



Modern Whig Party of America

Whig Academy

Module One:

Leadership

Lesson One:

Communication

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Introduction

Welcome to the lesson Communication. This is the first lesson of the Whig Academy Training online! These courses are targeted toward emerging leaders within the Whig Party, and communication is the foundation of any leadership role.

Because communication both with individuals and with teams is so important to your role in the community, this lesson is the first in the level II series. Your communication skills are the foundation of your role in the Whig Party and the community.

How many of you can go a day without communicating? Think about it, no email, no telephone conversations, no facial expressions, etc. I think we can all agree that communication is a very important part of our daily lives. We communicate in a variety of ways and with many different people...more than we probably realize.

In this Lesson

This lesson explains the definitions of communication, different ways to communicate, miscommunication, principles of communication, communication barriers and roadblocks, effective communication techniques, netiquette, tips for effective listening, and barriers to effective listening.

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

Define Communication.

Identify personal communication strengths and weaknesses.

Discuss communication barriers and tips for improvement.

What is Communication?

What is Communication? Many people think of communicating as the act of sending a message, but in reality don't you need someone to receive the message that is being sent? Both of these elements must be present for communication to occur.

For the purpose for this training we are going to define Communication as the sending and receiving of messages by speech, signals, writing, and/or behavior.

Exercise: Who and How We Communicate

Now, let's perform a communication exercise.

Different Ways to Communicate

So is it fair to say that you communicate through many and varied means...verbally, non-verbally, through writing, reading, and listening? With all of this varied communication going on, do you think miscommunication can occur?

To avoid miscommunication, you need to learn to communicate effectively. The purpose of this lesson is to discuss the importance of effective communication as well as provide some techniques for becoming a more effective communicator.

Miscommunication Example: GI Party

Let's take a look at an example of miscommunication.

It was 5:30 PM. An Army spouse had been home with the kids all day. She had been working for about a half hour preparing supper for her family. She planned to have supper finished by 6:00 PM in time for her husband to arrive home from work. She was tired and stressed out, but looking forward to seeing her husband and spending time with him.

Just then the telephone rang. It was her husband. He said, "I don't have time to talk now. I just wanted to let you know I am on my way to a GI party. I'll be home late, so don't wait up for me. I have to go because the guys are waiting on me to get started."

Meanwhile the spouse is stunned that he could be so insensitive. She was tired and had been working hard to get supper finished for her family. Now her husband was going to a party with "the guys". She was so mad, she could hardly see straight!

Miscommunication Review

Let's review the following questions about the example of the GI party:

Was communication going on? (Sending or receiving messages?)

Was the communication taking place between the Soldier and spouse effective? Why?

What is a GI party? Does everyone we talk to understand what a GI party is?

What happens when you use acronyms, terminology, or slang that others don't understand?

Did the spouse have the opportunity to even ask a question for clarification?

What happens in this instant?

Miscommunication

As we all know, if a message is not delivered effectively, it can generate negative and unwanted consequences. Think about the example of the GI Party. What do you think happened when that Soldier arrived home?

If only the Soldier hadn't assumed that his spouse knew what a GI party was and instead said that he would be home late because he needed to stay and clean the work area.

Just as you can misunderstand messages that are directed at you, messages that you send can be misunderstood by others. For all kinds of reasons, people often "read into" messages and hear things that aren't there; therefore, it's imperative to communicate clearly and effectively.

Principles of Communication

Here are some general principles of communication that you should keep in mind to help you clarify your communication and avoid miscommunications.

Click on each sentence for more information.

The message sent is not always the message received

What does this statement mean?

Think about the GI party story. Was the message received by the spouse the same message the Soldier intended for her to receive when he called her? The spouse getting angry may not have happened if she knew what a GI party was or the sender didn't speak in acronyms.

What are some ways that you can make the message you send clear, accurate, and effective? For example, make sure others understand what you mean. The message you send has a better chance of being the message received.

It is impossible to NOT communicate

Do you believe this statement to be true?

Every action you take communicates a message. For example, body language, smiling, frowning, rolling your eyes or the tone of voice sends a message. Even if you don't speak or intentionally send a message, you still communicate in other ways and can convey attitudes or feelings.

Have you ever been told that people can tell exactly what you are thinking and feeling by your facial expressions and body language?

Every message has both content and feeling

What do you think this statement means?

Content is the substance of the message. Feeling is the intended expressions or inflections of the sender, such as excitement in a speech.

When you are reading a letter or email from someone, can you get an idea of what they are feeling by the type of words and punctuation they are using? What about talking to someone on the phone?

