UF IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

FCS9066
doi.org/10.32473/EDIS-HE747-1986

IFAS Leadership Development: Leaders Can Communicate[1]

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Introduction

This article is part of a series IFAS Leadership Development, with eleven modules developed for use by Florida Cooperative Extension agents. They are designed for training agents and officers. Information and activities provided in this series will help Extension leaders in facilitating leadership development for their agents and officers. Handouts for audience use are labeled in the leadership development modules. These may be duplicated for use during training sessions. Each lesson is designed for a workshop approximately two hours long. Various parts of the modules can be shortened or expanded according to the needs of participants and availability of time.

Recommendations for Leader Training

Prepare to teach this lesson by reading and familiarizing yourself with the objectives, materials, handouts and activities/exercises.

- Begin preparation several days in advance in order to secure whatever additional resources you need to make the lesson a "local" learning experience.
- Plan a learning environment with care so that the surroundings contribute to the achievement of the objectives.
- Begin on time, and end on time. Schedule a break at about halfway through the lesson.
- With each lesson after the first one, ask participants what they did as a result of the previous lesson. Record these!
- Introduce each lesson with an overview of how it fits into the overall major leadership development program.
- End each lesson with a summary and restatement of objectives. Explain what the participants are expected to do with the lesson after they leave.
- Heighten anticipation for the next lesson by sharing a brief description of it, but be cautious not to give too much away.

Objectives

1. To show the relationship between leadership and communication skills.
2. To demonstrate the process of communication and how it applies to each of us.
3. To show how nonverbal behavior influences communication.
4. To show how communication patterns relate to leader effectiveness.

Lesson Outline

Introduction and Overview of Objectives (25 minutes)

- *Communication and Leadership*
- *Definition of Communication*

Group Development Lecture and Discussion (35 minutes)

- *SMCR Communications Process Model*
- *Communications Congruence*

Break (5 minutes)

Group Development Lecture and Exercise (20 minutes)

- *Nonverbal Communication*

Group Development Lecture and Exercise (25 minutes)

- *Communication Patterns*

Summary and Evaluation (10 minutes)

Total time: 2 hours

Lesson Plan—Leaders Can Communicate

Step 1—25 minutes

Use the following as background for your introductory remarks. Relate the introductory lecture and objectives of this lesson back to Lesson 1. Use *Communication and Leadership* for lecture.

Refer to *What Do Leaders Do* and *Democratic Style of Leadership* in Lesson 1 as a tie into your introductory lecture. Read over objectives. Put them on chalkboard.

Step 2—35 minutes

Use *SMCR Communications Model* as background for lecture.

Make a diagram of *SMCR Communications Process Model* into an overhead slide for use with this step.

Use *Communications Congruence* as a brief lecture to emphasize the importance of communication skills to leaders. Liven up this lecture with exaggerated illustrations of each section.

Step 3—20 minutes

Explain that all forms of communications are not necessarily verbal. Use examples from *Forms of Nonverbal Communication* to illustrate your point.

Give list (shortened version) to participants as a quiz on their perceptions about messages sent and received using nonverbal communications. Allow 10 minutes.

Read aloud answers. Note that people will interpret gestures differently.

Step 4—25 minutes

Make *Communication Patterns* diagram shown on an overhead.

Use *Communication Patterns* as background material for lecture.

Exercise: Select one person to act as leader and role play each communication pattern shown on the diagram. Discuss the problems associated with each pattern.

Step 5—10 minutes

Summarize major points of lesson. Restate objectives and tell how they were met.

Hand out evaluations; ask for discussion and suggestions. Collect evaluations and adjourn.

Communication and Leadership

Communication is central to all human behavior. Humans cannot socially interact unless they communicate through shared symbols. Through sharing common symbols, men can communicate information, ideas, and emotions. Man uses symbols, words, gestures and pictures to transmit messages, information, ideas, and emotions to others. When people give similar meanings to symbols, they communicate. Similar meanings arise from a common social and cultural background. The members of a community service club have a common social and cultural background. These members have shared many experiences, and the meaning that they assign to words, gestures, and picture symbols are likely to be quite similar.

