

Good morning, everybody, Dennis Engelbrecht with The Family Business Institute, Digging Deeper.

I read a lot, I read a lot of newsletters. I read a lot of industry news, that sort of stuff to keep myself updated and many thanks to one of our friends, Arlin Sorenson who this week had an article or wrote a bit about communication. And, are you communicating effectively? And then of course I had a slap in the face yesterday, if you're like me and I've heard now that many people are, you get an email and you read the first two sentences and then you just shoot to the bottom and probably miss a little bit. So, I responded to one of my client's questions with the wrong answer, because he had said he was not available during those times versus said he was available.

But I already was in my skimming mode after I got through the first couple of sentences. So, a pox upon me for that. But, my question to each of you today is, are you effective in your communication? And I was thinking about the process of communication of course, is very difficult and there are certain responsibilities for the giver of the communication and there are certain responsibilities for the receiver of the communication in order for a communication to be successful. And this doesn't matter whether you're communicating by voice, by Zoom or by email or by text, however you're communicating, you still have these various responsibilities. So, what are the responsibilities of the giver for effective communication?

Well, the giver of communication, first of all, should make sure that whatever they've communicated has been received. And you may think, well, that's pretty simple if you're face to face, but not always, sometimes the person you're talking to, isn't really listening. Do you have their attention? I know I'll be in the middle of a work thing during the day and my wife will come around the corner to the office and she'll start asking me a question, but I'm still totally involved in whatever I was doing. And I absolutely, I know she's there, but I do not hear her. I do not hear what she's saying. So, you have to make sure you have the attention of who you're talking to. If it's an email or a text, unless they respond, how do you know they've actually looked at it, heard? Have they been away from their desk? Is their phone dead? Are they in a no cell service zone?

All of these things, so it's really the responsibility of the giver to confirm in some way or not that you've been heard. Certainly in an email, you can send an open receipt and things like that, certain methodologies there, but it oftentimes helps if you don't hear back from somebody, you follow up and sometimes, if you did it by email, sometimes you follow up with a call or a text to try it a different venue, to make sure that they've heard you or they're listening. Then you want to make sure that whatever, again it's the responsibility of the giver, make sure that there's an understanding of what you said. Yesterday would be a good example where I didn't really understand what the person said because I didn't read it completely.

So again, that's where follow-up, or an interchange can come in to make sure that there is understanding. If you get an email back from an email or a text back, and it seems out of character or doesn't really answer the question, well, obviously you failed in your responsibility, the giver, making sure that somebody could understand what you were sending. And then generally speaking, follow up. A one-time communication doesn't mean that anything's going to get implemented or get done. So always following up to make sure that it's been received, heard, understood, and that the plan of action going forward from whatever you've sent everybody's in sync and it's happening. So, let's now turn to the receiver.

In communication, the receiver's possibly an even more difficult position. And part of the problem with the receiver is, I'm going to call it noise. So, I'm getting a communication, but it's very important that I stay in the moment with a communication. And I'm not being confused by the past. If I get a communication, for example, from somebody that I've had a problem within the past, I might read that with an attitude that reflects my past interactions with them. Or, I could be somebody I really like, and I could read something into it on the positive side that they're not even saying. So, it certainly can happen both ways, but as the receiver of a communication, it's important to stay in the moment and actually hear

what is being said or read what is being written. And try not to read in these other things. As mentioned, where I failed yesterday, make sure you complete reading or listening and whatever it is.

And that may happen to you in conversations too, somebody says something to you and all of a sudden, your mind starts going down another track. I'm sure that's probably happened to you, try to stay with that conversation and stay with it and make sure you get the full listening and understanding. Finally, it's up to you to confirm that you've understood what they're trying to say and what the point is. And the easiest way to do that is ask questions. "So, are you saying you want me to do this?" Or, "If I go do this, is that what you're expecting of me? Is that what you're looking for?" But if you ask those questions, confirm that understanding. That's very important on the point of the receiver.

Now, two things, two basic rules of communication. One is no attitude. Again, staying in the present, try not to bring an attitude from the past into the current conversation. That will get you off course. And then the other thing is don't make assumptions. If somebody's saying something or writing something, don't write extra things into that, that they're not saying. Those are assumptions. And there's a saying about that, I won't cover here, but anytime you make assumptions, you're sort of walking a plank that could lead you to a bad place. So much better to ask a question and confirm than to make an assumption. Next rule for communication is, do try to create an interchange. It's the back and forth where things really get confirmed, people get on the same page, really understand each other, understand what went unsaid in the first communication, because many communications only are the tip of the iceberg.

So really try to create that interchange. And that's really where when you go face to face or Zoom in these days, you really have a much better chance of getting a full, complete communication that results in what both parties want it to result in. So, don't avoid interchange, welcome interchange, and that can be done back and forth on text and an email, just not quite as effective. And then finally, if you really want communication to be effective, try to always end it on a positive note. At the end of an email, say things. At the end of the conversation, say, thanks for talking about this, thanks for clarifying this, thanks in advance for your help on getting this done. But giving things, ending on a positive note, sounds like we've got a great understanding here, a great plan going forward, but always try to end your communications on a positive note. And I think you'll find you'll be much more an effective communicator.

Again, Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper. Thanks for tuning in.