

# FOCUS

A Herff Jones IMPACT Resource For Advisers

June, 2005

## JUNE FOCUS

### Communication

Daniel Webster said, *"If all of my talents were to be taken from me by some unscrutable providence, and I had my choice of keeping but one, I would unhesitatingly ask to be allowed to keep the power of speaking, for through it I would quickly recover all the rest."*

Good communication skills are one of the most important things that an adviser can possess. Today many people rate the ability to communicate as the number one key to success. As an adviser you must be able to communicate, but also to teach that skill to the students in your activities program.

Characteristics of a good communicator include:

- ◆ Cooperative
- ◆ Kind and considerate
- ◆ Patient
- ◆ Many interests
- ◆ Pleasant
- ◆ Fair and impartial
- ◆ Sense of humor
- ◆ Good disposition
- ◆ Interested in the problems of others
- ◆ Gives recognition and praise
- ◆ Flexible
- ◆ Good understanding of subject

The worst communicators:

- ◆ Are sarcastic
- ◆ Never smile
- ◆ Do not explain things clearly
- ◆ Get angry
- ◆ Have favorites
- ◆ Pick on certain students
- ◆ Act superior and aloof
- ◆ Are over-bearing
- ◆ Are not friendly

Many times advisers have to speak in front of groups, whether it is a club meeting, a presentation to the school board about a project, or a company that you are asking to be a business partner.

There are several things that will guarantee a dull, boring, and dry presentation. They are:

1. Showing an organizational chart and telling the history of your group, but apologizing in advance for doing it
2. Explaining why the subject has value to the audience, but articulating it so that the audience has no reason to pay attention
3. Telling the audience more than they need to know
4. Insulting your audience by reading to them from

Powerpoint slides or other visuals. They will feel that you could have just given them the handout

5. Letting your audience know that you are not enthusiastic about your topic.

**Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said, "Great is the art of beginning, but greater is the art of ending."**

Here are some other things to avoid while giving a presentation:

1. Do not tell a joke unless you are naturally humorous and it relates directly to your subject
2. Do not give dictionary definitions of words
3. Do not say, "I am honored to address the \_\_\_\_\_. It sounds stereotypical and insincere
4. Do not think small, think big
5. Do not apologize for anything.

**This newsletter is a joint effort of Jackie Burch and Herff Jones, Inc.**



Whether you are doing a presentation or just talking to a few students, you still have to be a good communicator. A Yale University study determined the 12 most persuasive words in the English language are:

1. **You**
2. **Money**
3. **Save**
4. **New**
5. **Results**
6. **Easy**
7. **Health**
8. **Safety**
9. **Love**
10. **Discovery**
11. **Proven**
12. **Guarantee**

The most powerful word combinations in the English language are:

1. **Thank you**
2. **Would you please...?**
3. **What do you think?**
4. **I am proud of you.**

Many times you are interrupted when you are trying to make a point. It can blow your entire train of thought. Here are two approaches to handling these situations:

1. “The answer is yes and I’ll explain that in just a few minutes.”

2. Just give me a few more minutes and I’ll take all of your questions.”

When you are answering questions, listen carefully so you will know exactly what you are answering. Always repeat the question before you answer so that everyone, even those sitting in the back, will hear. Repeating the question also gives you extra time to formulate your answer. Look directly at the person who is asking the question, but when you answer break that eye contact and direct your attention to the entire audience.

The most common mistakes when answering questions include:

1. **Answering too much.** Keep your answers brief and to the point. Do not answer a question with another speech.
2. **Answering too soon.** Let the person ask the entire question before you answer.
3. **Dialogue with only one person.** Do not let one person dominate the question session. Offer to speak with them later if they still have questions.
4. **If you do not know or not sure of your answer, do not bluff.** Be prompt to admit that you do not know the answer.

Calvin Coolidge once said, “*I have never been hurt by anything I did not say.*” When speaking to your students or another group, there are some distractions that will take the

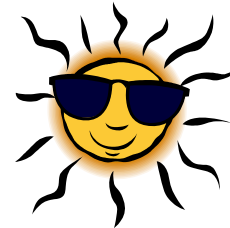
minds of the audience off of the subject. These should be remembered in classroom teaching as well.

1. Rattling keys or coins in pocket
2. Habitual and continuing use of “uhs” or “ahs”
3. Tugging your ear or lip biting
4. Popping the top of a marker
5. Twirling hair
6. Playing with a pencil

Good communicators can touch and change the lives of people. With a little effort everyone can improve their communication skills.

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**HAVE A GREAT  
SUMMER!**



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