What communication message are you sending? What professional communications skills do you want to develop? What actions are you willing to take in order to commit to this development? Are you willing to practice these communication skills?

These are important questions. Why? It is crucial to know how to communicate in business. People receive messages that involve feelings, thoughts, and emotions. Our messages may not be being heard in the way they were intended. The messages we send go through a process known as “noise.” This is how some view the communication cycle:

However, here is a better model of what happens when we communicate:

After you send a message, it goes through a shared space that contains “noise,” such as emotions, thoughts, feelings, and perceived communication. The Receiver has a perceived meaning as to what they hear, think, and feel. It is their reality. So, how do we get our messages across?

In the book, SYMBOLS: The Art of Communication, it is stated that we live in a world of signs and symbols. Street signs, logos, labels, pictures and words in books, newspapers, magazines, and now our mobiles and computer screens all contain graphic shapes that have been designed. They are so commonplace we seldom think of them as a single entity graphic design. Yet taken as a whole they are central to our modern way of life. More often than not, people miscommunicate. They hear what they choose to hear. They hear selectively. In our social networking world of texting, tweets, and posts, there are many nuances to consider. The electronic forms of communication offer great value in the communication process.

What first comes to mind is the immediate gratification of sending and receiving messages. When people used to write letters, they had to wait for a response, and now you can reach worldwide access in seconds. Another point is that “real time” electronic communication is what we are living in – the real world. Businesses can now send messages via office email, quickly and efficiently.

In the book Multiple Intelligences by Howard Gardner, it suggests that we now have the opportunity to go beyond stated expectations and explore specific interests.
So, since getting a message immediately does have good traits, we seem to have lost the actual communication in real life. No longer do your children call every week; they text. Everything has moved in a direction of "I need information right now." It concerns me that we are losing our opportunity to communicate on the telephone, in-person, in lieu of these electronic advances in technology.

The majority of the population is born with the ability to hear, but not to listen. There are several reasons that people do not or cannot listen or remember, ranging from physical conditions to cultural beliefs. Albert Mehrabian has pioneered the art of communications since 1960. He established an early understanding of body language and nonverbal communication. His research has been quoted worldwide.

His message was:

- 7% of a message is the spoken word.
- 38% of a message indicates feelings and attitudes, also known as paralinguistic (the way words are said).
- 55% of a message has to do with facial expressions.

His model of communication relates to the feelings and attitudes shown in the graphics above. This involves facial expressions. This model has become a widely used reference for communication.

If you want to become a professional communicator, read all that you can about verbal and nonverbal communication. See yourself in a conversation as if you were just listening in, and practice using Mehrabian’s findings. You’ll be glad you did.

Some questions to consider:

1. Do you understand the “noise” you make? Davis Foulger, Research Consultant at Evolutionary Media in Brooklyn says, Noise is described in the form of ‘secondary signals’ that obscure or confuse the signal carried. Given Shannon’s focus on telephone transmission, carriers, and reception, it should not be surprising that noise is restricted to noise that obscures or obliterates some portion of the signal within the channel. This is a fairly restrictive notion of noise, by current standards, and a somewhat misleading one. Today we have at least some media which are so noise free that compressed signals are constructed with an absolutely minimal amount information and little likelihood of signal loss. In the process, Shannon’s solution to noise, redundancy, has been largely replaced by a minimally redundant solution: error detection and correction. Today we use noise more as a metaphor for problems associated with effective listening.”

2. Do you realize what you are saying to another in the communication process? What you say can be “said” many ways. Perhaps, if you think about what message you want to get across, prior to opening your mouth, this can facilitate the communication process.

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