Communication is one of the essential elements of leadership. Without communication, there is no leadership. It is possible, however, to communicate without leading. If a member of a Family and Community Education Club suggests that the club initiate a beautification project for the community park, it is possible that the club will not do so, even though the other members of the Family and Community Education Club understand the proposal. A beautification project for the community park would never happen, however, without communication of some kind.

In leadership roles, the ability to communicate determines effectiveness. The purpose of this lesson is to show a relationship between communication and leadership.

Definition of Communication

Communication covers a wide topic area. Any definition of a topic as broad as communication would be too general, too complex, or too fragmented to be of much use to a community leader. Various aspects of communication can be explained with definitions, but they would not be unified. One way to define communication is to explain the process of communication.

Applying the term **process** to communication means that it is an ongoing event. Social interaction with others involves communicating. Communication, therefore, is the process whereby thoughts, ideas, wishes, or emotions are transmitted to others.

In this lesson, communication involves only the information, thoughts, ideas, etc., to be transmitted to a specific audience. The definition of communication does not include observed behavior unless the observed behavior is intended to help transmit the message. For instance, there is no communication between a leader and two group members having a conversation on the other side of the room, even if the leader is observing their behavior. The two group members do not intend their conversation to transmit any messages to the leader. Nor is the leader intending to transmit any messages to the two members through his or her observation. However,

the leader can use gestures to help transmit messages to a specific audience as a part of the communication process.

Goal of Communication

Acceptance of the sender's message by the receiver is the goal of communication. If the receiver understands the meaning of a message asking for action, but fails to act, the goal of communication is not achieved. But if the receiver responds to the message by taking appropriate action, the goal of the communication is achieved.

Adapted from *Communication: Process and Leadership* by J. L. Tait, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University, 1968.

SMCR Communications Model

Human beings learn to communicate at a very early age—even before learning to talk. As a result, adults tend to forget that communication is a very complex process.

Understanding the communication process might improve the effectiveness of communication. The Communications Model is one way of visualizing the process for analysis and understanding.

Modern communication involves four main factors: a source or sender, a message, a channel and a receiver. The sender-message-channel-receiver view helps us consider some of the psychological and sociological factors that determine the success or failure of communication.

(S) Sender: All communication must come from some person, group or source. The following determines how the sender operates in the communication process.

- **Skills—**the development of one's ability to think, write, speak, act, etc.
- **Attitudes—**the sender's attitudes about an audience or a certain subject, and personal biases one has that might affect communication.
- **Knowledge—**the sender's knowledge and understanding about a subject, the audience and the communication process itself.
- **Situation—**the social-cultural context in which one is placed or chooses to operate: the given community, friends or associates, membership in social and business groups, and how "things are done or not done" for a given group, community, state, etc.

The communication process starts with a sender—someone starting communication. Many things act upon this source to influence communication. Everyone will benefit from examining themselves as senders, and evaluating the communications they receive by considering who is sending the message.

(M) Message: The sender puts communication in the form of a message. This can be thought of as:

- **Facts and/or fiction—**the content of facts, ideas, fiction and other elements as the substance of the communication.
- **Treatment—**how the contents will be presented, such as written or spoken in a certain language. Will it be acted or presented in a way that is in line with the following?
- **Organization—**the way in which the elements of the communication are structured or arranged.
- **Ease of understanding**—the readability, understandability, use or non-use of technical words or lingo.
- **Style—**newspaper, theatrical, radio, TV, feature style, etc. This refers to the individualism of the communication.

The message always reflects the skill, attitudes, knowledge and situation of the sender unless special steps are taken to prevent this. It should be prepared with the needs of the receiver in mind.

(C) Channel: Once a sender has created a message, a decision must be made concerning what channel will be used to present the message to the receiver(s). Communication varies widely from newspapers to radio to theater to tantrums at home. It is easier to classify channels under the physical senses used by media:

- **Seeing**—all written or visual communication is read, using the seeing channel.
- **Hearing**—spoken or other communication involving sound, using the hearing channel.
- **Touching**—when the message can be handled, it often carries a more vivid impression.
- **Smelling**—this channel requires the receiver to be near the sender and involves the olfactory glands.
- **Tasting**—a message that can be sampled or consumed carries a vivid impression.

