

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 United States License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/us/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 171 Second Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, CA, 94105, USA.



Ver. 1.1, updated 6 October 2008

## Contents

- Session 3 Topics
- Session 3 Key Concepts
- Homework Assignments due for this session
- Session 3 Agenda
- Session 3 Teaching Notes

These are **teaching notes**. They are written from the program leader's perspective, as if the program leader is speaking. They are detailed but not comprehensive. My goal is to give you all the concepts and tools of the program, along with a flavor of my teaching style. You should find here enough information to evaluate whether the program is useful for you, or enough detail to develop it for your own organization.

You'll also find teaching tips or clarifications shaded in gray.

These teaching notes make more sense if you've already read the **Program Overview and Setup** document. It's also best to read the session documents in order, because later sessions build on the work of earlier sessions.

## Session 3 Topics

- Sharing learning with your team
- "And" exercise
- Observations
- What do managers communicate about?
- Be brave
- Fundamentals of effective communication
- What goes into a clear and effective message?
- Delivering the message

### Session 3 Key Concepts

- You must communicate on human (emotional) levels as well as on business (information) levels.
- Use plain language
- Your job is not to make everyone happy. Your job is to be clear, transparent and authentic. Good managers are brave enough to communicate bad news as clearly as good news.

These concepts are essential underpinnings of the Humans At Work<sup>SM</sup> program. Do not substitute other concepts unless you are prepared to reconfigure the entire program accordingly. If you are not familiar with these concepts, don't lead this session. These skills should be introduced and demonstrated by expert practitioners who can model the behavior as well as describe it.

You'll find basic handouts for all sessions in the Tools and Materials document.

### Homework assignments due for this session

1. Review handouts on Session 2 concepts.
2. Take a step to initiate or strengthen at least one Group 1 relationship.
3. Read **Oxford Guide to Plain English** (pp 54-81 and pp 125-142), **Difficult Conversations** (pp 25-43) and **Fierce Conversations** (pp 1-54).
4. "And" exercise.
5. Share learning with your team.
6. Observe communication behavior and record observations.

### Session 3 Agenda

9:00	3.1	Open session ( <a href="#">see notes</a> )
9:05		
9:10	3.2	Sharing learning with your team ( <a href="#">see notes</a> )
9:15		
9:20		
9:25		
9:30	3.3	"And" exercise ( <a href="#">see notes</a> )
9:35		
9:40		
9:45		
9:50	3.4	Observations ( <a href="#">see notes</a> )
9:55		
10:00		
10:05		
10:10		
10:15		
10:20		
10:25		
10:30		<b>BREAK (10 minutes)</b>
10:35		
10:40	3.5	What do managers communicate about? ( <a href="#">see notes</a> )
10:45		
10:50	3.6	Session manifesto: Be brave. ( <a href="#">see notes</a> )
10:55		
11:00		
11:05	3.7	Fundamentals of effective communication ( <a href="#">see notes</a> )
11:10		
11:15		
11:20		
11:25		
11:30		
11:35		
11:40		
11:45		
11:50		
11:55		
12:00		<b>LUNCH (1 hour)</b>
1:00	3.8	What goes into a clear and effective message? ( <a href="#">see notes</a> )
1:05		
1:10		
1:15		
1:20		
1:25		
1:30	3.9	Delivering the message ( <a href="#">see notes</a> )
1:35		
1:40		

1:45		
1:50		
1:55		
2:00		
2:05		
2:10	<b>3.10</b>	<b>Group exercise: What's wrong with this memo? (<a href="#">see notes</a>)</b>
2:15		
2:20		
2:25		
2:30		
2:35		
2:40		
2:45		
2:50		<b>BREAK (10 minutes)</b>
2:55		
3:00	<b>3.11</b>	<b>Communication scenarios (<a href="#">see notes</a>)</b>
3:05		
3:10		
3:15		
3:20		
3:25		
3:30		
3:35		
3:40		
3:45		
3:50		
3:55		
4:00		
4:05		
4:10		
4:15		
4:20		
4:25		
4:30	<b>3.12</b>	<b>Summary remarks, final questions and comments (<a href="#">see notes</a>)</b>
4:35		
4:40		
4:45		
4:50	<b>3.13</b>	<b>Wrap up (<a href="#">see notes</a>)</b>
4:55		
5:00		<b>Session ends</b>

