one situations to try to elicit honest response.

4. **Assertive Communication Style.** The assertive style is typically the most respectful and productive type of communication in the workplace. Assertive communicators share their thoughts and ideas confidently, but they're always respectful and polite. They readily take on challenges but know how to say "no" when it's required. These individuals understand their own limits and protect their boundaries without acting overly aggressive or defensive.

Assertive Behavior Exhibits Itself Through:

- Expansive gestures
- Collaborative and sharing tendencies
- Healthy expression of ideas and feelings
- Good posture
- A clear voice
- Friendly eye contact

If you have assertive communicators on your team, encourage them to share their ideas, place them in positions of leadership and enlist their help dealing with passive, passive-aggressive and aggressive communication styles.

TAKEAWAY

Recognizing different forms of communication will dramatically enhance the quality of your working relationships. That's because your skill of managing difficult conversations depends on communication ability.