Nonverbal cues are more believable than verbal cues

Here are some examples.

Speaking with their arms folded.

Looking away while talking.

Smiling and acting interested.

Your movements, gestures, eye contact, language, and body posture can say a lot.

There is an old saying: actions speak louder than words. Usually you are not even aware of the many nonverbal cues you communicate to each other. In other words, these things can be more believable than your spoken words.

Communication Barriers

Be aware of communication barriers. Barriers hinder the communication process, and can serve as roadblocks to effective communication. It is useful to think of barriers as obstacles in the path of free-flowing communication – they may not totally block the messages being sent, but can filter or screen

them, causing the messages received to be somehow different from the ones sent. Let's take a look at some of these barriers.

Roadblocks to Communication

What did you learn about any barriers or roadblocks that you may not have thought about?

What are some things that you can now do to avoid these barriers?

Do these barriers always provide a negative effect during communication? Where might they actually help a situation?

Keep in mind that these barriers should not always be considered bad. In certain situations, they can be effective at helping an individual achieve a particular result. The key to their effectiveness is to be aware of when and why you are using them.

Making note of these "roadblocks to communication" will help you avoid them in your conversational style.

Effective Communication

Speak specifically and clearly

Saying specifically what you mean leaves little room for miscommunication. Don't talk down to anyone, but make sure you include all the necessary information. Say what you mean, how you feel, what you want, and what you think if that's what you want the other person to hear. When clear communication is important, it can be a good idea to plan what you want to say before you share it with another person. Click on the statement that is more clear and specific to continue.

1)

Meet me in the evening at the mall.

2)

Meet me at the Food Court in the mall next Friday at 6:00 PM.

Effective Communication

Watch the non-verbal

Have you ever heard anyone say, "His actions spoke so loudly I couldn't hear what he said?" People tend to believe one's actions more than the words they speak!

We've already talked about non-verbal cues. What were some of the non-verbal ways to communicate?

Some questions to think about:

Does your body language send the same message as your words?

Just what type of message do you send with your non-verbal cues?

What are some steps that you can take to ensure you are sending the right message even non-verbally?

Always keep in mind that the receiver of communication tends to base the message and intentions of the sender on the non-verbal cues he/she receives.

Effective Communication

Clear and concise written communication

In writing, legibility and readability are as important as the content. If your writing is full of jargon, typos, and run-on sentences, readers may ignore the content.

This is particularly relevant to electronic mail (e-mail), which is used frequently in this day and age. With the popularity of the Internet, we should all be aware of how we communicate through e-mail, instant messaging, and other written electronic communication.

Effective Communication

Relevant Reading

Reading is an important way to receive information. Being in the Information Age means that there is so much material available literally at our fingertips. We must learn to skim and decide what material is important.

Effective Communication

Listening

Effective communication is a two-way street. This means that if we want to be heard, we also have to listen.

Active listening is especially important. You will need to have good listening skills to communicate with people effectively.

Netiquette

We've provided this as a resource that highlights several tips and techniques to better communicate electronically. The term used for the do's and do not's of online communication both for common courtesy online and the informal rules of cyberspace is Netiquette.

Remember when you write a message you can rewrite and revise until it conveys exactly what you mean.

Rules for Internet Netiquette

Identify yourself and the subject of your e-mail message.

Begin each e-mail with a greeting stating the person's name (Hello Kerry, or Hello Dr. Reed), and closing with your name on its own line (Regards, Kerry, or Thank you, Dr. Reed). *March 2010*

Be aware of the effect that your choice of words and tpestyle may have.

Capitalize words only to highlight an important point or to distinguish a title or heading. If using bold type or all capitals, people will think you are shouting at them or simply emphasizing a point. *Asterisks* surrounding a word can be used to make a stronger point. Remember if you emphasize everything, you will have emphasized nothing. Remain professional when responding to ideas with which you feel strongly.

Use emoticons sparingly.

They are often misunderstood and relay vague ideas. It is better to find clear words for your thoughts. Be careful when using satire, sarcasm and humor. Without face to face communications your joke may be viewed as criticism.

Rules for Internet Netiquette

Sleep on it.

If your message is designed to vent strong feelings, write it, but do not send it until you have slept on it overnight. It is interesting how different your words look in the light of day!

Practice patience and courtesy.

As the reader, give the author the benefit of the doubt. If something seems hostile or offensive, before you leap to that conclusion, ask for clarification.

Apologize.

When a misunderstanding occurs, acknowledge when you have been unclear, apologize, say what you meant more clearly, and put it behind you.

Use "please" and "thank you".