## Session 3 teaching notes

### 3.1 Open Session

- A. Brief review of Session 2 outcomes
- B. Session 3 goals

#### 3.1 A -- Review Session 2

In Session 2, we learned that effective communication is a primary component of managing people well. Effective communication is not about "being nice" or "making everyone happy" – it's about being clear, transparent and authentic to create a shared understanding about your daily work.

We looked at various communication concepts and models that you can use to understand how to make your communication more effective: mirror neurons, the interpersonal gap, the ladder of assumption, Satir modes and leveling behavior, and effective listening.

Any questions about what we covered in Session 2?

#### 3.2 B -- Session 3 goals

Today we start applying those concepts to the practical communication work of the manager:

- What and how managers communicate
- How to prepare and deliver clear verbal and written messages

---

## 3.2 Sharing learning with your team

**Group discussion of homework assignment:** Tell us the story of how you went about sharing learning with your team. What did you do and say? What was the response? How do you feel about the experience?

Be sure to get specific information. It's better to get three or four reports at this detail level, rather than ten superficial reports.

---

### 3.3 "And" exercise

**Group discussion of homework assignment:** What was your experience doing this exercise. What do you take away from it that will benefit you as a manager?

The goal is for participants to understand the way that changing their language changes their own perceptions and feelings, and changes the response of people around them.

Even the smallest words have power and meaning for us. The ability to acknowledge competing factors ("and") instead of diminishing or marginalizing one ("but") can make a difference in how people receive our message, and even in how we ourselves view the situation. Saying "and" can feel inclusive and fair and realistic; saying "but" can feel judgmental. "And" can be a powerful tool for helping to bridge the interpersonal gap.

---

### 3.4 Observations

Select a participant to facilitate the following group discussion. Coach them as they work. The goal is to make sure that responses are specific, and to record key concepts on the flip chart.

**Group discussion of homework assignment:** Talk about your observations of communication behavior. Be specific. What did you take from your observations that will help you as a manager?

---

### 3.5 What do managers communicate about?

**Group discussion:** what do managers communicate about on the job?

Participants should brainstorm a list of manager communication situations/topics (e.g. give direction, pass along information, give reviews, etc.) .

Also make sure the brainstorming includes differing audiences for manager communication (e.g. team members, executives, customers, etc.).

The goal is not a comprehensive list, but rather an understanding from the participants that managers must communicate across a wide spectrum of topics and audiences.

---

### 3.6 Session manifesto: Be brave.

Please read the Manifesto section in the Program Overview and Setup for more guidance about the session manifestos.

Put the manifesto in your own words. Testify. And remember that your purpose is to show participants how today's concepts and ideas are related to each other, to the work of previous sessions, and to good management in general. This is where you bring it all together.

\*\*\*

Start every manifesto with a personal story.

Today's story should be about why a manager's communication must be clear, transparent and authentic. The story should demonstrate how much difference effective communication makes, and that it is behavior that anyone can adopt if they choose to.

\*\*\*

Look at how many things we communicate about at work. Without communication, there is no business. How we communicate as managers makes the difference whether or not people understand how to do their jobs.

Communication is the most important daily work you do as a manager. It needs to be effective. It needs to achieve a shared understanding – so that everyone has all the information they need to do the next thing, all the way from filling out a form to clearing out their desk and leaving.

Communication is not a contest to see who is nicest or smartest or the most fun to hang out with. It doesn't matter how smart you are, how nice you are, how much you care, or how well you know the business – if you do not communicate effectively with other human beings at work, you will not accomplish work effectively with them and through them. You can't be successful as a manager if you're a lousy communicator. It's that simple.

