

Communication Skills for Effective Interaction



Human Resource Update

When I discuss listening in my workshops, I ask the participants what they are doing when someone else is talking. The first answer is usually "thinking about something else."

You aren't listening!"
 "You make me mad when you ____!"
 "You don't give me any feedback."

How many times have you heard these statements from family, co-workers and employees? Usually when we hear and use these or similar statements there are strong feelings and high levels of stress. Can we learn anything to more effectively handle such difficult questions? The answer is "YES". Each of these statements is addressed below.

Effective Listening

When I discuss listening in my workshops, I ask the participants what they are doing when someone else is talking. The first answer is usually "thinking about something else." This we can avoid by focusing on what is being said. More challenging is the next response of "thinking about how we are going to respond." We all do this but it is not effective listening. We need to have the patience and focus to only listen until whomever we are talking to has finished, and only then think about how to respond.

A very powerful tool in listening is to practice active or empathetic listening. In active listening the listener listens for both content and emotional aspects and provides feedback on both. This means listening for the content and also the underlying feelings that may or may not be stated explicitly. This listening tool has additional attributes that it can be used to focus on joint problem solving and it fosters open communication and personal development.

"I Statements"

The problem with "You make me mad...!" is twofold. First, the recipient of the statement will often be offended and become defensive. This is certainly not conducive to good communications. Second, the feeling of anger results from an action of the person, *not* the person himself or herself. An "I" statement, however, is a much superior method for giving criticism,



explaining a problem, making a suggestion, or expressing an opinion.

An "I" statement has two parts:

- First part: Describe your feelings without blaming others.
- Second part: Describe how you would like things to change.

For example, when you are disappointed and frustrated that an employee cannot remember simple instructions, you would state, "When what I think are simple instructions are not followed, I feel disappointed and frustrated. I

continued on page 15

Table 1. Comparisons of "YOU" and "I" statements.

"YOU" Messages (blames others)	"I" Messages (first part)
You really make me mad.	I'm feeling upset about this.
You sure are disorganized.	I feel ineffective when things are not organized
You're always interrupting.	I feel frustrated when I am interrupted.

Pest Watch

continued from back cover

entomopathogenic nematode. SC is easy to produce in both in vivo and in vitro cultures, and it is the most widely available commercial nematode. SC is representative of classic “ambush” or “sit and wait” host-finding strategy, and can infect several insect orders, especially lepidoptera and some coleoptera. Therefore, it is an important standard for comparison in nematode testing.

***Heterorhabditis bacteriophora* (HB).** HB has also been well studied, though not as extensively as SC. These nematodes are relatively easy to produce in vivo, and are commercially available. HB exhibits a “searching” or “hunting” host-finding strategy, and can infect several insect orders. They are especially effective against some scarab grubs, including the Japanese beetle.

***Steinernema feltiae* (SF).** Much less is known about this nematode species, but it is commercially available on a limited basis. The few field tests of SF against scarab grubs have yielded mixed results.

***Steinernema glaseri* (SG).** This nematode is not currently available on a commercial basis, but is known to be a strong “searcher” and an aggressive grub pathogen.

MIKE VILLANI
CORNELL UNIVERSITY TURFGRASS TEAM

Short Cutts

continued from page 14

multi-use fields, and developing communication skills for dealing with coaches and administrators.

The Long Island Short Course will complete the three year commitment made in partnership with the NSLGA. The 1999 course is scheduled for February 15 through 26. Following this effort, discussions will continue regarding how the Cornell Turfgrass Program in partnership with the County Associations and industry leaders best address the continuing education needs of the region.

As you can see, exciting times lie ahead as your Cornell Turfgrass Program prepares to enter the next century with a “full head of steam”. If you have any questions about the short course, contact our Director, Joann Gruttadaurio at (607) 255-1792.

Human Resource Update

continued from page 12

want you to listen more carefully, write things down if necessary and ask questions if anything is not clear.”

Note that the first part of this statement used an “I” message where you state how you feel using the word “I” so that the other person does not feel offended by what you say. It doesn’t blame “YOU” — the other person. Table 1 compares “YOU” and “I” messages.

Feedback

In studies where employees have been asked about their performance, the most common response is, “I must be doing well because I haven’t heard that I’m doing anything wrong.” This response implicitly suggests that feedback is very limited and that the expectation is that feedback will be negative. Both are mostly true and neither is conducive to good communication and high productivity.

First, feedback should be common and should be based on performance. Remember, in his book, *Everyone’s a COACH*, Don Shula states, “Good performance should be treated differently than poor performance.” When we give feedback, it should respond to:

- positive consequence
- a need for redirection; performance stopped and redirected using training
- a negative consequence; requires a reprimand, a punishment, a demotion, removal from activity.

The following are ideas for improving our feedback-giving activities:

- Ken Blanchard says, “Catch your employees doing something right.”
- Give four compliments for every constructive criticism.
- From Jane Magruder Watkins of Transformational Management, “Practice Appreciative Inquiry: the process of asking questions about what is going well, rather than what is going poorly.”
- Use the PIN technique to find positive aspects of performance even when you must say “no”:
 - focus on **P**ositive aspects
 - focus on what is **I**nteresting and innovative
 - focus on what is **N**egative.

ROBERT A. MILLIGAN
CORNELL UNIVERSITY TURFGRASS TEAM

In studies where employees have been asked about their performance, the most common response is, “I must be doing well because I haven’t heard that I’m doing anything wrong.”

15