The power of these simple signs of respect and caring cannot be overstated.

Rules for Internet Netiquette

Remain polite and professional at all times.

Don't use offensive language, and don't be confrontational for the sake of confrontation. Would I say this if we were sitting in a face-to-face? If the answer is no, rewrite and reread. Email is easily forwarded. Remember NOT to write anything you, anyone you write about, or your organization wouldn't want to see publicly printed. Computer messages are not absolutely private.

Obtain permission before forwarding personal notes or messages.

It is considered extremely rude to forward personal email to mailing lists or Usenet without the original author's permission.

Focus on one subject per message.

Clearly categorize the message and always include a pertinent subject title for the message, that way the user can locate the message quickly.

Rules for Internet Netiquette

Include your signature at the bottom of the Email.

When communicating with people who may not know you personally, your signature footer should include your name, position, affiliation and Internet or BITNET addresses. In addition, your footer should not exceed four lines. Optional information could include your address and phone number.

Follow chain of command procedures for corresponding with superiors.

For example, don't send a complaint via Email directly to the "top" just because you can.

Use acronyms carefully.

Acronyms can be used to abbreviate when possible, however messages that are filled with acronyms can be confusing and annoying to the reader.

Always minimize, compress or "zip" large files before sending.

Get in the habit of compressing anything over 200 kb. (You can view file sizes in Windows Explorer. Simply right click on the file name and choose properties.) Do not send unannounced large attachments to others because you think that photo or file is cute or cool or neat. Ask first!

Rules for Internet Netiquette

Spell-check everything.

Keep it short.

One of the benefits of e-mail is the ability it gives us to communicate quickly and concisely.

Respond within a reasonable period of time.

Keep in mind that people expect a more quick response to email messages due to the speed of communication on line. It is recommended to respond to e-mail messages within 24 hours from the time the original message was sent. If you are unavailable most e-mail service providers have an option of an auto response feature. For example, if you go out of town, you can have an automatic response notifying anyone who sends you an e-mail message that you will be unavailable until the date you report.

Rules for Internet Netiquette

Watch your REPLY.

If you receive an email sent to many people, consider whether everyone on the "To" line needs to see your response. Many people receive hundreds of emails a week and greatly appreciate it when they do not have to deal with a dozen emails that say, "got it!" or "thanks!" that is directed at the sender rather than a fellow recipient. Before you decide to hit the "Reply to All" be sure everyone wants to know what you are going to say.

Watch your FORWARDS.

Unfortunately in today's tough market, some sales people will capitalize on any opportunity to gather facts and contact information about potential customers. Here is an example:

You send a great poem to all your friends. One person sends it to 5 other friends. One of those friend's sister does e-marketing for an online company that sells hand buzzers and whoopee cushions and is also an Army spouse. When she receives this great poem, suddenly she has 100 new email addresses to which to send spam. Using BCC or blind carbon copy is a great way to send email to all your friends and family without disclosing all those email addresses.

Rules for Internet Netiquette

Pacify paranoia.

These days, there are plenty of reasons to be justifiably paranoid about the security of personal information and the security of your computer system. Be kind to your friends and take these steps to protect privacy.

Delete names and addresses that are unnecessary to the meaning of the email.

Always use up-to-date virus protection software.

Protect yourself.

Unfortunately, if you do get harassed or threatened, do not hesitate to send a copy of the offending e-mail to the sender's ISP. This does not include those who simply have a different opinion than yours and state so clearly without using obscenities or resorting to personal name-calling or threats.

Rules for Internet Netiquette: Emoticons

Your basic smiley

:-) Generally used to inflect a sarcastic or joking statement.

Wink smiley

;-) User just made a flirtatious and/or sarcastic remark.

Frowning smiley

:-(User did not like that last statement or is upset or depressed about something.

Indifferent smiley

:-| Better than a :-(but not quite as good as a :-).

Exercise: Netter's Abbreviations and Acronyms

Now, let's perform a communication exercise.

Active Listening

Often when a misunderstanding occurs, it is attributed to a lack of communication, which most of the time implies that whoever was delivering the message did not do an effective job. But what about the other side...the listener? Effective communication is a two-way street: it requires a sender and a receiver.

How are you at receiving...being the listener? When someone talks, do you give the impression of listening by looking at that person, nodding your head, and saying uh-huh, and are you just hearing them or are you really listening?

Tips for Effective Listening

Here is a list of effective listening tips to help strengthen our active listening skills and become better communicators.

Be aware of active listening barriers

The contrast between hearing and really listening can be as different as night and day. One of the best ways to begin to improve your listening skills is to have a better understanding of some of the most common behaviors you and others demonstrate when not listening effectively.