It is interesting to note that many media use more than one channel. For instance, TV uses seeing and hearing while a cooking demonstration could easily use all five.

Communication is usually more effective when as many channels as possible are involved without confusion. It can easily be seen that when smelling and tasting are involved, the number of receivers reached is much smaller than when only channels such as seeing or hearing are involved. However, touching, smelling and tasting are often more effective.

(R) Receiver: The final link in the process is the receiver—the person or persons the sender had in mind when communication was started. All of the factors that influence the sender also operate on the receiver.

- **Skills**—acquired ability to read, listen, interpret, understand, etc.
- **Attitudes**—developed about the sender and the situation, the ideas or facts in the communication, etc., as well as personal attitudes concerning the learning or receiving situation.
- **Knowledge**—acquired about the subject of the communication, related topics, on words and ideas used by the sender, etc.
- **Situation**—interpreted in relation to the customs and habits of the receiver's community, way of life, recent events related to the communication.

An important note about the receiver concerns reward. Most likely attention and a favorable reaction to communication will occur if a reward or obvious reason exists for doing so. Rewards might be satisfaction of an interest, fulfilling a curiosity, a new idea, praise, a method that would save time or work, a chance to participate, economic return, status, or others.

The communication model really has just one use, and that is to convey how communication takes place by pointing out some of the factors that can help or hinder the effectiveness of communication.

The model can assist those individuals who have trouble being understood, getting their point across or understanding others, if they will trace their communication efforts through the model. Stronger and more effective communication techniques can be developed from this process. See Table 1.

Communications Congruence

The SMCR model provides an excellent framework for looking at communication between senders and receivers. In addition to the factors listed on that model, it is helpful to look at how individuals communicate to other individuals. That is, what the specific ways are that the human body gets its message to another. This is done in a number of ways.

Words: The most commonly used method is the use of words from the appropriate language. This may be in the form of written or verbal communications. Words are defined in even the most elementary dictionary with more than one meaning. When communicating with words, senders have one intent as they send a message to someone else. However, if they don't define the word as the receiver does, the communicator can be very ineffective because both define the same word differently. A key concept to remember is that **meanings are in people, not in words.** Many of the problems faced in misunderstandings are based on this concept. Ask for clarification, for more information or for a re-definition when communications are not going well and word usage is the problem. These are all opportunities to use feedback to keep communications open and try to understand each other.

Tone of Voice: The words used may communicate a certain meaning verbally. If someone says they are having a good time, but their voice has a sharpness about it and does not sound very joyful, others may be confused as to what is really meant. Is it the words that they should believe or is it the tone of voice? Hearing one's own voice can be helpful in determining if the tone, as well as words, help express feelings. A tape recorder is a good means for practicing voice tones to achieve congruence.

Gestures and Body Language: How one stands, crosses arms, holds head, points fingers and crosses legs are all gestures that researchers report give clues to others on the sender's meaning and feelings. Sometimes a stance conveys immediately that a person is not willing to change whatever is being considered. Sometimes people are deliberate with gestures, but most times gestures are unconsciously used in given situations. In most cases, these are cultural gestures "modeled" from those around, such as parents and friends. Gestures communicate things to others that are unintentional or unconsciously communicated that the sender would just as soon not communicate. Using a video recorder and replay system is

an excellent means of evaluating one's own gestures and body language.

Expression: Closely aligned with gestures are facial expressions. In fact, some researchers place these in the same category. Although there are some cultural differences, facial expressions are pretty much universal. A smile is a smile in any culture, and such expressions as anger, fear, surprise, sadness and disgust seem to be universally the same.

As stated earlier, the same is not true for gestures. Such gestures as the circled thumb and forefinger that means "A-OK" in the U.S. is an unprintable insult in Southern European countries. Facial expressions give meanings to words, but if the sender is frowning when he or she says they are happy, what does the receiver believe, the frown or the words?

