**Precision in Language Makes for Effective Communication**

Dynamic communication is one of the keys to success that I discuss in [***Straight Talk for Success***](http://www.straighttalkforsuccess.com/).  If you want to become a dynamic communicator, you need to develop three types of skills: conversation skills, writing skills and presentation skills.

In which of these skills are you strong?  In which of them are you weak?  Please leave a comment telling us how you developed your strength and what you are doing to address your weakest communication skill.

We all have our communication skill strengths and weaknesses.  However, there is one commonality that cuts across all three.  Words and language are key to each of these three communication skills.

I am a big believer in using precise language.  Sloppy word choices lead to poor communication.  Let me share an example that happened to me just yesterday.  I had an appointment with a salesperson set up for 4:00.  She called me a little after 11:00 to confirm our appointment.  So far, so good.

Then she said, “I’ll see roughly around 4:00.”

I said, “Our appointment is at 4:00.”

To which she replied, “That’s what I said, I’ll see you roughly around 4:00.”

I then said, “Our appointment is at 4:00.  You said you would see me ‘roughly around 4.’ I have an appointment that will run until about 3:55, and another one at 5:00.  I need for us to meet at 4:00.”

She said, “Whatever.”

I asked, “So you’ll be here at 4:00?”

She said, “Yes,” and hung up.

I know this might seem like no big deal, but I believe it is indicative of a mistake that hampers effective communication.  Imprecise language leads to ambiguity and poor communication.  Precise language, on the other hand, facilitates quality communication.

Effective communication is difficult.  Several years ago, the Harvard Business Review ran an article on communication called, “The Fateful Process of Mr. A Talking to Mr. B.”  The title makes the point – communication, especially verbal communication is difficult.  You can enhance your chances of communicating effectively by choosing your words carefully.

To return to the example, the two qualifiers, “roughly” and “around” on their own were bad enough.  In this case, to me “roughly” means anytime between 3:30 and 4:30; “around” means anytime between 3:50 and 4:10.  Hearing them combined in a sentence made me think that this person might show up anytime between 3:00 and 5:00.

See what I mean about precision in language?  If you heard someone say, “I’ll be there roughly around 4:00, what time would you be expecting him or her to arrive.  Please leave a comment on this one.  It will be interesting to see different people’s interpretation of the phrase “roughly around 4:00.”

I don’t know what the sales person was thinking when she used those words, but I assume that to her, “roughly around 4:00” means the same as 4:00.   To avoid this problem all she needed to say was, “I’ll see you at 4:00.”  Then, if she were running late – or early – she could have called and said, “I’m sorry, I’m going to be 10 or 15 minutes late, is this OK?”

The common sense point here is simple.  If you want to communicate effectively – in conversation, in writing, and in your presentations – choose your words carefully.  My best advice is to use the smallest word that communicates exactly what you want to say.  Small, commonly used words communicate better than polysyllabic (I mean, “big”) words that do little to enhance communication but show off your large vocabulary.  Precision in language facilitates effective communication.  Imprecision hampers effective communication.  Choose your words with care and you will become a better communicator.

That’s my take on precise and imprecise language.  What’s yours?  Please leave a comment sharing your thoughts.  I appreciate every comment I get.  As always, thanks for reading – and writing.

http://www.budbilanich.com/precision-in-language-makes-for-effective-communication/