It's often difficult for new managers to accept that effective communication isn't just about data, the same way that working is not just about the paycheck. It's personal. When you manage someone, you have a relationship with them. And now we've got Susan Scott telling us that conversation is relationship, and she's right. So remember that to the people around you, how you communicate about everything reveals everything about who you are as a manager.

Another thing that is often hard for new managers is to remain clear, transparent and authentic – to remain effective – in difficult situations. What if you have to ask an employee to scrap a project, take a pay cut, work with a difficult team member? What is the fear? They might become upset. They might quit. They will be unhappy.

Listen closely: It is not your job to make people happy. It is your job to be as clear as possible about the reality of the situation. It is your job to share all the information that people need to make decisions about their jobs and their lives. If that decision is to say no or to quit, then you work from there to figure out the best result. You deal with what is real. In the long term, avoiding reality helps no one – not you, not your team, and certainly not your business.

That isn't always fun: but it is the right thing to do as a manager. You do no favors to anyone if you try to make people happy. Be clear with them and expect them to be clear with you

We all invest ourselves to some extent in our work – we can be excited, satisfied, hurt, made greater or smaller by what happens to us at work. And what happens to us is so often bad communication -- lies, avoidance of hard news, verbal abuse by people who think that volume is a substitute for clarity, incomplete information and incomprehensible directions given by people who won't look us in the eye and just tell us what they want. There is no excuse for any manager to ever do this.

Effective communication is behavior. That's all it is. It takes practice. If you're not highly verbal, if you're not accustomed to being clear or transparent or authentic, you can still be successful as a communicator and a manager – you simply have to work harder. But anyone who does not have a physical or emotional condition that impairs communication can learn to do this.

Communicating effectively every day, about everything – being clear, transparent and authentic about everything -- is the hardest work you will do as a manager. And it is the most important.

---

### 3.7 Fundamentals of effective communication

- A. Use plain language
- B. Human/Business Interaction Model
- C. Monitor the interpersonal gap
- D. When to use face-to-face, email, memo or telephone communication
- E. Prepare for communication

All of these concepts apply to any communication -- face-to-face, email or memo, or telephone.

#### 3.7 A -- Use plain language

**Group discussion:** What is plain language? Does it matter whether we use plain language? Why?

Keep this brief. The goal is simply to be sure that participants can describe plain language, and understand why it's a better choice than business-speak.

This is the definition of plain English from **Oxford Guide to Plain English**:

The writing and setting out of essential information in a way that gives a cooperative, motivated person a good chance of understanding it at first reading, and in the same sense that the writer meant it to be understood.

This is an elegant definition of clear, effective communication – and the basic principle is true for any communication (verbal, signed or written) in any language. The best way to communicate clearly, transparently and authentically is to use plain language.

Here are some key concepts of plain English. Strategies for communicating plainly in other languages will vary.

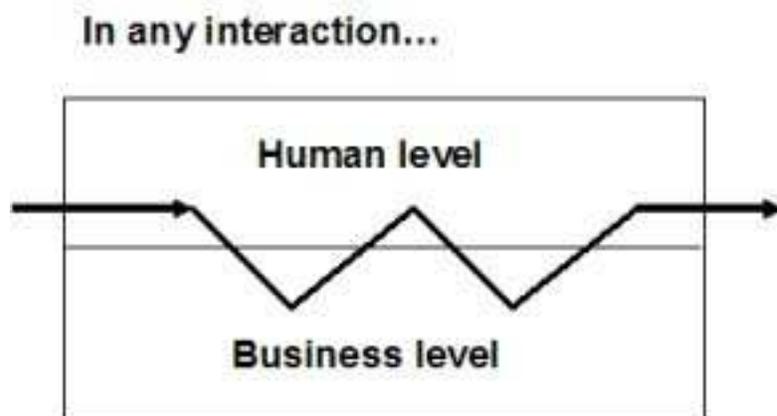
- Use shorter sentences.
- Use common, everyday words. No corporate-speak!
- Use a conversational tone – "I" and "you" rather than "one" or "the department."
- Don't blather. Don't let your point get lost under a mountain of unnecessary words.
- Use active verbs (e.g. "Linda told me" rather than "I was told by Linda")

- Plan before you communicate.
- Structure your communication in whatever way will make your points most clear to their intended audience.
- Sometimes tables, graphs or images are more effective than words.