Touch: The need for touch has long been recognized as important in raising children and in many animal species for proper adjustment. Additional research indicates that it is as important for adults as it is for children, and that all have need for touch expression. During emotional stress periods, touch may be the only way to soothe or comfort a person. At times this has been culturally oriented, and in some instances has sexual overtones, but in most cases, it should be recognized as a valid and effective means of communicating with people. Everyone has a need for some form of physical contact for security, self-worth and other personal satisfaction.

Appearance: Certain expectations of people probably develop because of cultural socialization. Sometimes a person's appearance is associated with a profession, or sex role, or sometimes age. Certain judgments are made from looking at people's appearance and dress. What response would result if the minister showed up in flowered shirt and shorts to deliver a sermon from the pulpit, or if the clothing textile "expert" showed up to give a presentation on clothing and styles in sweatshirt and cutoffs? It would be hard to accept the person's appearance as consistent with the image of the role they are supposed to be playing. Factors such as a beards, makeup, hairstyles or mod clothing have different values to people. How one looks may not be in keeping with the job or role others expect. Miscommunication then occurs.

Other factors in individual communication, such as smell, may affect the receiver but are not major influences. Congruence is the key. To be effective in communicating, individuals need to recognize that words, body language, tone of voice, expressions, touch, appearance and smell all communicate the message. If all of these factors are not communicating the same message to the receiver, it will result in mixed signals and the receiver will not be sure what to believe. All individual communication factors need to say the same thing. If in doubt, wait for feedback to be more effective in communicating with others.

Forms of Nonverbal Communication

Body gestures and expressions are two of the more common and interesting forms of nonverbal communication. They are also subject to a wide variety of meanings and interpretations. Gestures and expressions (movements) can be intentional or unintentional and may communicate emotions, moods, motives and intentions better than words; even though they often accompany words. Here are some common gestures. See if you know what they mean. Take 10 minutes to define the meanings of these actions. Your instructor will provide you with an answer sheet to check your responses.

Wink

Extension of arms

A-OK

Circle of motion around ear with finger

Raise eyebrows

Blowing a kiss

Wrinkle brow

Patting a child on head

Smile

Putting hands on hips

Frown

Clapping hands

Wrinkle nose

Yawning

Blushing

Holding stomach

Wringing hands

Mouth dropping open

Twiddling thumbs

Clearing throat

Thumbs down

Pounding on table

Walking style

Wrinkling forehead

Posture

Tears

Avoiding eye contact

Twirling or chewing hair, rubbing beard, chewing a pen or pipe

Silence

Jabbing in ribs with elbow

Shrug of shoulders

Covering mouth with hand

Wiggling foot

Hands in pocket

Biting nails

Biting lip

Finger to lips

Looking at watch

Snapping fingers

Standing up as person enters room

Gritting teeth

Holding hands

Smacking lips

Nodding head when passing someone

Sticking out tongue

Rubbing chin

Pulling ear

Pacing the floor

Rolling eyes

Arm around someone

Waving hand

Cupping hand behind ear

Shaking a fist

Bent elbow with chin resting on palm of hand

Tapping a foot

Taking a few steps backwards

Extending index and second finger

Icy silence

Gently tucking finger in mouth between teeth

Absence of handshake

Scratching head

Bloodshot eyes

Hugging oneself

Sighing

Hanging one's head

Closeness to another

Constant eye contact

Folding arms and rocking them

Holding nose

Sniffing neck

Handshake

Pat on back

Forms of Nonverbal Communication Answer Sheet

Body gestures and expressions are two of the more common and interesting forms of nonverbal communication. They are also subject to a wide variety of meanings and interpretations. Gestures and expression (movements) can be intentional or unintentional and may communicate emotions, moods, motives and intentions better than words; even though they often accompany words. Here are some meanings for common gestures.

Wink—a pass, flirt, tongue in cheek.

A-OK—ok, I can handle it, "it's finished."

Raise eyebrows—chastisement, disbelief, dissatisfied.

Wrinkle brow—puzzlement, amazement, dissatisfaction.

Smile—a pass, humor, satire, ridicule, happy, affection, love.

Frown—dissatisfied, ill, unhappy.

Wrinkling nose—odor, itch, disapproval.

Blushing—mad, embarrassed, caught in the act, discrepancy in actions, innocence.

