Guidance Note Series 2

Developing communication skills



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You can improve your communication by developing excellent listening skills, understanding body language and changing your negative. behaviour. Impressive communication skills can be learned by anyone of average intelligence. All that is needed is the determination to learn and practice to improve step by step. This is the second installment of the Guidance Note Series on "Developing Communication Skills".

Introduction

In the strictest sense, monologue is not proper communication. Communication implies conversation between two or more persons.

Besides positive behavioral traits that were discussed last week, it is important to learn how to be an active participant in a conversation. This week, we will discuss two significant characteristics that a good communicator should possess.

Be a Good Listener

To have effective flow of conversation, it is imperative that you patiently and carefully listen to the person with whom you are conversing. This helps to understand the thoughts and views of the other person and to respond appropriately. As a result, the conversation becomes meaningful and enjoyable.

On the other hand, imagine a situation where you offer suggestions or criticisms without allowing the person to complete what he or she has to say; or do not lend your ears for attentive hearing. Unless you are certain of the other person's intent, your suggestions or criticisms can cause frustration for both parties, and lead to an early end of communication. Hence, you must fight the urge to respond immediately and listen to what the other person is trying to communicate before you respond.

Speak with Conviction

While being a good listener is important, it does not mean that you remain silent. Nervousness is common when it comes to interacting with other people. Remember that if you are nervous there is good chance that the conversation will lead to a failure. Be aware of your opinions and feelings and do not hesitate in expressing your beliefs on a certain issue; and, of course, maintain dignified language. You communicate your thoughts better when you speak with conviction.

Practice

Usually, it is at home and with close friends that you feel most comfortable. A flip side of this comfortable feeling is that familiarity tends to make you a careless listener. When you speak you are not necessarily aware of what you want to convey. If you carefully analyse the outcome, you will discover that many times your suggestions or criticisms do not get acceptance. Your communication fails to have bearing on a decision or matter that emerges from the discussion. You cut a sorry figure as a communicator.

Turn this adverse situation into an opportunity to improve your communication skills. In a comfortable situation, nervousness does not stand as a barrier. Start being a good listener at home and with close friends, and speak with conviction of what you want to say.

Continue to be a patient listener till you find that your dear ones and close friends have started giving weightage to what you say. This would take time but is bound to happen with regular practice. Do not lose heart if you find it tiresome in the beginning. Keep on trying and you will make it.

Funny quotes

1. Always acknowledge a fault. This will throw those in authority off guard and give you an opportunity to commit more. - Mark Twain

2. Get your facts first, and then you can distort them as much as you please. - Mark Twain

3. Honesty is the best policy - when there is money in it. - Mark Twain

4. I have a higher and grander standard principle than George Washington. He could not lie; I can, but I won't. - Mark Twain

5. I was gratified to be able to answer promptly. I said I don't know. - Mark Twain

6. It is better to keep your mouths closed and let people think you are a fool than open it and remove all doubt. - Mark Twain

7. He attacked everything in life with a mix of extraordinary genius and naïve incompetence, and it was often difficult to tell which was which. - Douglas Adams

8. In the beginning the universe was created. This has made a lot of people very angry and has been widely regarded as a bad move. - Douglas Adams

9. Anyone who is capable of getting themselves made President should on no account be allowed to do the job. - Douglas Adams

10. If only God would give me some clear sign! Like making a large deposit in my name in a Swiss bank. - Woody Allen