

Go from Communicating to Connecting

Does it ever seem like no one is listening to what you have to say? Ever wonder why no one seems to think your great idea will work? You are communicating, but are you connecting?

At a recent session of the Executive Women's Forum in RLO, Cheryl Bonini Ellis, certified coach, trainer, and speaker, presented, "Everyone Communicates, Few Connect." To emphasize how complicated communication can be, she defined the following six components of communication:

- What you think you said
- What you actually said
- What the other person heard
- What you think the other person heard
- What the other person thinks about what you said
- What you think the other person thinks about what you said

Most people can relate to these components as we all have been misunderstood at one time or another. To make communication work, we need to connect. Connecting is the ability to identify with people and relate to them in a way that increases your influence with them. Having influence is one of the key characteristics that define a leader, and, as a result, the ability to communicate and connect with others is a major determining factor in reaching our potential.

Consider the fact that relationships drive business, and all things being equal, most people prefer to buy from people they know, like, and trust. Once you establish a connection, you can build rapport (i.e. a deep level of trust) and maintaining great rapport depends on the ability to communicate effectively.

The key to being a good communicator, and therefore a good businessperson and leader, is to build the personal connection and then have clear, effective communication.

Understanding Each Other

The most effective communicators understand who they are communicating with, and Everything DISC (Dominant, Influencer, Steady, Conscientious) Workplace assessment does just that. DISC is about mastering the art of human behavior, understanding personal styles, identifying others' styles, and learning how to respond to different behavioral styles. The understanding gained through this tool can increase results and effectiveness, reduce team conflict, and improve internal/external communication. However, it is not about judgment—there is no good or bad style and often people encompass more than one style. Instead, it is about recognizing the different styles, embracing who you are, and understanding the people with whom you communicate.

Meet the Dominant:

- Characteristics: results-oriented, decisive, independent, big thinkers, strong-willed, determined, productive, and high-energy
- Famous "dominants": Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, and Vince Lombardi

- Basic needs: challenges, control, and choices

Meet the Influencer:

- Characteristics: fun, friendly, enthusiastic, inspiring, emotional, impressionable, talkative, and impulsive
- Famous “influencers”: Robin Williams, Steve Martin, and Lucille Ball
- Basic needs: recognition, fun, and to be liked

Meet the Steady:

- Characteristics: helpful, diplomatic, team player, quiet, appears shy, kind, conservative, and loyal
- Famous “steadys”: Dr. Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, and Gandhi
- Basic needs: appreciation, peace, and security

Meet the Conscientious:

- Characteristics: logical, analytical, cautious, thinkers, witty, perfectionist, competent, and consistent
- Famous “conscientious”: Bill Gates, Clint Eastwood, and Jackie Kennedy
- Basic needs: excellence, value, and quality answers

Connecting with Each Other

Connecting principles can be learned; they are life skills that are always helpful and at which you can always get better. The five connecting principles are:

1. Connecting increases your influence in every situation.
2. Connecting is all about others; not ourselves.
3. Connecting goes beyond words.
4. Connecting always requires energy.
5. Connecting is more skill than natural talent.

The five connecting practices are:

1. Connectors connect on common ground.
2. Connectors do the difficult work of keeping it SIMPLE.
3. Connectors create an experience everyone enjoys.
4. Connectors inspire people.
5. Credibility is the “currency” connectors have.

Much of Cheryl’s presentation was based on the bestselling book, “Everyone Communicates, Few Connect,” by John Maxwell, one of her teachers and mentors.

Sidebar: Did You Know?

More than 90 percent of the impression we often convey has nothing to do with what we actually say. Keep in mind that people may hear your words, but they feel your attitude. In fact, words account for only 7 percent of our message, while body language accounts for 55 percent and tone 38 percent.