CRYSTAL CLEAR COMMUNICATION

MASTER SKILLS SET

INTRODUCTION AND LESSON 1

WHAT IT IS AND WHY IT MATTERS TO YOU
Not long ago, an international airline created an ad campaign directed to Spanish speaking people. It included billboards planted in auspicious places. The message was that they could fly “en cueros,” which was supposed to mean that the airline has leather seats. The airline execs learned later that in that context the translation for “en cueros” is “naked.” At least the message was memorable!

But, what if YOU were the clever marketing exec who created that ad? Where was your bi-lingual dictionary when you needed it? Or…did you assign that task to someone else who didn’t understand your instructions?

Talk about not understanding... A report was filed to an insurance company that began with: “Coming home, I drove into the wrong house and collided with a tree I don’t have.”

What? Did this person talk like he drove, or was it one of those phone depositions that the interpreter got all wrong? Do you suppose he got paid for the damage after he told the adjuster he didn’t mean what he said?

Talk about not meaning what you say ... A well intentioned volunteer for her church often helped type the bulletin. One week a few of her notices got noticed.
- “For those who have children and don’t know it, we have a nursery downstairs.”
- “Thursday at 5 PM, there will be a meeting of the Little Mother’s club. All ladies wishing to be ‘little mothers’ will meet with the pastor in his study.”
What did they say? And, who gave the proof reader the day off?

In our fast-paced, challenging times, these kinds of errors happen often. And, you’ll most likely agree…they’re not usually all that humorous.

This is how communication works – and how it doesn’t. **If the message isn’t clear, and if it isn’t received as it was intended, the outcome is almost sure to be different than intended.** And that outcome is all yours to deal with, regardless of where the communication wasn’t clear. When we aren’t clear with our business associates, family or friends, the results can be far-reaching, even devastating. **Effective communication is at the root of every relationship.**

As you know, communication is so important that it even defines your happiness, career, wealth and overall success. **It impacts everything you do, dawn to dusk, every single day.** Is that something you want to leave to chance, or is it worth learning to do as well as you can?

- Is talking something you do without thinking?
- Do you ever ask people to do something at the same time you’re busy doing something else?
- Has anyone ever told you that they don’t understand your request or point?

It’s often true of busy, dynamic, in-charge people that they take communication for granted. They expect the people around them to understand quickly and respond appropriately. Perhaps those of us who have been talking, and leading, and doing big things for years are the ones who could most use a reminder about how to do those things well.

**The bigger your dreams and goals, the bigger is your need to communicate them to the people who can help you achieve them.**

**In this course, you’ll learn:**

1. About the elements of crystal clear communication and why they matter.
2. What should happen in communication – and often doesn’t.
3. That listening actively is more important than talking.
4. How you “tell” more in your actions, body language and presentation style than you do with words.
5. How understanding communication styles will empower you and make successful communication easier.
6. That as a leader, you can use effective communication to get more out of your relationships, your work, and your life.

“Fully 85% of your success in life is contained in your ability to communicate effectively with other people.”
- Brian Tracy

With the help of Crystal Clear Communication, you’re on your way to achieving just about anything you can imagine – without it, you won’t.

Let’s get started!
LESSON 1.

CRYSTAL CLEAR COMMUNICATION

WHAT IT IS AND WHY IT MATTERS TO YOU

It was recently reported by Paul Harvey on his radio news that a camera crew showed up at the L.A. Airport and said they were there to “shoot a pilot.” They were released by the security staff five hours later!

From your first cry as a newborn, the challenging skills of communication are learned. You acquire and achieve those things that you can express a desire to have. So, you learn to talk. How well depends on how well those around you teach you. Later, your ability to communicate depends on how well you choose to develop your own skills. Your mastery over your native language, your ability to speak various languages, your choice of words and vocabulary, and so forth, become a product not only of your environment, but of your own choices.

Congratulations to you for making the choice to consider your communication skills and ways that you can improve them. You’ll improve your life in the process.

One of the most dynamic examples of our need for crystal clear communication can be seen in an example we’ve already been having fun with: air travel.
In fact, step it up a notch and consider international air travel. You’re planning a trip from your hometown to Venice, Italy. Think of the vast network of information behind setting up a schedule for your trip among planes that travel the skies between thousands of airports. Think of the coordination involved in your purchasing and reserving a specific seat on one of those flights. Think of the people who staff the airport, the airline and the plane that you will travel on. Now, consider that those people involved in your international trip speak different languages.

