

Free essay on the importance of effective communication in everyday life

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



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Abstract

This essay defines effective communication and puts forth its importance in everyday life with the help of a few examples. It also explains miscommunication that occurs when a message is not communicated clearly. An example from Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa is used to show how miscommunication can happen. This paper refers to works of Angeliki Tzanne and Julia T. Wood to get a better insight into effective communication. Learning theories and principles of effective communication can help to make communication in everyday life more effective. Therefore, theories of communication as explained by Claude Elwood Shannon and C. S. Lewis have been briefly discussed here.

Keywords: effective communication

Effective communication is a two-way process; it refers to the transfer and receipt of information from one person to another or from one point to another. The communication process, therefore, must include at least two people or points to play the role of the sender and the receiver. To complete this process, the message conveyed by the sender must be understood by the receiver of the message. This is true of all methods of communication: verbal, non-verbal, written and electronic. According to author C. S. Lewis, effective communication requires clarity of expression on the part of the sender and accuracy of understanding on the part of the receiver for whom the message is intended. The “ rhetoric” used by the sender must be clear for the receiver to understand and interpret, and shared meaning must be achieved to make the communication complete and effective. Otherwise, miscommunication and not effective communication has occurred.

Miscommunication

Miscommunication is defined as the failure to clearly communicate either because of problems in hearing or understanding the rhetoric of the sender. Angeliki Tzanne states that a miscommunication can result in “ partial or ambiguous understanding”, “ nonhearing” (Grimshaw, 1980) or “ nonunderstanding” (Zaefferer, 1977). Let’s look at an example of miscommunication from the computer-animated comedy film Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa. Recall the scene where the monkeys make a monkey-chain by holding hands and rescue Alex, the lion, from the tourists’ colony. In this scene, Alex and his father Zuba are inside the bucket that the plane has

dropped, with the monkey-chain holding onto it. When he sees Nana, the old lady, Alex says “ She’s got a gun! Let’s get out while we can!” and asks the monkeys to pass on his message up the monkey-chain. Alex’s message gets miscommunicated by the monkey called Mason and what Marty, the zebra, gets is the message “ Let’s have some fun and take out the dam.” Marty, therefore, asks the penguins who are flying the plane to take out the dam. The old lady is adamant about eating Alex, stands on top of the dam and shoots many times to bring the plane down. Soon she is out of bullets. As a last resort, she waves her hand bag just before the bucket strikes the dam, breaks through it and sends the water back down the drying river. The animals in the reserve are overjoyed to see the water flowing toward the watering hole. They accept Alex as an alpha lion and nullify his banishment from the reserve.

Importance of Effective Communication

This is a rare case where miscommunication has proved to be useful. In everyday life, both personal and professional, this is not the case; miscommunication between family members, friends and colleagues can cause chaos, confusion and arguments. Therefore, communicating to family members, friends or colleagues should not be taken for granted, because it is an everyday activity. Effective communication has become all the more important in today’s multicultural world. Julia T. Wood lists “ long-distance friendships, romantic relationships, public speaking, interviewing, classroom learning, and productive group discussion” as contexts where effective communication is important.

Let's take a look at a family of four where effective communication on a daily basis is vital. Anshula is a senior consultant working with an E-learning solutions provider in India. Her job responsibilities include communicating with the company's overseas clients and subject matter experts. Though it is a nine-to-five job, she usually needs to carry work home. She lives with her eight-year old son and mother-in-law. Her husband works for an oil and gas company in the Middle East. The company follows an on-and-off-duty schedule; when on duty, her husband stays away from home for forty consecutive days and when not on duty, he stays at home taking care of a family business. As a family, they get less time to spend with each other and communicate. To keep miscommunication at bay, Anshula has made it an everyday activity to call her son and chitchat with him after he reaches home from school. The family also considers dinnertime an occasion to sit together and listen to one another. She also sends short messages to her husband as frequently as possible giving him updates on their son's activities at home and school.

Importance of Learning Communication Theories

Like Anshula, we rely on effective communication on a daily basis to connect and bond with our family members, friends and colleagues. Knowing a theory or two on effective communication can help us to be more effective in communicating with others. For instance, Anshula has insight into the communication that maintains the bond between family members; so she is able to keep the family together despite the limited time they get to spend as a family. She knows how to listen better to her son; it helps her to find out

if anything is going wrong at home or in school. She knows how to manage time so that she can take time out of her busy schedule for her family. Knowing a few communication theories and following a few principles of effective communication have helped Anshula to maximize her abilities as an effective communicator, both in her personal and professional life.

Shannon's Theory of Communication

Claude Elwood Shannon, known as "the father of information theory", explains human communication system. According to him, human communication system consists of a sender that is the source of information, a transmission medium that has a noise source and a receiver that reconstructs the message. Shannon explains the system with the help of a schematic diagram.

Recall the rescue scene from Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa again. The scene is useful to understand Shannon's theory of communication. An information source (Alex) produces a message to be communicated to the receiving terminal; a transmitter (monkeys in the monkey-chain) produces a signal suitable for transmission over the channel and the channel (monkey-chain) transmits the signal from the transmitter to the receiver. Finally, the receiver (Mason) reconstructs the message from the signal and pass it on to the destination (Marty) for whom the message is intended.

Shannon adapts his theory to analyze ordinary human language. He states that it is redundant to use more symbols and words than necessary to convey messages. Michael McCrary when doing research on C. S. Lewis' estranged relationship with his father Albert Lewis discovers that when “

verbally disciplining his young children, he often became intoxicated by the very words he chose, which prompted him to use more of them." He quotes C. S. Lewis, "all the resources of his (Albert Lewis) immense vocabulary were poured forth". Therefore, later when C. S. Lewis comes up with his theory of communication, he emphasizes that the sender of the message adheres to two principles of effective communication: brevity and clarity of the message. He adds that when communicating the message clearly, the sender should also know the abilities of the receiver to understand the message.

Conclusion

It is clear that a person does not have to be an eloquent speaker or a certified communicator to communicate more effectively in everyday life. McCrary writes that C. S. Lewis, "one of the most effective communicators of this century" and Albert Lewis, "an eloquent court solicitor and public speaker known for his gift of simple exposition" have failed to communicate with each other throughout their lives and thus failed to show their genuine love for each other. To communicate more effectively, we just need to understand how the human communication system functions and follow these basic principles: brevity and clarity of the message on the part of the sender and accuracy of understanding on the part of the receiver. When a message is composed, the sender should also know the abilities of the receiver to understand the message so that shared meaning is achieved.

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