

Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.

Today's topic is going to be communicating. We all communicate, right? Some of us better than others. But I want to talk about one particular aspect of communication, which I've been witnessing in some of my travels of late and working with various organizations. And what was brought to mind is communicating is not always about what is said but what is heard. All right. You may think you're communicating clearly or communicating in a nonjudgmental fashion or not degrading the other person. But, oftentimes, what is heard is something different from what's intended.

As leaders, I want you to all think about not just what you're saying but how you're saying it and who you're saying it to. I've witnessed a few things being said that sometimes blow people off, so to speak. Leaders who say, "Well, I'll get to that later. Can you talk to me later?" If you just said something simple like that, what might be heard there? What might be heard is, "Oh, I guess I'm not that important." Or, "My problems aren't your problems," or, "Your priorities aren't mine," or "My priorities aren't yours." But really, what you simply were doing was just reflecting on your day. But, again, each time you speak, that sends a message and the message is well beyond the words that you may say. I want you to think about that. What is your communication like? Are you communicating clearly, and are you communicating in a way that the receiver is always getting the message that you want?

There are some good communication techniques for that. One is, of course, to ask for feedback. If you've explained something or you explain what you want, go ahead and ask the person, "So, what did you hear? What did you take from that? What did you glean from that discussion?" to make sure that they have a common understanding to what you were trying to reflect? I think that's very important if you think of a job site meeting. You go around and, "Well, I need you to be here tomorrow and I need seven people, and I need you to do this and be careful not to do that." Well, as you go around the room, did all those people actually get it? Did they get what you have? But if you stop and say, "So, let me ask you? What do you see as your priorities for this week? Do you see yourself being able to accomplish X, Y, and Z?"

Now, once they parrot that back to you, hopefully, then you know that you have a full understanding of what they're going to do. You also have a higher level of commitment for what they're going to do, because they said it instead of you saying it. When you said it, without gaining the response back from it, in their mind, they may be saying, "Yeah, fat chance, that's going to happen." But how do you know unless you ask them, and you find out. I think, again, by requesting that kind of feedback, you'll find you close a communication loop and, in so doing, you really create better collaboration as well among teams and one-on-one as well. So, assure that what is said is understood.

The last point I want to talk about communicating is email, and texts could be included in that certainly in today's world. But communicating one-on-one, of course, you at least get to see a visual reaction. You get to see body posture, you get to hear tone of voice in a conversation, and that gives you so much more information on what a person is trying to communicate. Still today, I see lots of folks failing to understand that with email, nobody knows what your emotions are when you say something. And many emails come across as harsh, uncaring, one way, edicts, and you may not have meant it that way. But remembering that in an email, yelling... When you capitalize, that's yelling. It doesn't come across as well on the other side and there's no opportunity for immediate feedback as to what you meant.

And I've seen many email chains go wrong and even cause contractors and customers to come apart for years and even permanently, just over an email chain gone wrong. Be very careful that, again, what you want to say is what's being heard on the other side. And with email that's even much more difficult than it is in person but, again, there are ways to achieve that by soliciting response and things like that. Again, watch your communication. Make sure what is said is what's being heard or be at least concerned with what is being heard.

Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper. Thanks for tuning in.