Digging deeper, consider the communication that has taken place around taking the concept of flight and transforming it into the huge jet-powered vehicle that acts lighter than air? How about the cooperation between people and computers both on-board and around the world that enable the plane to fly, to take off and land among others doing the same thing. Meanwhile, pilots are staying in touch with various other people and computers on the ground at any given time. And – we’ve been mastering all these communication systems for air travel since man began flying only about 100 years ago!

Miraculously, you usually get where you wanted to go, almost on time – and so does your luggage, most of the time.

The “flow” of information that is communicated from the time a passenger books a ticket until she picks up her bags at her destination is a practiced system that is designed to work well. But, what about your systems? Do you “fly” a little more “seat of the pants?” As an entrepreneur, you have much more in common with the air traffic controllers than the ground crew. The flow of information around your life and business may be much less predictable...something like this:

A DC-10 had come in a little hot and thus had an exceedingly long roll out after touching down. The tower noted: “American 751, make a hard right turn at the end of the runway, if you are able. If you are not able, take the Guadalupe exit off Highway 101, make a right at the lights and return to the airport.”
Or, on a bad day…

“TWA 2341, for noise abatement turn right 45 Degrees.”
“Center, we are at 35,000 feet. How much noise can we make up here?”
“Sir, have you ever heard the noise a 747 makes when it hits a 727?”

Some days, clear communication may just seem over your head.

Crystal clear communication, one on one, can be surprisingly challenging. Have you ever had a great idea that you had the hardest time getting someone else to “see?” Have you ever asked someone to do something, had him tell you he would, only to find out later it wasn’t done at all like you asked? Have you ever given someone driving directions, only to have them call you later – totally lost? Have you ever created a plan to meet someone at a particular place and time only to learn they were waiting on you somewhere else? Have you ever been the one who got it all wrong? Of course! We all have had many experiences like this. As a result, we’ve wasted untold time and money and effort; gotten frustrated and damaged relationships. Stuff happens and we all make mistakes, but many of these mishaps can be managed and even eliminated when we learn how to communicate clearly.

Please spend just a couple of minutes evaluating your communications abilities and challenges at this point in time.
Lesson 1

THE COMMUNICATION EVALUATOR

This self-assessment tool will help you evaluate your current communication abilities in various categories. Look at each statement and check the box next to it if you believe it is true about you most of the time. Then, add one point for each check.

**Communication Basics**

- [ ] I believe that the more crystal clear my communications, the better.
- [ ] I’m a confident communicator.
- [ ] I know how to listen actively.
- [ ] I rarely interrupt other people.
- [ ] I rarely have communication mix-ups or challenges.

Basics score out of 5: _____

**Communication Challenges**

- [ ] Other people clearly understand my communication most of the time.
- [ ] The outcomes and results that happen after I make a request or give an instruction are those I expect.
- [ ] I’m comfortable meeting new people.
- [ ] I can keep a conversation going with someone I just met.
- [ ] I can always be proud of my written communication.
- [ ] I communicate with people easily, regardless of their personality style.
- [ ] People seem to feel better about me and about themselves after our communications.
- [ ] I know how to ask questions when I need clarification.
- [ ] I’m familiar with the filters that get in the way of people hearing my messages.
- [ ] I’m aware of communication challenges that keep coming up for me and what to do about them.

Challenge score out of 10: _____
Communicating to Groups

☐ I often speak to groups of people.
☐ I look forward to speaking to groups because that format of communication is often important.
☐ When I speak to people, I feel confident and positive.
☐ When I speak to people, I get a chance to get my ideas across.
☐ When I speak to people, I receive good feedback.

Groups score out of 5: ______

Communicating Professionally

☐ I’m comfortable giving feedback to people who work with and for me.
☐ I’m comfortable receiving feedback from peers and employees.
☐ My instructions to others are consistently followed and completed, as I need them to be.
☐ My peers share their ideas and goals and seem eager to hear mine.
☐ I can quickly “figure out” how to approach other people about business.

Professional score out of 5: ______

Communicating as a Leader

☐ I believe that clear communication is a crucially important aspect of leadership.
☐ I’m confident working with other people at meetings.
☐ I lead efficient, clear and productive meetings.
☐ I’m confident that when I communicate new ideas and goals to people I lead, they will become excited and contribute to the goals.
☐ When I speak as a leader, people respect what I have to say.

