

Webinar: **Improving Project Communication**

*Breathing New Life
Into the “Same Old Same Old”*

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Quick Introductions

Who we are:



GARY



SUSAN

Quick Introductions

- Who you are
 - Engineers and high tech professionals
 - Project managers
 - Project leads
 - Project participants
- Public and private sector businesses throughout the northwest

Overview

- “Communication”



We're all terrible communicators.

We need to communicate well.

“Excellent verbal and written
communication skills required”
– and rarely found.

Overview

- What is “Communication”?
 - Listening
 - Writing
 - Speaking
 - Reading

Overview



Is everyone really terrible at all of them?

Cost Savings, Cost Avoidance

- The ROI on Effective Communication
 - Pay-back in time savings
 - Clears up confusion
 - Saves repeating yourself
 - Minimizes personal intervention (documentation v. personal attention)

Is Time Money?

Annual Earnings	An hour is worth	A minute is worth
\$20,000	\$10.00	\$.17
\$25,000	\$13.00	\$.21
\$30,000	\$15.00	\$.26
\$35,000	\$18.00	\$.30
\$40,000	\$20.00	\$.34
\$50,000	\$26.00	\$.43
\$60,000	\$31.00	\$.51
\$75,000	\$39.00	\$.64
\$100,000	\$51.00	\$.85

Source: www.leadership-tools.com

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Source: www.leadership-tools.com

Is Time Money?

- 15 people
 - Each makes \$60,000/year
 - Reading poorly organized, boring report
 - Spends 20 minutes reading
 - Well organized, interesting report would have taken 10 minutes

15people * (.51*10 mins) = \$765 **WASTED**
PER REPORT

Is Time Money?

- 200 people
 - Average salary = \$40,000/year
 - Reading weekly “Boss’s Blurb”
 - Time wasted:
 - Put it off (open, close without reading, “I’ll do it later”) = 5 minutes
 - Distractions; do-overs (re-reads) = 5 minutes
- $200 (.34 * 10) = \$680$
- $\$680 * 50 \text{ weeks} = \$34,000$

Forget what it said? “Priceless”

Project Communication

- The major challenges:
 - Presentations (speaking) are dull, too long, hard to pay attention to
 - Teleconferences are worse

Project Communication

- More challenges
 - Project deliverables (written) are boring
 - “I hate writing!”
 - “Writing isn’t real work” (put it off, never do it)
 - No one reads it anyway
 - “I forget how”

Project Communication

- More challenges – Fierce competition!
 - 3,000 messages a day!

Read this! **Remember this!** **Look here!**
I'm right! **Feel this!** **Do better!** **Understand this!**
Want more! **Understand this!** **Think this!**
Be careful! **Work harder!** **Do this!**
NOW!

Read this!

- Project dox:
 - Plans
 - Status reports
 - Requirements
 - Design materials
 - Product evals
 - Test plans
 - Test results
 - How-to / training manuals, etc., etc.

Headlines

- What's your net message? Say it first; place it prominently; don't make your readers wait.
- How would a newspaper headline about your project look?
 - Project WISTERIA is facing new delays
 - Discoveries about vendor product sends design team back to the drawing board
 - Testing on track; metrics now online

Headlines



Headlines

- Use them:
 - In status reports—right at the top
 - In email—on the subject line
 - In meeting announcements—First sentence of the info (before where, when, how long)
- ...anywhere you want to make a quick, lasting impression.

Objectives

- **MOST IMPORTANT:**

Begin with the end in mind.

- What's your purpose?
- What does “success” mean?

Answer this:

- When someone is finished reading what you've written, how will you know you've been successful?
 - What do you want out of it?
 - What do you want to have happen as a result of what you've written?

Objectives

- Because your **Audience** (your reader)
 - *Gets it!*
 - *Is informed!*
 - *Takes action!*
 - *Is moved!*



Objectives

- Goal of communications (written, verbal):
 - Get help
 - Transfer knowledge
 - Persuade
 - Build consensus
 - Calm fears ... or start them

In a nutshell: Keep things moving!

