

Steward News...

A PUBLICATION FOR CUPE ACTIVISTS IN ALBERTA

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 1

- Stewards help members deal with workplace problems.
- Stewards also help the union executive communicate with and respond to the concerns and priorities of the members they represent.
- Stewards play many roles: grievance handlers, organizers, educators, leaders and communicators.



In this issue:

how stewards can become effective communicators!

STEWARDS AS COMMUNICATORS

What is effective communication?

Communication is the exchange of information and feelings that leads to mutual understanding. Effective communication takes place when you share your message with others in such a manner that it is clearly understood.

Face-to-face communication is not like shooting an arrow into a bull's-eye. It is more like a game of tennis. You serve - your serve is returned - you return the return - and so on.

There are five elements to communication

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| <u>source</u> | person who attempts to communicate with another person(s). The source creates an idea and translates the idea into words, actions or illustrations. |
| <u>message</u> | The message is made up of verbal and non verbal parts |
| <u>medium</u> | The means or carrier of the message for example speech, newsletters, videos, telephone, etc. |
| <u>receiver</u> | The target of your message. It is the receiver who determines what is understood |
| <u>feedback</u> | Any response that the receiver makes to a message. This could be verbal, non-verbal or both. |

How do we communicate?

Whether communicating with our members or management, communication involves sending and receiving. We communicate more than words. We communicate our energy, beliefs, feelings and experience. Effective communicators must be sensitive to the experience, background, beliefs, attitudes and values of their "receivers" and they must be able to adapt their messages to these elements. This involves listening. Effective listening is crucial to effective communication.

Listening:

- Listening is active
- Listening requires skill and practice
- Listening is a way of becoming more aware of ourselves and how we think

When you listen, you listen for the content (the meaning of the words), and the feeling (most often carried in the nonverbal cues)

Three keys to listening:

- Be an attentive listener
Don't let interruptions distract you.
- Be a participating listener

Make an honest attempt to understand the message. Restate the message to make sure you have it correctly. Ask direct and specific questions to confirm your understanding.

Why is communication so important?

Because Stewards who communicate effectively are able to:

- exercise leadership
- inspire members to take action
- obtain trust and respect
- have more fun with people
- get others to feel more confident about themselves
- give and receive information easily and accurately
- achieve their goals

- Be an objective listener

Don't jump to conclusions. Don't make judgements. Avoid threatening questions and statements. And evaluate the message not the sender.

Listening Skills:

- Repeat - repeat back words or short phrases

- Paraphrase - restate what you think you heard in your own words

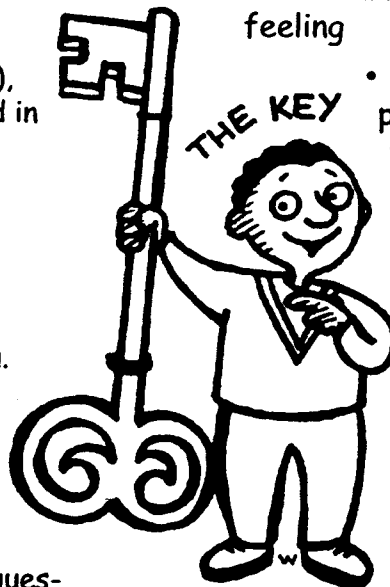
- Reflect feelings - observe the person's body language, tone of voice and listen carefully to what they are saying then state what your instinct tells you he/she is feeling
- Ask open-ended questions - questions that begin with What, How and When - this allows the person to continue talking about their experience
- Validate (confirm) - this shows that you understand what the person is saying or feeling

- Silence - show through facial expressions and body language that you are listening

- Summarize - restate what you think are the major facts, issues and feelings which the person has expressed

AND

- Stop Talking - You can't listen while you are talking. Remember you were given two ears and only one tongue.



So what is nonverbal communication?

Nonverbal communication is the exchange of meaning, understanding and information that occurs through body language, facial expression, tone of voice, seating arrangements, etc.

Our bodies speak volumes. Body language provides continuous feedback on what the speaker is saying. For example, telling a member we are concerned about them, while shuffling papers or staring out the window, sends a very inconsistent message.

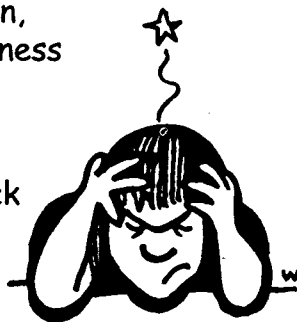
Typical interpretations of body language cues:

- smiling, open hands with palms visible = openness and warmth
- leaning forward in chair, tips of fingers of both hands touching each other in "steeple" position, shoulders back, head up = confidence
- running fingers through hair, fidgeting, covering mouth, jiggling money or keys = nervousness
- frowning, squinting, arms crossed in front of chest, head down, rubbing eyes = defensiveness
- short breaths, tightly clenched hands, pointing index finger, rubbing back of neck = frustration

Researchers find that the believability of what we communicate is influenced 7% by words, 38% by tone of voice and 55% by body language.

Some suggestions on body language

- When listening, make gentle eye contact, nod your head from time to time, lean forward slightly, keep hands resting comfortably by your sides or in your lap with palms open, and pay attention to your arms.
- When speaking, watch your listener's face and body for cues that they are "still with you"
- Experience is a good teacher - if you're sensitive to the feedback you get, you will improve your skill in understanding
- Become aware of cultural and gender differences and respect them. Some cultures require that you stand close and look the other person straight in the eye. Others lower the eyes as a sign of respect. Women sometimes interpret body language differently than men
- Get in touch with your own body language. Are you giving the kind of messages you want?



Some Good Advice on Communicating

- √ pay attention to non-verbal cues
- √ watch for discrepancies between what the person is thinking or feeling and what he or she is saying
- √ if it is unclear to you, ask for clarification
- √ learn to listen and do so with interest and concern
- √ express your own feelings using "I" statements
- √ avoid "you" statements which can make the other person feel put down or at fault

The seven C's of communication

- ◆ clear
- ◆ consistent
- ◆ concise,
- ◆ compelling
- ◆ creative
- ◆ comprehensive
- ◆ credible

Stewards can learn more about effective communication by attending CUPE communication workshops

- ⇒ Communicating CUPE
- ⇒ Face-to-Face Communication
- ⇒ Facing Management
- ⇒ Advanced Stewarding



25th Anniversary CUPE Weeklong School

May 6-11 at the Red Deer College

The workshops offered this year are:

- Advanced Stewarding
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Understanding Diversity, Challenging Discrimination in the Workplace
- Computers 101
- Advanced Pensions

Please send your comments and/or ideas for future Steward News topics to

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