### **3.7 B -- Human/Business interaction model**

The first step in communicating with humans at work is remembering that you're communicating with humans. In every interaction – verbal or written – you should use the **Human/Business interaction model**.

I first came across this model in 1998, and have seen it used in many different contexts by HR professionals, consultants, and writers. I don't know the original creator of the model.



The human level is where you'll find many of people's filters and their emotional needs (for respect, dignity, understanding, inclusion, etc.). The business level is where you'll deal with the purpose and information content of your interaction.

The model is very simple: Enter and exit every interaction at the human level. And as you move through the business conversation, revisit the human level periodically.

This can be as simple as starting your verbal interaction with, "Hi, how are you?" and ending with "I really appreciate your help." In email, it's as simple as starting with "Hi, Beth," or "Hello, all," before moving into the business level.

If you're clear at the business level and ignore the human level, people feel badly treated and diminished. If you're clear at the human level but not the business level, people may enjoy your company but they'll have no idea what you need or how to give it to you.

### **3.7 C -- Monitor the interpersonal gap**

If you sense that something's going wrong with your communication, it probably is. Trust your instincts and check it out, using the various strategies you have learned for closing the interpersonal gap, identifying assumptions, using leveling communication techniques, and listening effectively.

Don't ignore the signs of a misunderstanding, conflict, distraction or other problem. It's better to deal with it immediately – including postponing the remainder of the conversation, if necessary – than have to deal with having your goals de-railed down the road because the communication was not effective.

And remember – you can most effectively monitor the interpersonal gap when you are listening, when you are paying close attention. If you think miscommunication is happening, listen.

### **3.7 D -- Basic guidelines for face-to-face, written or telephone communication.**

#### **Face to face**

Talk in person as often as possible for individual communication – it's the richest and most complete communication interaction, since people can get body language and facial cues, as well as the verbal content.

If possible, talk face-to-face when:

- You need to ask for a favor or negotiate a result from someone you don't know well.
- You need to clear up a misunderstanding.
- You are delivering bad news (unless you're in a different geographical area).
- You expect (or are already experiencing) conflict or resistance.
- You are distributing or collecting information or data that is subject to interpretation or emotional response (input for an important decision,

getting the background on why a project got derailed, discussing a process breakdown, etc.).

It's also better to conduct meetings in person if location permits. We'll spend more time on communicating effectively in meetings in Session 4.

\*\*\*

### Telephone

When you work in the same physical space as the person you want to talk to, the telephone is the least effective way to communicate in general. Important issues should be handled face-to-face, and email is often better for delivering information because people can take their time absorbing it.

Use the telephone for informal situations such as quick questions, or to ask someone you don't know well if you can drop by to discuss something (and give them at least an idea of what the topic is) .

Unless absolutely necessary, do not use the telephone to:

- Deliver bad news (unless geographical distance requires it).
- Negotiate conflict.
- Conduct an important meeting (if it's that important, get everyone in the room or at least consider a video conference).

\*\*\*

### Email and documents

It usually effective to send information in written form as long as there's no particular emotional component. It's easy for people to fall into the interpersonal gap when they talk through email, because there are no body language, tone or facial cues.

We often use email to avoid a face-to-face discussion that we are intimidated about. We also often use email because "it's quicker." Both of these uses can be traps that actually cost you more trouble and time down the road.

If you must use email or memos to deliver emotional content, or to communicate with people, you must prepare the email carefully. More about that later in this session.