Wringing hands—nervous, anxious, greedy.

Twiddling thumbs—bored, impatient.

Thumbs down—denunciation, disgust.

Walking style—tired, sexy, in hurry, frightened.

Posture—relaxed, nervous, tired, unconcerned.

Avoiding eye contact—shifty, guilty, shy, wanting to terminate conversation.

Silence—sick, disappointed, thinking, insulting, uninterested, angry, unfriendly.

Shrug of shoulders—nonchalance, indifferent, "I don't care," "I don't know."

Wiggling foot—bored, nervous, impatient.

Biting nails—bored, nervous, fear.

Finger to lips—silence.

Snapping fingers—"I'm cool," wanting to get attention, service, hurry, get on the ball, cease what you're doing, I've got an idea.

Gritting teeth—anger, toughness, rage, nervousness, pain.

Smacking lips—good taste.

Sticking out tongue—teasing, anger, flirt, dislike.

Pulling ear—"You're pulling my leg," disbelief.

Rolling eyes—disgust, "Wow!," "Oh brother!"

Cupping hand behind ear—repeat, louder, "I can't believe what you're saying."

Shaking a fist—anger, power, threat, prepared to fight.

Tapping a foot—boredom, impatience, parents let children know they are doing something wrong.

Extending index and second finger (in V form)—victory, love, peace, two.

Gently tucking finger in mouth between teeth— innocence, shyness, pretense of innocence or shyness.

Scratching head—puzzlement, amazement, dandruff, thinking.

Hugging oneself—pleasure, happiness, mocking someone, cold.

Holding nose—something stinks, dislike of social situation.

Handshake—friendship, conclusion of encounter, sealing a contract, agreement, congratulations, hello, goodbye.

Pat on back—congratulations, consolation, sincerity, you're ok.

Extension of arms—come to me, endearment, intention of security.

Circle of motion around ear with finger—"You're crazy," "I don't believe you," "You're exaggerating."

Blowing a kiss—love, endearment, goodbye.

Patting a child on head—approval, love.

Putting hands on hips—disgust, dissatisfaction.

Clapping hands—approval, enjoyment, praise, hurry up.

Yawning—sleepy, bored, tired.

Holding stomach—pain, sick, disgust.

Mouth dropping open—awe, disbelief, surprise.

Clearing throat—get attention, caught overstepping bounds, calling someone down.

Pounding on table—anger, emphasis.

Wrinkling forehead—pain, attentiveness, thinking, questioning.

Tears—happy, sad, grief, pretense for sympathy.

Twirling or chewing hair, rubbing beard, chewing pen or pipe—nervousness, unsure of oneself, embarrassment.

Jabbing in ribs with elbow—sign of comrades, mutual secret sharing, cue for someone to stop doing something, flirting with opposite sex.

Covering mouth with hand—surprise, shock, indication of inappropriate behavior, shame, embarrassment.

Hands in pocket—casualness, indifference, unconcern, boredom, trying to suppress one's gesture.

Biting lip—concentration, nervousness, thinking.

Looking at watch—I'm in a hurry, wish to end conversation, time for you to go, time for me to go.

Standing up—courtesy, respect, respect for age or authority.

Holding hands—security of affection, closeness.

Nodding head when you pass someone—a nonverbal hello, shows you recognize person.

Rubbing chin—puzzling, thinking.

Pacing the floor—impatient, thinking, nervous.

Arm around someone—concern, sympathy, love, affection, friends.

Waving hand—hello, goodbye, get attention, wait a minute, stop.

Bent elbow with chin resting on palm of hand—bored, attentive, thinking, relaxed.

Taking a few steps backwards—want to leave, other person is too close.

Icy silence—hostile, insult, extremely upset.

Absence of handshake—hostility, unfriendliness.

Bloodshot eyes—been drinking, been crying, has a cold, been sleeping, eye strain.

Sighing—bored, displeasure, blissfulness, satisfaction, show of affection, relief.

Closeness to another—

Close: love, affection, concern, sympathy.

Far: not wanting conversation, indifference, anger, hostility, suspicious.

Constant eye contact—person is self-confident, sexually attracted to you, interested in person or conversation, being polite, respect for another.

