Human Communication Cheat Sheet

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MODERN AGILE

Human Communication is Co-Creation

Having shared goals and clear intention will allow others to bring their skills, intelligence, and talent to bear.

"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place." —George Bernard Shaw

Balance Self, Other, and Context



- Virginia Satir gives a useful definition of congruence, as *appropriate* attention to self, to the other party, and to context, to collaborate successfully.
- Insufficient attention to any of these three elements creates dysfunction.
- Rick Brenner's piece on <u>Organizational</u> <u>Coping Patterns</u> explains and applies this model.

Communicate Intention Transparently

Stating intention rather than giving oblique orders or requests helps us provide aid and support to each other and drive toward better outcomes.

- <u>David Marquet</u> introduced Intent-Based Leadership in his bestselling book: <u>Turn the</u> <u>Ship Around</u>
- Communicating intent decentralizes thinking, engages others, and produces a better result by bringing together competence and clarity.
- In <u>Kim Scott</u>'s <u>Radical Candor</u> we are instructed to care personally about a colleague's success and also challenge them directly.
- It is always okay to ask for what you need -- provided you can take 'no' for an answer.

Come Alongside Others

- Seek common ground.
- Focus on your common mission.
- Be the first to show respect.
- Listen to what others mean, more than just what they say.
- Seek alignment rather than conformance.
- Look for ways to help the other person become more successful.

Choose Curiosity Over Judgment

- Don't impose expectations on an interaction.
- Set a breakpoint: instead of judging a situation right or wrong, examine with curiosity:
 - What is going on, really?
 - What forces are in play?
 - What is your context?
 - What needs are being expressed?
- Ask questions in non-accusatory ways.
- After asking, listen.

You Can Be Right, or You Can Be Effective

"Life is not what it's supposed to be. It is what it is. The way you cope with it is what makes the difference." —Virginia Satir

Being Right Isn't Always Important

- It can push people away
- We can forget to embody wisdom and grace
- We can become proud and impatient
- It may hinder our impact

Don't Say Things Others Cannot Hear

The same words may have different meanings across functions or domains, and another person's jargon may be meaningless to you.

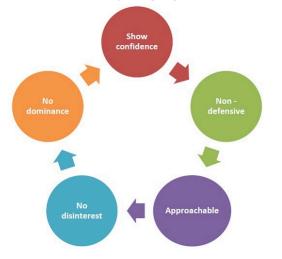
Within the same domain, a person's mental model may differ, so that they misinterpret your intentions or instructions.

"Communication is not sending a signal, but instead listening to responses to discern how my signal was interpreted and then becoming more wise about what and how I send. Want to take responsibility for your communication? Own the responses!" —Christopher Avery

Positive Body Language

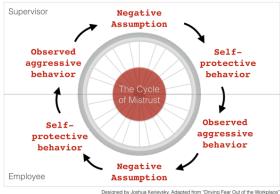
"A positive body language must place us in a position of comfort, dignity, and likeability. It helps us to be open to other people and be approachable, helping them feel comfortable when they are interacting with us."

— Positive Body Language at TutorialsPoint



Beware The Cycle of Mistrust

Especially in a power relationship, a vicious cycle of confirmation bias and aggressive/protective behaviors drive a wedge between people who should be aligned and collaborating.



Common Communication Myths

- Myth: Talking/writing is communicating. Truth: Communication has both a sender and a receiver. Sending a message doesn't ensure it is received as intended.
- Myth: Meaning is in words. Truth: Meaning is in interpretation, preferably shared.
- Myth: More communication is always better. Truth: Sometimes emotions and conflict get in the way of understanding. Giving others space before re-engaging is important.
- Myth: Communication is a trait, not a skill. Truth: Communication skills can be learned.
- Myth: Words take precedence. Truth: When words and non-verbal communication conflict, people are more likely to interpret nonverbal communication as the true message.

References and Recommended Sources

- The Anatomy of Peace or Leadership and Self-Deception, both by The Arbinger Institute.
- <u>The Responsibility Process: Unlocking</u> Your Natural Ability to Live and Lead with Power, by Christopher Avery.
- Turn the Ship Around!: A True Story of Turning Followers into Leaders, by David Marquet.
- <u>Your Brain At Work</u>, by David Rock
- Your Mind is What Your Brain Does For <u>A Living</u>, by Steven Jay Fogel.
- <u>Compassionate Communication</u>, Jon Russell.
- <u>Being Right Isn't Always Important</u> by The Peculiar Treasure blog's Kristin.
- <u>Getting Through To Each Other</u>, by Tim Ottinger
- <u>Cycles Of Mistrust</u>, by Josh Kerievsky
- Learn Positive Body Language
- <u>Radical Candor</u>, by Kim Scott

Updates to this Document

This is a living document. Find the latest updates at <u>http://modernagile.org</u>



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