When possible, use email or documents for:

- Distributing information or data that is not subject to interpretation or emotional response.
- Formally announce information that is already known to people, or is expected.
- Follow up with individuals after face-to-face conversations.
- Document the results of a meeting.

If you have a solid working relationship with someone, it may be okay to use email or documents for:

- Sending information that is open to interpretation or emotional response
- Raising an issue or concern.

**NEVER** use email or documents to:

- Conduct a power struggle.
- Vent.
- Tell someone off.

### **3.7 E -- Prepare for communication.**

Whether you are communicating in person or in writing, take the time to plan and prepare for communication. Good communication behavior takes time to learn and integrate – don't leave it to chance.

Depending on the situation, planning and preparing may include:

- Making notes on talking points to take with you into a conversation or meeting
  - Scripting and rehearsing important parts of a conversation
  - Preparing outlines for emails or memos
  - Asking someone you trust to review your notes or outlines and offer feedback
  - Keeping a list of key phrases and communication strategies that you find helpful
-

### 3.8 What goes into a clear and effective message?

The basic elements of a clear business communication are:

- A specific topic
- A specific goal
- A specific audience
- A specific headline
- Key information
- Giving direction and delegating
- Next steps

You should take all these elements into account when you are planning a communication.

\*\*\*

#### Topic

The most effective communication is about a single specific topic.

If you can't state the topic (or the other person cannot state theirs), don't have the conversation. **Don't communicate until you know what you want to talk about.**

One of the most common ways that conversations go wrong is that people are trying to talk about different topics. The more specific you are about the topic, the less likely someone is to muddy the conversation by focusing in the wrong place.

**Example topic:** "I want to talk about marketing a product."

This is too large a topic. "Marketing" might mean advertising to one person, publicity to another, events to a third, etc. It might mean a post mortem on last year's campaign, or a planning session for next year.

**Better example topic:** "I want to do some brainstorming for next year's ad campaign for Product Zero."

Do you see that's it's cleaner and more efficient to be specific right up front? It takes less time and focuses the other person (or people) immediately on the right issue.

\*\*\*

## Goal

Why do you want to communicate about this topic? Do you want to deliver information, ask for a result, change a decision, solve a problem, or just vent?

Being clear about the goal puts everyone's focus in the same place. If people don't have the same understanding of the goal, it's easier for them to make mistakes in responding. That just makes the interpersonal gap wider. In the "example topic" above, the goal is fuzzy ("talking about" something is not a goal). In the "better example" topic above, it's clear that the goal is brainstorming.

**Don't communicate until you know what you want to accomplish.**

\*\*\*

## Audience

Who do you need to talk to? Who are the stakeholders for this topic? A stakeholder is anyone who can be affected by the topic.

Think about this carefully when you are planning to communicate. If you leave people out who have a stake in the topic, you risk missing out on important input, breaking someone's process, making them angry, etc. If you include people who do not have a stake, you risk uninformed input, confusion, etc.

In the "example topic" above, it's hard to identify the stakeholders – who is affected by "marketing"? If you use a fuzzy topic and a fuzzy goal, you'll end up including too many people, or missing important stakeholders, in your communication.

Never leave a stakeholder out of the loop on purpose – it only leads to more conflict down the road. Effective managers communicate about issues up front in order to minimize the mess later.

We talk to different people in different ways. If you and I have a long working relationship and a history of shared projects, I can be less specific with you and still be clear. You see this in relationships all the time. You and I might sit in your office and say, "Oh, this customer is just like that guy last year," and that's

all the context we need to understand the situation. But saying that in a large meeting of company executives may get us nothing but puzzled looks.

Knowing who you are talking to will affect how you structure your communication – how much background and context you need, whether you need to explain the meaning of special terms, etc. You may even consider crafting separate messages for separate groups of stakeholders – not so that you can "spin" the information, but so each stakeholder has a message that is plain to them.

**Don't communicate until you know who you are talking to.**

\*\*\*

### **Headline**

A clear message starts with a specific headline.