Sniffing neck—preliminary gesture to complimenting fragrance, affection.

Communication Patterns

These are the communication patterns most frequently used (see Figure 1).

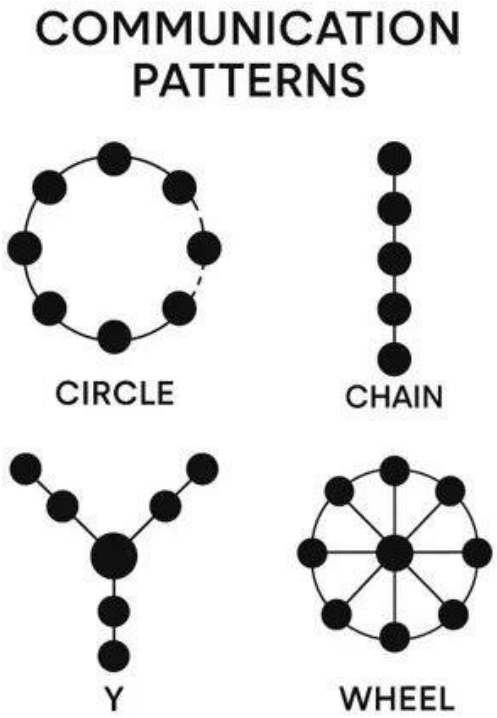


Figure 1. Four Typical Communication Patterns.

- CIRCLE
- CHAIN
- Y
- WHEEL

The large dot represents the sender or the leader, while the smaller dots indicate the receivers or other group members.

Each of the four patterns presents one basic and serious communications problem: no group member communicates directly with all the other group members. Three of the patterns do not allow each member to communicate directly with the leader. In the **circle**, each group member communicates only with the person next to him or her. A message from the leader is likely to be changed considerably by the time it completes the circle and gets back to him or her.

With the **chain**, the same problem exists as in the circle. The last person may get a different message than that which the leader transmitted. An even worse problem here is that the sender gets no feedback; he or she does not know how much the message is distorted.

The **Y** pattern is further complicated. It has all the communication problems of the circle and chain, with an additional one of having three separate groups that can communicate only through the leader.

The **wheel** is the best of the four. The leader can communicate directly with each group member. However, all of the group members cannot communicate with each other. This pattern can be used in all groups that are small enough to allow direct communication between the leader and each member. Larger groups are almost forced to use the other patterns or modifications of them. When the wheel pattern cannot be used, the best insurance against message distortion is prompt feedback. Remember, the leaders are responsible for implementing and utilizing feedback.

Leaders should note, however, that as a group grows in numerical size, feedback becomes more formalized. Although the goal of communication is to get the receiver to take appropriate action. Other means of feedback from group members is needed besides overt action. By checking the meaning of the message or getting an opinion of the action informally provides feedback.

Several methods can be used to get such feedback. Among the methods are evaluation sheets, verbal reports from audience listening teams, question cards, or reports and questions from individual members.

If a group is small enough that each member can communicate with every other member, they have an ideal situation. Communication will be very informal and the sender's goal of acceptance of the transmitted message is more likely to be achieved. This modified wheel pattern diagrams such a communicative process.

Adapted from *Communication: Process and Leadership* by J. L. Tait, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University, 1968.

Table 1. SMCR Communications Process Model

SENDER ---->	MESSAGE ---->	CHANNEL ---->	RECEIVER ---->
Communication Skills	Content	Sensory	Communication Skills
Attitudes	Treatment	Institutionalized	Attitudes
Knowledge			Knowledge
Situation			Situation
<---------- FEEDBACK ---------->			

Acknowledgment

Original article written by Elizabeth B. Bolton, professor emeritus, UF/IFAS Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Gainesville, FL.

Reference

Tait, J. L. 1968. *Communication: Process and Leadership*. Iowa State University Cooperative Extension Service.

[1] This document is FCS9066, one of a series of the UF/IFAS Department of Family Youth and Community Sciences. Original publication date September 1986. Revised January 2009, January 2012, June 2015, and July 2025. Visit the Ask IFAS website at https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu/ for the currently supported version of this publication.

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