

# A B C of Interpersonal Communication

By: Faiez H. Seyal

*In the modern world, there is nothing more talked about than communication. Dynamic organizations send their managers to attend seminars on communications. Unfortunately, in Pakistan, it is one of the most neglected areas. One who can speak, thinks that he is a good communicator. Well, that is not exactly what we call communication. A person may be speaking but is not communicating if the message is not getting through. The cost of distorted message is lost time and productivity. The rules of communication run from A to Z and may be a good start to build or refine communication skills.*

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A is for Assertiveness. A good communicator is always assertive i.e. he expresses himself honestly without denying the right of others. This communication technique involves respect for oneself and respect for others.

B is for Body Language. Verbal language is not the only communication medium. Body language, too, communicates. It is an expression of the way one feels and relates non-verbally to their inner and outer world. Research shows that 55 % of the communication is done through body language. One's body must match with the words, to make the communication process effective.

C is for Concise. We need to be understood without over or under-whelming the people we are talking with. We can only remember a certain amount of information. After the saturation point has been reached, nothing more is taken in. The message should be clear and concise.

D is for Direct. Nothing is better than face-to-face communication. We must accept the ownership of what we say, to avoid distortions. It is only possible when we send our messages ourselves. Communication is too important to be left to others to handle it for you.

E is for Eye-Contact. How do you feel when a person who is talking to you does not look in your eye? We can learn a lot about the feelings of other person if we have a proper eye-contact with him. Research suggests that people do not listen effectively to a person with bad eye-contact.

F is for Feedback. The only factor which distinguishes two-way communication from one-way is feedback. After you have sent your message, always ask for the feedback to check the accuracy. Every sender also needs to be a good receiver. Allowing for the honest expression of thoughts and feelings is scary but beneficial, and is only possible through proper feedback.

G is for Guessing. The exchange of information must be completely correct and concrete. It is only possible when we never guess or assume anything. We must never confuse assumptions with the facts.

H is for Heart. We must communicate from head as well as from heart. Honest people always take other's feelings into account before determining how to say or present sensitive items.

I is for Interruptions. Every one has a need to be heard. Research shows that interruption is the single most annoying factor to more than 90 percent of the chief executives. So remember this golden rule that if you do not want to be interrupted, do not interrupt others while they are talking.

J is for Judgment. If anything kills real communication, it is judgment. You can use the factual data on words and feelings to make better decisions but do not pass any judgment. The best way to be sure is to check and clarify.

K is for Kindness. Kindness and gentleness are prerequisite for a healthy communication process. If you have left it home, go and get it before you begin. People will not listen effectively if you are not polite. Kindness helps in building up better rapport.

L is for Listening. A good listener never loses any discussion. There is a great old saying that "Listening starts the caring, from caring comes the rapport, in rapport there is magic, and in magic there is power", which well states the importance of listening.

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M is for Mood. The way we feel affects the way we present ourselves. It is a good idea to laugh to enjoy both the communication and the people. "Laughter is not a sign of disrespect, rather it is a sign of comfort and productivity".<sup>1</sup>

N is for Normal. Some people have tendency to get excited or confused in a discussion. This behavior affects their body gestures and destroys self-confidence. Do not under or over-react in discussion. Just staying normal gives you control over the situation.

O is for Open. "It is okay to tell people what they do well, why you like what they have done and how you feel about it. As truth is a rare commodity, it is often used sparingly. It may seem naive to believe that "Honesty is the best policy," but it still is, and it can establish its user as trust-worthy. Wounds opened to the air generally heal quicker".<sup>2</sup>

P is for Perception. People are different, their perception is different and therefore they must be approached differently. We may disagree with others but must not make them right or wrong. We have different points of view because we have different perception. Understanding that people have different perception is the first step in developing trusting relationships.

Q is for Quit. A communication break-down usually occurs "when both parties carry on dual monologues without ever stopping to listen".<sup>3</sup> People require time to respond. Pausing after you are through will encourage others to clarify any queries.

R is for Rapport. It only takes a second to establish rapport before tackling some issue. Rapport-building is on-going and cannot be stocked up. It is a prerequisite for a good start and helps in breaking ice and developing trusting relations.

S is for Summarizing. One golden rule to avoid any distortions or mis-understandings in communication is to summarize the outcome of the discussion. Spending little time on summarizing will clear any mis-understandings and save lot of time afterwards.

T is for Timings. Everything has a season and a time. In communication also, "there is a time for sharing and a time for withholding, a time for confronting and a time for caring, a time for praising and a time for criticizing".<sup>4</sup>

U is for Urge. Clean your urge for forcing your point of view on others, before you start communicating. Never give your pre-determined solutions up-front until you have clearly listened and understood other's point of view. Be flexible in reaching at a conclusion.

V is for Vocal. The pitch of your voice, your tone must match with your body language and verbals. An aggressive voice or a loud tone does not convey much but may backfire on you. Your vocal controls 38 percent of the total communication process.

W is for Win-Win. Try to create win-win situation in the discussion. We could create it only if both parties were the winners at the end of the discussion without putting anyone down or hurting other's feelings.

X is for X-rated. Use of filthy or x-rated language is a sign of aggression. It does no good for you. You might feel powerful for the time being but ultimately become powerless, when you loose.

Y is for Yap. Words are important enough to loose in noisy foolish talk with no outcome. One may also loose the real message in Yapping. Do not yap.

Z is for Zigzag. Avoid zigzag communication. People get bored and real message is lost in a zigzag communication. Try to talk straight and remember this formula:

Feeling Message = Ownership + Feeling Word + Description of Behavior