This is not the same thing as the subject line of an email. The headline is the opening of the business portion of your communication (after you have entered on the human level). The headline tells your audience the topic, the goal and, if necessary, your particular perspective on it.

Keep it simple and specific. For example:

- I want to propose changes to the payroll system (topic) because it will make our tax calculations easier (perspective). I would like to get your input.
- I have heard about Beth's promotion (topic) and am upset that I wasn't considered for the position. Can you tell me why that happened?
- The printer just called to say the order will be late (topic, no perspective). Will that be a problem for you?

**Open your communication with a clear statement of topic and goal.**

\*\*\*

### **Key information**

Identify the key information that everyone receiving this communication must have in order to accomplish your goal. This is generally the longest part of the communication, and the place where plain language and attention to clarity make a great difference.

Key information includes any data or information that your audience needs to clearly understand and respond to your message. Remember that you may need to set context, define specialized terms, remind people of historical experience, etc.

Key information also includes assumptions, parameters and limitations (e.g. "we don't have enough in the budget for a full system" or "I assume we want to implement this next year.")

Give everyone the information they need to have a good chance of understanding the topic and your goal on first reading, in the way you intend them to understand it. Think about the most clear way to organize and present the information.

Good organization, with specific attention to context, can make an enormous difference in how people receive and respond to your message.

\*\*\*

### **Giving direction and delegating**

If you are giving direction about a task or delegating responsibility for an issue, do not expect people to read your mind and "know" what you want.

Pay particular attention to the following kinds of information in your communication:

- Set clear deadlines
- Be clear about any requirements for the format or structure of the result, the process, etc.
- Be clear about any constraints (e.g. budget, resources, time spent, etc.)
- Be very specific about what authority the person has to act on her own with regard to this work. Does she have to check all questions with you, or are there areas of the work where she may use her own judgment?
- Be clear that she can come to you with any questions or concerns.

It's particularly important to clarify a person's areas of authority when you are delegating. Do not make someone responsible for an overall result without giving them authority to make key decisions. Be very specific about the decisions that she may make, and the decisions she may not.

Giving direction does not give you permission to micromanage. If there is a particular process that must be followed, say so. If there is not, keep your hands off and let the person do the work her own way.

\*\*\*

### Next steps

Be clear about any next steps that you think may be necessary, including specific requests, accountabilities, deadlines etc. Don't leave people wondering what they are supposed to do with the information you've given them.

If there are no next steps, say so.

---

## 3.9 Delivering the message

Once you've planned your communication, you have to deliver it – talk to someone in person, write the email, etc.

Here are some general guidelines for delivering the message so that it is heard by people in the way you intend them to hear it.

- Enter on the human level
- State your headline right up front
- Deliver the information
- Discuss next steps and summarize
- Exit at the human level

Often in our culture, we deliberately avoid making our point up front. We want to avoid conflict or rejection. Or we're afraid of hurting someone's feelings. Or we want to suck up by making sure our opinion matches theirs, so we try to determine their opinion before we express ours. Or we have a need to make sure the other person hears "the whole story" and has "the complete picture" before they form an opinion.

And so we come into an interaction and start telling a story. "Hi Marie, I was talking to Lorenzo yesterday and he said that he had talked to you about the paper stock change at the production vendor, and I was thinking about the last time they got a new paper supplier, you remember? It was the Anderson project and the new paper wasn't up to spec and it really screwed us with the

client, so I was wondering if ...." Blah blah blah.

Where do you think Marie's attention is right now? Is she fascinated by the conversation? Nope. She's leaping up the ladder of assumption trying to figure out what your point is so that she can organize her thoughts and pay the proper attention to the pertinent information. By now, she's either confused, irritated or both.

In business culture, we are looking for answers. When someone initiates a communication with us, we assume there is a point and we begin looking/listening specifically for that point. If we don't get it right away, the interpersonal gap gets wider as we go up the ladder, or feel annoyed that someone is wasting our time, or just get more confused.

