

# Top Ten Tips on Communication & Influencing Skills

## 1- Inner-Dialogue

- 💡 If you know you will be meeting new people or due to have a discussion with others where you wish you make a positive impression, think through how you should approach the engagement. Have a short 'inner dialogue' conversation to give yourself courage and consider how you will behave.



## 2- Keep calm and smile (authentically)

- 💡 Try not to be too eager and inadvertently project desperation. Smile with confidence and ensure you make eye-contact with everyone in the room. Remind yourself that you have a lot to offer the people you will be having a conversation with. Be prepared and ready with suitable initial conversation that will be of interest to **them** (e.g. **"How is your project coming along?"** Or **"It was great to see your company win that award featured on LinkedIn – you must be delighted!"** etc.)

## 3- Ask open questions before you reveal your perspective

- 💡 Open questions such as... **'What is your biggest priority at the moment?'** or **'How are things working out for you on your plans'** etc. By asking about their priorities and what affects them – they are more likely to be receptive to any recommendation or suggestion you may have.



## 4- If the other person talks a lot about their situation/concerns – let them

- 💡 Be a good listener – and ensure you are not just nodding along and looking around you. You may not be hugely interested in hearing what they are saying, but if you want to have some influence over how you interact with this person – it's crucial you build a rapport. Active listening is the most effective way to winning the confidence of other people. But it will require some concentration and you may need to 'dig deep' to avert your sense of self-indulgence. Try not to interrupt them if they are in full flow – otherwise they may resent you for that and you'll have forfeited any opportunity to persuade them.

## 5- Connect what they have said to what you would like them to consider

- 🧠 If it is clear to them that you have 'an agenda' that is far removed from theirs – your level of influence might be worse than zero – they may actually resent you a little. It is imperative that you align your suggestion with what they have mentioned is **important to them**. E.g. ***“it’s interesting that you have found your supplier is a bit unreliable, I’m sorry to hear that. However, there is an alternative option that you may find worth considering. Shall I explain....?”*** Or ***“Your point about what’s causing you some of these challenges has just reminded me of a similar situation my colleagues and I had and we found some really practical ways of how to deal with them. Would you like me to offer a couple of suggestions....?”***



## 6- Behaviour Labelling – prime the other person/people to be ready to receive your message

- 🧠 If you have a key message or a strong recommendation you can prepare your audience, or the person you wish to engage with, to be attentive and ready to receive it. This is called 'Behaviour Labelling'. It's when you prime the other party to be ready to listen to what you say. E.g. ***“Based on what you have said, you may be interested in a smart way to deal with that....”*** Or ***“Having reflected on all the comments from yesterday’s meeting, there is a really good suggestion that I have for you (all). Shall I outline the idea...?”*** Be careful not to devalue this technique by over-using it. This should only be deployed when you have a key message that deserves to be listened to.

## 7- Proposals and recommendations

- 🧠 Your level of influence will be very limited indeed if you are regarded as the person who complains or finds faults – but offers no solution or suggested improvements. When you identify an issue or an area that could benefit from an upgrade – offer a suggestion – or to make it more arresting – a 'Proposal'. Most people are intrigued when you say you have a '**Proposal**'. They are likely to pay more attention and reflect on its merits as it implies that they will gain something from it that is meaningful. However, you need to make sure your 'Proposal' or recommendations are set out in such an accessible way that they can see how the benefits are gained.



## 8- Be careful not to advertise your own prejudices

- You may have strong opinions on issues or you have good reason to disagree with the other people you want to engage with. However you run the big risk of disenfranchising others if you happen to blurt out what you think – either by endorsing it/them – or criticising it/them – as there is a distinct possibility you have revealed an opposing position to that held by the person/people you are hoping to engage with. They may not reveal this but you will have inadvertently eroded your stock, which could have been avoided. Try to steer clear of traps such as football teams; political figures; region & especially other personnel in the company. Aim to keep a neutral position, which may include offering a disclaimer such as – ***“I’m not that well versed with (insert name/topic)”*** or ***“I’m not qualified to make a judgement on that”*** etc.



## 9- Invite their opinion

- Most people are highly motivated when they feel valued. So it is vitally important that you ask others about their perspective and experience; their preferences and opinions. You may not agree with them but you have a far greater chance of being listened to and respected when you have demonstrated that you have understood their views authentically. This is crucial if you ever want others to consider your, potentially differing, position, because you will have earned their attention by giving them yours.

## 10- email etiquette

- Many a positive impression has been crushed by a follow-up incoherent or slap-dashed email full of typos and errors. Make sure that any email correspondence is clear, well-written and free of typos/errors/grammatical mistakes – but most importantly of all – **composed with the reader in mind**



If you or your organisation would be interested in learning more about Communication & Influencing skills, please call 01937 579649 or email

[info@dicksontraining.com](mailto:info@dicksontraining.com)