Leadership score out of 5: ______
Notice the areas that your communication skills need the most work. The chart below will interpret your current feelings about yourself as a communicator.

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<th>Overall Score</th>
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<td>Basics</td>
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<td>Leadership</td>
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<td>TOTAL:</td>
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<tr>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>27-30</td>
<td>You believe you have a solid mastery of communication, while there may be room for improvement.</td>
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<td>20-26</td>
<td>Good communication skills are indicated with a few areas that need work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>Your communication ability needs work — as an entrepreneur, you have areas of weakness.</td>
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<td>0-14</td>
<td>Clear communication is a challenge for you, but that is about to change!</td>
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Please answer these questions.
1. What have you learned from this evaluation?
2. Do any areas stand out as strengths or weaknesses?
The good news about that evaluation is that your efforts in completing this course will improve your skills and abilities. So let’s dig in.

Communication is much more than talking. It can take many forms and be delivered via an ever-increasing myriad of formats, to include all art forms. In fact, good communication is more an art than a science. It existed in art forms before language and it has been studied and taught by professionals. Like art, communication remains subject to interpretation most of the time! At this point, we’re going to consider only verbal, face-to-face speech between two people. Later in the course, we’ll consider other formats.

We learn as kids in school that communication sets humans apart from other highly functioning animals. It makes sense that the better we communicate, the more likely we are to get what we want in life, make a difference in our world, and be happy and satisfied at all levels. Communication is without doubt the most important skill required to live successfully in our competitive world.

“You can have brilliant ideas, but if you can’t get them across, your ideas won’t get you anywhere.”
— Lee Iacocca

Communication takes place when two or more people exchange thoughts or information. Once a message is created and spoken or written or acted, it must be heard or read or seen by someone else for communication to have taken place. This is very often the reason why communication is ineffective or even absent – the message was never received in the first place!

“The problem with communication ... is the illusion that it has been accomplished.”
— George Bernard Shaw

You’ve most likely experienced the frustration of feeling like you’re “talking to a wall” when you speak. Unless we get some confirmation that our messages are received, we don’t know for sure that we’ve communicated. Perhaps the most crucial thing you can do to be an effective communicator is to remember that your message is not as important as whether – and how – it is received. Quite simply – you haven’t communicated until someone has received your message, so we’ll spend most of this course on that issue.
“Most conversations are simply monologues delivered in the presence of a witness.”
- Margaret Miller

Think back to personal examples of communications challenges. Make a list of examples of communication challenges you’ve had. What was your role in the communication effort? Can you remember what caused the disconnect?

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<th>Situation</th>
<th>Your Role</th>
<th>Reason for Problem</th>
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As you go through this course, remember those situations and you’ll begin to understand how they will go differently in the future.
Think about the process of communication. Basically, it’s made up of three parts:

- the sender of the message,
- the message,
- and the receiver of the message.

Seems pretty straightforward. In how many ways could it go wrong? Before we count them, let’s consider other pieces of the puzzle. Also involved in any communication are:

- The content of the message – is it good news or bad, interesting or boring, threatening or supportive, clear or muddled, accurate or not, and so forth.
- The intonation, style, attitude, body language, timing, etc. of the sender’s voice.
- The attitude, mood and circumstances, etc. of the receiver.

The various multiples of these factors mean that many, many things could get in the way of effective and productive communication. There are more reasons why a simple request, question or comment could be misinterpreted than there are reasons for it to be received as intended. So, your job is to anticipate those potential pitfalls — and avoid them. You can do that after you’ve learned what they are and when you focus on your own communication.
List various situations you can think of in your current life interactions that require you to communicate accurately, effectively...clearly. What situations do you find yourself in that require you to function at your best – or serious negative results could be the outcome?

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<th>Situation</th>
<th>Your Role</th>
<th>Serious Potential Outcome</th>
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Are you more motivated than ever to improve your skills?

Think about people you admire as communicators. List the things that you like about their communication styles.

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<th>Person</th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>What You Like</th>
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As you become more aware of communication in general, and just what makes it crystal clear, as opposed to murky and pointless, you’ll begin to understand that it is more complicated than we think. There is certainly something to that old adage:

**THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK!**

The film crew that wanted to “shoot a pilot” might agree! But, you’ll learn that you can become a very good communicator ALMOST without thinking!

*In the next Lesson we’ll examine the reasons why whatever can go wrong often does when it comes to communicating.*