Confused people are no fun to work with. They are more likely to become defensive, irritable, unhelpful, and obstructive.

Enter the conversation on the human level, and then state your headline immediately.

There are no exceptions to this rule – good news, bad news, or neutral. Effective management is **not** about persuading other people to your point of view by spinning a situation, withholding information, or glossing over obstacles – it is about laying out the information, your opinions, and your goals clearly, transparently and authentically so the other person can decide how they wish to respond.

Deliver your information clearly and completely.

Remember, this not about what you want to say – it's about what your audience needs to know and understand. Make sure you're sending the message in a way that they can listen to. Make sure you're using their language and tying your message to ideas they are familiar with.

Continue communicating until you believe that everyone has a shared understanding of the content. This may be a 5-minute conversation, an hour-long meeting, or lengthy exchange of emails. Do whatever is necessary. No matter how much time it takes up front to get to a shared understanding, it is still better than having everything go to hell down the road.

Then discuss next steps if necessary. Don't let the clarity slide here – setting unclear expectations and making unclear requests can widen the interpersonal

gap unexpectedly

Be prepared at the end of your exchange to summarize the next steps that everyone has agreed to. It's very important to make sure everyone is on the same page. This is particularly important for face-to-face and telephone interactions. If you have been trading email back and forth, send a summary email to clarify the agreed-upon next steps.

Finally, close every interaction on the human level. Thank people for their time and help. If you haven't achieved what you wanted from the interaction, express hope, disappointment, concern, understanding, acceptance – use your leveling techniques to leave things on a human note. If nothing else, thank them for being willing to talk with you and express your desire to revisit or resolve the situation.

---

### 3.10 What's wrong with this memo?

**Group exercise:** We're going to look at examples of communication and talk about what's wrong with them and how you would improve them.

Have a number of memo and email examples prepared for this exercise, and go through as many as possible depending on whether you are running ahead of or behind schedule. Do not cut into the time needed for the next exercise (3.11).

The emails/memos should reflect poor communication in a realistic way, as opposed to exaggerating for effect. Try for a blend of obvious and subtle problems (possibly including missing steps, assumptions, etc.).

Facilitate discussion of errors and fixes, relating them back to the communication learning from both sessions 2 and 3. Don't let the group move on until they've caught all the obvious errors – point them out if necessary and note those concepts for follow-up in upcoming sessions.

---

### 3.11 Communication scenarios

**Table exercise:** Work in your table groups. Take a few minutes to read through the scenario. Then decide as a group how an effective manager would communicate about this situation.

Your decisions should include:

- Will you use face-to-face, email, memo or telephone communication?
- What is your headline?
- Who do you think are the stakeholders? Who needs to know?
- What are the key points?
- What are the next steps?
- How would you open the communication?
- What kinds of miscommunication you expect in this interaction? How might you respond to it?

Take 15-20 minutes to develop your approach. Then each table will share your approach with the group.

Have a number of scenarios prepared for this exercise. Select them based on what you think best matches the specific questions or concerns participants have expressed about communication throughout the day.

The scenarios should reflect typical work situations: communicating about policy changes, a customer complaint, delegating work, someone stealing people's lunches, a team member with poor hygiene, etc. Please avoid layoff/discipline scenarios or scenarios of intense workplace conflict – those will be covered in later sessions.

When the group comes back together, ask each table to describe their approach. When all tables have reported, solicit comments and suggestions from the group. Keep it brief unless it's clear the group has really missed the point, or if the table groups have taken wildly different approaches – then discuss as appropriate. But in general, practice is more important than discussion at this point.

---

### 3.12 Summary remarks, final questions and comments

Okay, let's put all this together into the big picture of communicating as a manager:

- Effective communication takes into account that you are communicating

with a human being about a business topic.

