

## Communication

When a project is in trouble and needs to be rescued, individuals are under pressure. When individuals are under pressure in a professional environment, they can respond in different ways. Some people can react in a positive manner and energize themselves into action. Some people can respond in a negative way and will need to be managed through this difficult time.

How you communicate with the main players on the troubled project is as important as what you are communicating. When dealing with a troubled project you need to keep all parties on your side and communication is key to this. Focus on how you are communicating and who you are communicating with. Each person will receive and process information in a different way and you should take time to understand this. This can only be achieved by spending time with the people and understanding what their main concerns and requirements are and how they can influence the investigation and ultimately the outcome of the project.

The same message can be communicated in different ways and can therefore be interpreted differently. The language you use, the tone and the body language you use can also have an impact on how the message is communicated and received. Here are some examples of expressions and terminology and how we can say what we need to in a direct way that does not cause any alarm but brings the person on board with you and your intentions.

<b>Say</b>	<b>Instead of</b>	<b>If you Want to</b>
"I understand ...however... can we consider "(May also end the sentence and start a new or use "and")	"Yes, but..."	Disagree with what has just been said.
"You may be right."	"It is not!" or "You're completely wrong"	Hear other perspectives
"Help me understand..."	"You are wrong."	Reduce conflict
"Let's try this (to suggest an alternative.)"	"It won't work."	Consider other options before disagreeing with the first one
"I need your help to ...."	"Do this for me."	Seek cooperation or get something done by asking for help.
"Is everything satisfactory?"	"I sense that you are not content with something?"	Ask specific, non-emotional questions.
"Here's what I can do."	"Here's what I can't do."	Focus on the positive first.

<b>Say</b>	<b>Instead of</b>	<b>If you Want to</b>
"Let's work together."	"You must do what I say."	Work with rather than against others.
"I understand. I need to look further..."	"I disagree."	Accept and acknowledge others' ideas and let them coexist with yours.
"Thank you."	"I need more from you"	Don't take relationships for granted.
"Let's choose to make the best of..."	"I can't change anything...."	Choose to respond and not react.
"I can manage my available time."	"I don't have time."	Eliminate powerless phrases.
"I'll help you myself."	"Ask someone else."	Be part of the solution.
"We are struggling with resources at the moment , can we get together to understand your priorities"	"We have no resources"	Avoid a negative outcome
"I believe, the best way forward is...."	"It's only my opinion."	Describe accomplishments positively.
"Starting now, I will."	"If only I had..."	Focus on choices, not regrets.
"That's all; it's over."	"What if things get worse?"	Apply energy for a positive outcome.
"I am a little disappointed here because..."	"You make me upset!"	Focus on your responsibility.
"Let's give it a chance, and monitor progress. What is the measure of success here....."	"It won't work."	Stimulate creativity.
"Hello, I'm _____"	"I just can't remember names." (never say this)	Use others' names.
"You might want to consider another option that we've been working on....."	"I recommend."	Look at benefits to others.
"Can I just respond to that ...."	Responding angrily	Create the environment for a controlled response

### **General Communication Ground Rules**

Once of the most important elements of communication is listening. In order to listen effectively, first of all you must be silent. Is it a coincidence that the words listen and silent contain the same letters. Being silent, making eye contact is a huge

part of listening. It is equally important to clarify what someone has said afterwards so that there can be no confusion as to the intent of the meeting or encounter.

1. Irrespective of the intention of a statement, always be accepting of others opinions – keep an open mind.
2. Be truthful and respectful.
3. Use open body language.
4. Always approach a meeting with positive intent and remain positive and calm.
5. LISTEN: Turn off your own self talk.
6. Respectfully question ideas that you do not genuinely understand.
7. Never highlight or escalate a problem unless you have considered a solution to offer up immediately afterwards.

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### **General Meeting Ground Rules**

1. Create an agenda that is clear and to the point.
2. Stick to the agenda.
3. Specify no use of phones / blackberrys.
4. Begin and end on time
5. Rotate facilitators – for weekly / daily meetings.
6. Everyone at the meeting should have an active participation otherwise you will lose audience members attention.
7. Insist on one conversation at a time.
8. Keep comments brief.
9. Do not restate what has already been said.
10. Minute the discussion and distribute with clear action responsibilities.

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### **Dealing with Challenging People**

1. Identify the persons negative behaviour.
2. Understand the outcome you want from the meeting/relationship.
3. How do you want to be perceived by that person?

4. Plan your response to negative behaviour.
5. Practice your approach.
6. Choose the appropriate time and environment.
7. Follow up with the person if appropriate.
8. Evaluate the meeting.
9. Determine what can be improved for future encounters (plan, practice etc).

I recommend that you review this section of the course in advance of any meeting or interview where you anticipate there may be some challenge or animosity with the attendee(s). This a tool that I refer to time and time again. As always if there are any specific questions relating to this topic, please email us at [projects@systeme.ie](mailto:projects@systeme.ie).