

FROM:

The Manager's Communication Handbook: A Practical Guide to Build Understanding, Support, and Acceptance, by David Cottrell and Eric Harvey. 2003: Performance Systems Corporation and Cornerstone Leadership Institute.

www.walkthetalk.com

BONUS SECTION

44 Effective Communication Tips

Phone and Voice Mail (from 175 Ways To Get More Done In Less Time)

1. On your voice mail recording, clearly state when the person calling may expect a callback. This will take away the caller's guesswork and will eliminate them calling back two or three more times.
2. Be proactive in reducing voice mail "tag." Answer three questions when you reach the voice mail of the person you are calling – why you called, what you need, and when you are available for call backs.
3. Stick to one issue per voice mail. If you have more than one issue to cover, it may be best to talk "live."
4. Stand up when you are on the phone. A USC study discovered that the brain's information processing speed increases 5-20% while standing. Think you may look a little goofy standing and working? You would be in the company of Thomas Jefferson, Ernest Hemingway, and Winston Churchill, all of whom stood while working.
5. Take notes while on the phone. Taking notes keeps you focused and involved in the conversation.
6. Before ending the conversation, recap what has been agreed upon to eliminate any misunderstandings.

E-mail (from Nuts'nBolts Leadership)

7. Use the "subject" line to inform (e.g., Meeting changed to April 5) rather than merely identify the topic (Meeting change). You will increase the odds that people will pay attention.

8. Don't overuse "urgent." People will ignore it if it's used too often.
 9. Be careful what you include in your e-mail – you never know where the message will be forwarded.
 10. Be concise and to the point in your e-mail. As a rule of thumb, e-mails should not be longer than one screen.
 11. Use bullets or numbers to organize your message.
 12. Avoid sarcasm in your e-mails ... people cannot read what you were thinking.
 13. Never send an e-mail when you are angry. You can write it, but don't send it. Take some time to chill out; then re-read your e-mail before you hit the send button.
 14. If you will be away from e-mail for more than a day, set up an auto-responder so the sender will know that you are not ignoring their message.
- Memos (from Nuts'nBolts Leadership)*
15. State your objective in the first paragraph. Don't make people sift through several paragraphs before knowing the objective of the memo.
 16. Write like you speak. What would you say to communicate your point? Write that down.
 17. Make it an objective to limit your document to a maximum of one page.
 18. Narrow your communications to no more than three points.
 19. Use examples, pictures, and stories to convey your message and increase retention.

Meetings (from 175 Ways To Get More Done In Less Time)

20. Shorten your meetings! Most managers say that at least one-half of their meeting time is wasted.
 21. Every meeting should have a published agenda answering the most obvious questions: Why am I investing time in this meeting? How long will it last? Who's attending? What are the expectations?
 22. Start and end on time. Meetings are one of the largest expenses that never hit the income statement. Figure it out – four \$50K a year employees in a four-hour meeting costs \$400 in employee time. Respect the investment your meeting requires.
 23. Early morning meetings tend to be best. People are fresher the challenges of the day have not yet surfaced, and the odds of everyone arriving on time improve.
 24. Start your meetings with the most important item.
 25. Set time limits on how long you will allow people to "sell" their points. A huge time waster is people who continue to fight losing battles. Set limits on the time allowed per item and move forward.
 26. At the end of the meeting, recap so everyone knows who is responsible for next steps, when action should take place, and how the results will be communicated.
- Presentations (from 136 Effective Presentation Tips)*
27. Be yourself. Your presentation is not about being perfect; it is about connecting with others and delivering a sincere message.
 28. It is best to narrow your presentation to three major points. Most people can remember only three highlights. This is not an absolute, but ... if you focus your energy and time on

accomplishing your three major points, you have a better chance of concluding your presentation with all objectives completed.

29. "Almost" memorize the beginning of your presentation. Nervousness is most intense at the beginning of a presentation. Attack your nerves by having your introduction totally under control.
 30. Watch what you eat and drink. Stay away from too much coffee ... it could make you look jittery to your audience. If your presentation is after lunch, do not eat turkey as part of your meal. Turkey contains chemicals that serve as natural sedatives, which is not what you need when you want to be focused and at your best.
 31. One of the best ways to keep your audience's attention is to get them involved. The average adult has an attention span of five to seven minutes ... or less!
 32. Silence is powerful. Pause periodically. This conveys relaxation and confidence.
 33. Keep your slides simple. You may be tempted to use animation, fancy schemes, or wild graphics. Avoid that temptation. Your job is to get your message across, not sell presentation software. Each slide should contain no more than six lines of text, and each line should contain no more than 40 characters.
 34. Keep getting better. Become dedicated to improving your communication skills. There is always something to tweak, some adjustment you can make, and some small thing you can improve.
- Feedback (from 144 Ways To Walk The Talk)*
35. Be certain that each person who reports to you fully understands your performance expectations. Feedback is

most effective when people know the standards against which their performance is being measured.

36. Develop the habit of giving each member of your team some type of feedback every week. If you're apt to forget, put a tickler in your calendar or computer.
37. Solicit feedback on your feedback. Ask others to critique your nonverbal (looks, behaviors, etc.) as well as verbal feedback.
38. Solicit and apply feedback from others. Don't wait until your performance appraisal to collect feedback on your performance.
39. Ask others in your sphere of influence to become partners in your efforts for continuous improvement. Regularly solicit feedback on how you are perceived.
40. Be concise and specific. Avoid ambiguous words and phrases that may mean different things to different people (e.g., usually, sometimes, a lot, rarely, etc.).
41. Customize the recognition you provide. Ask each member of your team how you can best demonstrate your appreciation for them. Then provide "different strokes for different folks."
42. Never assume others understand what you say or write ... check to be sure. Ask them to describe their understanding of your message. This will allow you to clarify and correct any misunderstandings.
43. Establish a No Surprise Rule for yourself and others. Make withholding bad news the absolute worst violation of all.
44. Don't be an information-hoarding Power Broker. Ask each member of your unit to identify the kind and amount of information that would help them be more successful ... and make sure they get it.