- Making your communication effective on both these levels takes practice. Don't be afraid to prepare, rehearse, and seek feedback as you develop these skills.
- You do your part by knowing what you want to talk about, what your goal is, who your stakeholders are, and what information you need to give them.
- Deliver your message in plain language.
- Enter at the human level.
- State your headline right up front.
- Discuss information and next steps clearly until you are confident you have a shared understanding of the situation.
- When you are giving information or direction, be specific about why the information or work request is important and necessary. If it affects the listener individually, say so. Set clear parameters for deadline, format, constraint and authority.
- During the conversation or email exchange, monitor the interpersonal gap and do your best to head off miscommunication when you see it happening. Remember, the most important thing you can do sometimes is listen.
- Stay clear, authentic and transparent.
- Summarize next steps and important agreements.
- Close the interaction on a human level.
- Remember, the people you are communicating with are different from you. They may not perceive, understand, or react to things the same way you do. Deal with it. It's your responsibility to do everything you can to make your communication with everyone successful.

Questions or comments about what we've covered today?

### 3.13 Wrap up

- A. Preview Session 4
- B. Review homework assignments for Session 4

#### **3.13 A -- Preview Session 4**

Our next session will take us into four activities that take a lot of a manager's time and energy: establishing team accountability, setting priorities, making decisions, and running meetings.

These are critical ongoing management responsibilities – areas where you must be effective every day in order to keep work moving forward. They are also areas in which people often use bad process, miscommunicate, and end up working at cross-purposes.

You'll learn in the session how to establish and manage priorities for the team; a variety of decision-making models and how to make and communicate a decision; and how to run effective meetings.

#### **3.13 B -- Homework for Session 4**

Refer participants to homework sheet in their notebook. See Tools and Materials section for homework sheet and handouts.

1. In your notebook, you'll find handouts with more information on what managers generally communicate about and tips on delivering messages clearly, transparently and authentically. Please make sure to review them.
2. Share a concept, skill or behavior from this session with your team or co-workers and ask for their help in observing you and offering feedback.
3. Readings:
  - **Becoming a Manager**, pp. 47-85
  - **Difficult Conversations**, pp. 44-57.
4. Communication scenarios

You will need to develop 2 or 3 scenarios for this assignment. They should be simple and commonplace: the point is for participants to analyze situations that they can expect to encounter as part of their everyday

managing experience. Please make sure the scenarios require understanding the communication models presented in Session 2, as well as the planning and delivery skills from Session 3.

Develop a response to the communication scenarios provided with your homework sheet. Each scenario will specify whether you are responding in person or in email.

For the in-person conversation, script your side of the conversation. For the email communication, write the full text of the email.

Please write up your responses, along with a brief analysis of the factors you considered in your approach, why you made key decisions, and what concerns or issues you noted.

Please post your responses to the group email list before the next session, early enough that others may read and comment on them. Please respond to each other's scenarios with feedback, requests for clarification, and suggestions.

#### 5. Practice conversations.

Pick a partner now to work with on this assignment.

Schedule at least two brief conversations to practice your communication skills. In one conversation, you bring the topic and do the preparation; in the other conversation, you are the recipient of the communication. In both cases, work to apply the communication skills you have learned in Sessions 2 and 3, even if it means having to stop the conversation, back up, and try again.

Please choose a legitimate business topic – in other words, talk about something real, not an artificial scenario. If you can work together on solving a business problem or improving a process, great. If you don't have a business reason to communicate, then a real personal topic is okay (a significant personal experience, seeking feedback on a social situation, planning a trip, etc.).

I prefer these be face-to-face conversations rather than written. The goal of this exercise is to practice staying clear, monitoring the interpersonal gap, and completing the communication in real-time (as opposed to having time

to consider your response in email).

It'll probably feel awkward. Please do it anyway. You need to practice, and practicing with each other is safe.

At the end of the conversation, share feedback with each other and make notes of how it went.

6. Continue to observe communication behavior, with special attention to effective versus ineffective messages.

Record your observations in your journal – note the specifics, and be prepared to tell some of these stories in our next session. Also be prepared to talk about what you take from your observations that will benefit you as a manager.