Writing: Purpose

- Purposes of business writing
 - Instruct
 - Resolve
 - Announce
 - Persuade
 - Inspire
 - Complain
 - Stir things up

Writing: Purpose

- What do you want to accomplish?
 - Get my money back
 - Turn negative opinion to positive
 - Build consensus
 - Calm fears
 - Spread the news
 - “How-to” information - makes users of it independent
 - Define how it's **supposed** to work (requirements)
 - Persuade someone to buy

After the Headline

- How do your readers know your purpose?
 - **Tell them!**



- Don't expect them to infer (i.e., conclude)

Writing: Purpose



“My goal is to make this a complete, accurate how-to guide. Please read this draft and correct any errors you find or add information you think is missing before Monday, June 1. Send revisions to me.”

Writing: Purpose



“After reading this section, you will know how to create a new customer record.”

So ... After the Headline

- State your purpose.

- BTW:

The weakest purpose = “to inform”



Defy Predictability

- “Predictability is the death of message.”
- How many of these words and phrases have you read over and over again?
 - Proactive
 - 7 x 24
 - Peeling the onion
 - Bandwidth
 - Buy-in
 - Burn rate
 - Re-engineer
 - Scalable
 - Streamline
 - Synergize
 - World class

Predictability

- The effect of predictable words and phrases:
 - You skip over it
 - “Yeah, you and everybody else”
 - “What else is new?”
 - No lasting impression

Is that the effect you want your writing to have?



Fresh Tip

- Break the Ho-hum Cycle:
Dump the trite stuff!
Try these ideas instead!

Available *FREE* at

http://www.susandelavergne.com/cache_and_carry.html

Project **BORING**

- Data past its sell-by date
 - UPDATE issues and risks—even if there's little or no news:
 - “We believe these risks continue to pose a threat to this project and we are, therefore, noting them here.”
 - “Please take note of the changes to the levels posed by risks 24, 27 and 31.”

Progress Quiz

- Name one hot tip you've gotten so far
- Name another
- And another ...?
- And one more ...

Editing



- Cut; be ruthless:
What can/should your audience remember?
- Proofread and effect repairs:
Read aloud (Can't breathe while you're reading? Think that's a good thing?)

Example – *BEFORE*

Four alternative ways to meet and review urgent production problems every day have been examined by several people from different departments and the four alternatives are to meet first thing every morning and discuss them, to meet at the end of the day and discuss them (and decide what to do about them that night), to email all problems to all participants, or to post all current problems on the web portal for viewing by all within the company. We will email all problems to all participants for review and action is the way to proceed for now.

Any questions, email me.

Start Big, Get Smaller

New Process for
problem review

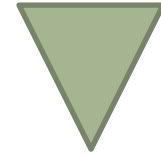
4 alternatives

They were

We picked one

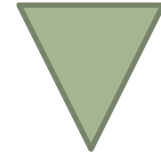
We picked it because

Examples: The Fix



- Key point:
 - New process for problem review*
 - The process is ...
 - We evaluated four alternatives
 - They were ...
 - We picked this one because ...
 - Conclusion (Questions? Call me)

Example: The Revision



We will implement a change to our process for reviewing urgent production problems. Starting Monday, we'll email all problems to everyone involved so they can review and take action, as appropriate. Those who "own" problems are responsible for resolving or re-assigning them.

We evaluated four alternatives before deciding to change the process:

1. Meet every morning to discuss problems;
2. Meet every afternoon (end of day) to discuss them;
3. Post current problems on the web portal for general viewing;
4. Targeted emailing of problems daily to all participants.

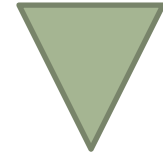
The team believes emailing problems daily will be most effective because those who can address them will receive the detail and action items directly.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Cut, and be ruthless



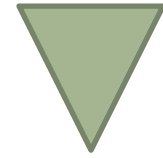
Editing the Revision



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Don't Overlook the Details


- The case for punctuation:

A woman, without her man, is nothing.

A woman: Without her, man is nothing.

Source: *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* by Lynne Truss

Wake It Up

- Write Headlines
- Know your purpose: What do you want from your audience?
- Stay away from tired language
(stop peeling the )
- Update: No data past its sell-by date!
- Edit: Cut, and be ruthless—and proofread

THANKS for Joining Us!

Obrigado

Merci

Gracias

Tessekruler

Danke

Grazie

Dank u

本当にありがとう