Communications Skill Assessment

BUS600

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For this assignment I used the communication skills assessment tool located on the MindTools (MindTools Editorial Team, 2016) website. The assessment is comprised of fifteen questions that measure the frequency with which I exhibit certain behaviors. At the conclusion of the question and answer segment I was presented with and overall score that was further interpreted into various sublevels of communications characteristics. In my specific case I was defined as a capable communicator, however my style of communication could be problematic at times. Additionally, the method for determining my intended message, as well as its presentation were discussed to identify my strengths and weaknesses within the constructs of both the assessment as well as the supplied information. At the end a culminating section titled “Key Points” provided general feedback and information applicable to the communication process, tying all of the results together into a neatly packaged statement relating to the importance of proper communication.

Surprisingly the gaps in my communication style (as identified by this assessment) relate to message planning, crafting my message, and receiving and interpreting messages. It is important to note that at the onset I believed these to be my strongest areas relative to communication, so this assessment inspired a deeper level of investigation as to why the results opposed my original belief.

According to the assessment I either convey information that is not essential to the receiver in an attempt to provide an enhanced level of understanding. This clutters my message and fosters a scenario where the receiver is left to determine exactly which points are important to me and which are not. Additionally, the receivers time is spent enveloped in a time consuming manner which reduces their level of efficiency. Assuming that the results of this assessment are consistent I would benefit from a detailed plan of what I intended to convey throughout my communication to ensure the message was adequately sent, while reducing unnecessary details or unrelated elements. Preparing a pre-communication script of sorts could assist in assuring that “messages are prepared and updated incrementally throughout formulation” (Brown-Schmidt, S. & Konopka A., 2015, p. 838), thus reducing the opportunity for the addition of unnecessary information being included in my messages.

Another area of improvement is related to the manner in which I craft messages. Keeping in mind who the audience is that will be receiving my messages is a key component to this concept. I can admit that often times I simply communicate my thoughts or opinions in a way that is convenient to me, without great regard for the audience I am sending information to. Whether this is a direct byproduct of the many years spent in the military or simply a personality trait, I will need to place a greater emphasis upon this step. In crafting a message that will be memorable to others, Greg Beaubien suggests “using comparisons that grab attention and make a new product or idea understandable” (Beaubien, 2012, p. 18). Undeniably I am not introducing a new product in my current capacity, however I would submit that comparing concepts and/or ideas in a relatable way could guide the intended meaning of my messages in a more positive direction.

Lastly the way in which I receive messages from others is another area of default. Looking back, I can identify with situations that I presumed to understand what others were saying and even the implied unspoken communications. I attribute this to the environment of the military and the value that is placed upon what I call preparatory hearing. That is, hearing not only what is being said, but more importantly what another may say resulting from the direction of action you choose while carrying out the duties from what was actually said. In other words, staying in front of what another might say next by assuming their thoughts based upon historical data and key points within previous conversations. While this may sound a bit convoluted I assure you it is a method of thinking and if mastered can attribute to great success in certain circles. Nevertheless, an approach more applicable to my current and future life would be to engage in active listening. Active listening involves the “reflection and summarizing, which takes the words of the speaker, and, without questioning or challenging the thought, condenses it, and offers it back, the listener can establish that they have heard and understood what has been said” (Bryant, L., 2006, para. 15). Clearly hearing what the sender is saying (or reading type or text) and providing feedback so that they might understand what you received. This provides clarity to the communication leading to a mutual understanding of the information being passed.

With all of the topics listed above the greatest opportunity for improvement is through the continued study of my own communication practices, the solicitation of feedback from those with whom I communicate, and a level of increased awareness during the communication process. As my new professional life begins communication will play a central role in how effective and successful I become. With a vast majority of my time being spent engaging with clients my ability to adequately communicate will determine the levels of success that I am able to reach. A continued focus on the improvement and quality of my communication style will attribute greatly to the increase of my communication capabilities.

Reference

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