



ASSIST-U YOUR EAP 800.750.5595

COMMUNICATING AT WORK

Almost every conflict, misunderstanding, problem or mistake begins with a communication problem. Communication is the basic thread that ties us together; we have different ways of communicating our feelings, our needs, our wants and our ideas. The better we are at communicating, the more effective we will become with our co-workers and our customers. Clear, honest and direct communication can also reduce some of our stress. Let's look at some very basics:

COURTESY

This is a **MUST**. Courtesy has been called many things – pleasantness, politeness, thoughtfulness, tact, diplomacy. Simply defined it means just being nice to people, whether they are co-workers or customers. **BUT**, let's face it – being courteous is not always easy. It can be one of our biggest challenges. Here are a few examples:

The Complainer

This customer or co-worker always finds something wrong. They will tell you why an idea or solution won't work. They blame others for their need or want not being fulfilled.

The Controller

The "I don't care what you think or want, do it my way, now". He or she may suggest impossible solutions or make unreasonable requests or demands.

The Exploder

Despite your best efforts, this person makes irate protests so everyone can hear. We've all had them. They're simply a part of our daily business lives. You achieve a real victory when you successfully deal with such a disagreeable situation by being pleasant, courteous and efficient. It makes everyone a "winner", the organization, the employees and most important, the customer. Remember that every contact either strengthens or weakens your relationship with the other person be it your customer or your co-worker.

Ironically, the employee who stands his or her ground with **dignity** and **courtesy** is most often the one who gets customers' and co-workers' respect. You can use the following techniques to deal with overly demanding customers and co-workers and still retain their business and cooperation.

- **Don't get into a dispute or argument.** Remember when a customer makes an unreasonable demand, he or she is usually aware of it. The person may expect to negotiate. Winning an argument with an upset

person is like a slap in the face. You may win that battle but lose the person.

- **Help customers keep their dignity.** Explain your reasons politely and reasonably. Offer explanations why instead of simply saying “It’s our policy.”
- **Appeal to their sense of what’s fair.** Explain that you’re eager to do what is fair and right. Let the customer know that you regard him or her as a person of integrity (without frowning or sounding patronizing). This could influence the person to do what is best.
- **Be firm.** This doesn’t mean being ridged or obstinate. It does mean stating the facts and not losing your temper.
- **Tell them what you can do.** This will often take the sting out of saying no. The alternatives you may suggest just might satisfy the customer.

It is not easy to say no, but when the circumstances justify it, you may have no choice. One thing we do know for sure – conceding to one unreasonable request usually means an encore.

“**May I?**” Give your customer authority by asking permission.

“**As you know.**” Implies knowledge.

“**Please**” A great soother in human relations.

“**A person of your standing**” Although we may not know just what that means, people believe or hope they have it.

Be courteous and be a great listener. Ineffective listening is acknowledged to be one of the primary contributors to poor communication and poor customer relations.

For further information or help, please call your Employee Assistance Program, Assist U.