



Communication Culture

GETTING AND KEEPING ATTENTION 101

By Helena Kaufman, *The Afro News Vancouver*

WHOA! READERS TOOK ACTION after last month's column on the power of verbs. Requests sent in asked for more on communicating effectively – or sending a message to make something happen – to get action and to get a desired response.

Today's column is written to satisfy your interests on the topic of attention in our culture:

1. How to get it
2. How to identify barriers
3. How to keep it

Getting someone's attention is not as difficult as keeping it. Most people will give you a moment for your message. There are some typical barriers you may encounter

Breaking through Resistance Gets Results

People may resist your verbal or written message because of:

Presentation. How we come across can invite or repel people to our message. Take a close look at how you dress, how you present yourself. Would your appearance, gestures or tone be intimidating or threatening? Take note of what you talk most about, how long you talk or how interesting your presentation really is. Humans can not NOT communicate. We can control many of the messages we send in our manner and dress. In addition, our attitude is also on display. Belittling other people, not respecting their time or needs or using a monotonous unpleasant voice can all throw up invisible but very real barriers.

Comfort Zone. Do you think about how he person you are talking with might be

feeling? Is he/she physically uncomfortable or in pain. Is the topic one you should approach slowly? Many people became aware of 'being a host' after the movie Pay It Forward came out. Be sensitive to people and treat others as your guests.

Clarity of Message. When people are confused or can't understand your message, they may feel defensive or threatened by what you are saying. We resist people who may not respect our positions or opinions. If the receiver of your message feels threatened, they will turn off their attention and they might ignore what you are saying. Worse, you may never know. They may not debate it or comment, just ignore you!

VIP – The very important point that forms the solution to most barriers - if you want others to take seriously what you have to say – is the 'host attitude'. Paying attention to what they understand, think, feel and combining it with a sense of timing and sensitivity – helps us communicate effectively and with results. It even overrides all the perceived advantages of technology, need for speed or other non-human factors.

Helena is a communication trainer with special interest in sending effective and human messages in a high tech, high speed world. Drop a comment or sign up for F.R.E.E. Express Lane weekly tips on great communication at: www.helenakaufman.com

Barrier Busters – Proven Tactics to Communicate and Get Action

Messages may fail because of listener/reader apathy. Here's how to get around people saying, "So what?" and having them care about your message. Can you identify the common solution?

1. Get to the point – quickly and clearly what you want at the outset.
2. Think through your ideas first to reduce confusion and present issues well.
3. Present the benefits right away to keep people's attention.
4. Repeat your main point to fix a message in memory longer, more accurately.
5. Send clear pictures with your words as people receive messages in images.
6. Be yourself and be real – it preserves the power in your message.
7. Be enthusiastic if you want others to feel the same about your message, service or product.
8. Try some gentle, humour – it can win over an audience or reader.

Modern culture allows less time and patience for information to come out. The common thread has remained – self interest. Messages with few surprise agendas and with their points made quickly are more successful. Attention is held by answering the question, "What's in it for me?"