Stop and focus on the other person

What if you were speaking to someone and you could tell that they really weren't focusing on what you were saying? How does that make you feel? So remember to STOP and give your full attention to the speaker instead of your own concerns and issues at the moment.

Tips for Effective Listening

Look and pay attention to non-verbal messages

Notice the body language and non-verbal cues that the sender may be sending you. This will provide for a richer understanding of the speaker's point of view. However, don't get too distracted from the verbal message.

Listen for the essence of the speaker's thoughts

Try to seek an overall understanding of what the speaker is trying to communicate instead of reacting to the individual words or terms that they use to express themselves.

Be empathetic

Think about how you would feel in the person's situation. Maintain calmness while being empathetic to the feelings of the speaker as you do not need to be drawn into all of his/her issues and problems. Just ensure that you acknowledge what he/she is experiencing.

Tips for Effective Listening

Ask questions to clarify

Use questions to clarify your understanding as well as to demonstrate interest in what is being said.

Keep an open mind

How many times do we quickly form an impression from a small amount of information or one's experience? Don't do this. Be open to what the person is trying to say to you.

Don't interrupt and don't impose your "solutions"

How many times have you been interrupted before you've even finished your statement? How did that feel? Give the speaker time to finish his/her statement before jumping in with your story, your solution, or your information. See if he /she would like your feedback instead of being in just the listening mode.

Listen to the words and try to picture what the speaker is saying

Stop, listen, and try to form a mental image of what the speaker is saying to you. This gives a good check to see if you are focused on the speaker.

Tips for Effective Listening

Give the speaker feedback

Let the speaker know that you are paying attention to what he/she is saying. Summarize what's been said, give a nod or smile, reflect your feelings, and every now and then give an "uh huh" - just make sure you are actively listening when you do so.

Remember...like the development of any skill, the first step to improvement is to have a good understanding of what you can do or stop doing in order to get better. The second step is often the most difficult, and that is the requirement that you practice the skill over and over. Listening is no different. Listening effectively to others can be the most fundamental and powerful communication tool of all. When people are willing to stop talking or thinking and begin truly listening to others, all of their interactions become easier, and communication problems are all but eliminated.

Key Points

Effective communication is important for positive personal and working relationships as well as in reducing the stresses associated with interpersonal interactions. Just about anybody can talk, and most of us can hear, but it takes time and effort to be effective at communicating. Remember communication is a skill that is learned so use the ideas and suggestions here and practice, practice, practice.

How will you use the tips and techniques discussed here today, to better communicate with the people you have listed in column one? Take a few moments and jot down some ideas, strategies, steps, etc. that you will do to communicate better with these people.

Through awareness and practice, your communication skills will become more effective; and you, your family, your friends, your co-workers, and others that you communicate with will benefit, and it will be a much more rewarding and enriching experience for all.

Review Exercises

Now it's time for a review of the concepts we've covered in this module. Read each of the following questions and choose the best answer. **Please Bold the whole line of your answers.**

1. What is the definition of communication?
 - a. Talking to someone through email, written word, or speech
 - b. The sending and receiving of messages by speech, signals, writing, and/or behavior
 - c. Hearing sounds or reading information

2. What are some principles of communication? **Bold** all that apply.
 - a. It is impossible not to communicate
 - b. Talking is more important than listening
 - c. Nonverbal cues are more believable than verbal cues
 - d. Every message has both content and feeling

3. What is an example of clear, specific communication?
 - a. The meeting is tomorrow at 6:30am
 - b. The meeting is Friday at 6:30 in the corner office
 - c. The meeting is tomorrow morning in the corner office
 - d. The meeting in Friday at 6:30am in the corner office

4. What are some good tips for effective listening? Click all that apply.
 - a. While the other person is talking, prepare a thoughtful response
 - b. Stop and focus on the other person
 - c. Look and pay attention to non-verbal messages
 - d. Be empathetic

Summary

Congratulations! This completes the lesson **Communication**. In this lesson, you learned about the definitions of communication, different ways to communicate, miscommunication, principles of communication, communication barriers and roadblocks, effective communication techniques, netiquette, tips for effective listening, and barriers to effective listening.

You should now be able to:

Define Communication.

Identify personal communication strengths and weaknesses.

Discuss communication barriers and tips for improvement.

PLEASE EMAIL YOUR ANSWERS TO
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End of Whig Academy

Module One

Leadership

Lesson One:

Communication

Proceed to Module One: Leadership: Lesson Two

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