

Communication: Skills, Style and Strategies

by Donna Dunning

No matter what type of work someone is doing, communicating with others is essential. Effective communication is a key competency for learning, obtaining feedback, understanding the needs of others, and sharing information.

Employees who communicate effectively express themselves well, give and receive feedback, make connections with others, and are seen as amicable and cooperative. They come across as clear, articulate, pleasant, straightforward, diplomatic, empathic, understanding, tactful, non-judgmental, open-minded, and considerate.

Without a well-developed communication competency, almost anyone will have difficulty in almost any type of role. When people are not demonstrating the communication competency, others find it frustrating and unrewarding to interact with them. Poor communicators do not respond well to feedback and may have many conflicts and unresolved issues with others. They tend to appear obtuse, unclear, confusing, defensive, judgmental, argumentative, passive, indirect, pretentious, domineering, or aggressive.

A practitioner working with clients to help improve communication will need to be familiar with both communication competencies and communication preferences. Communication competencies are the skills, knowledge and behaviors necessary to communicate effectively. Communication preferences are how a person prefers to communicate. Competencies and preferences overlap, since individuals are often motivated to learn and demonstrate competencies that align with their preferences. As well, effective communication requires awareness of and ability to accommodate the communication preferences of others.

People of all personality types can learn to communicate effectively. When developing the communication competency each individual will have unique challenges and strengths. Understanding communication preferences can help trainers, leaders, and coaches in two ways. First, communication preferences provide clues about how to most effectively work with clients. Effective practitioners use their understanding of personality differences to approach clients in a manner that facilitates development of a working relationship. They choose useful interventions that will be appropriate to both the personality preferences and the skill level of the client.

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COMMUNICATION: SKILLS, STYLE AND STRATEGIES CONTINUED

A second way that communication preferences can be used is to help clients recognize their challenges, strengths, and areas for development. The practitioner's role in this second process is to present personality preferences in a manner that clearly separates skills from preferences. At the same time the practitioner acknowledges and discusses common strengths and potential blind spots that tend to be inherent within personality preferences. Initially these two pieces of information may appear paradoxical, however, understanding the differences between skills and preferences is an essential part of the client's self-assessment process. Clients usually find certain communication competencies are more or less easier for them to accomplish. Helping clients assess both competencies and preferences provides a starting point for subsequent competency growth and development.

As you work with clients keep in mind they have a unique combination of competencies and preferences. Your challenge is to help clients create strategies to enhance their communication competencies while still acknowledging and capitalizing on their natural preferences and strengths. When clients are clearly aware of both competencies and preferences they are less likely to make excuses, stereotype, or blame others when communication is less than ideal. They can more fully appreciate and understand the complexity of the communication process, an excellent starting point for competency development.

Note: Donna will expand upon the themes in this article at the MBTI® Professional Development Conference in Calgary on October 18-19. For more information about the conference please visit our website at: www.psychometrics.com/conference

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Southern Alberta Association for Psychological Type

April 21, 2007, Calgary

Mini-Conference featuring "The Easy-To-Use Change Model – Contributions All Types Can Make to Change." By Donna Dunning

Strong Interest Inventory® Professional Update Workshops

April 30, Hamilton

May 2, Ottawa

May 15, Montreal

This six-hour workshop provides beginners, as well as seasoned Strong users, with innovative techniques to take full advantage of the latest version of this instrument in their career development work. Participants will be provided with a *Technical Brief for the Newly Revised Strong Interest Inventory®* workshop study guide, bibliography, sample reports, and a copy of their own Strong results.

The cost for attending the workshop is \$25 + GST.

www.psychometrics.com/training

Building Tomorrow Today

May 4, 1–5 pm, Edmonton

George Fitzsimmons will be presenting a half day workshop on using the Strong Interest Inventory® as part of the career conference Building Tomorrow Today.

www.careerdevelopment.ab.ca/events/btt.php

PSYCHOMETRICS TRAINING



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April 23–26	Calgary, AB	September 10–13	Ottawa, ON
April 30–May 3	Montréal, QC French Instruction	September 17–20	Vancouver, BC
May 14–17	Victoria, BC	October 22–25	Calgary, AB
May 28–31	Toronto, ON	November 5–8	Montréal, QC French Instruction
June 4–7	Edmonton, AB	November 19–22	Toronto, ON
July 16–19	Ottawa, ON French Instruction		



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