

RESULTS-FOCUSED COMMUNICATION

EXPLORING THE INTERPERSONAL GAP

Have you ever experienced how, in trying to communicate with someone, your best intentions ended



in disaster? Or how, at other times, you achieve great outcomes you didn't even intend? Given that the most

basic and recurring problems in social life result from the difference between what we intend to communicate and the actual effect of that communication on the receiver, it just might be time to grapple with this 'gap'.

The Interpersonal Gap refers to the degree of congruence between one person's communication intentions and the effect produced in the receiver of the communication. If the effect is what was intended, the interpersonal gap has been bridged. If the effect is the opposite of what was intended, the interpersonal gap has increased.

"Intentions" are the wishes, wants, hopes, desires, and fears that lead to one's communication actions (and may also include motives of which one is unaware). We look at the outcome of our communication and

decide whether it is what we intended, as we can compare what we wished prior to communicating with the outcome achieved, and determine whether they match. Expressions of this might sound like: "that wasn't what I meant to do." Or, "yes, that's what I hoped would happen."

"I want Mary to like me," "I want Alexa to obey me," "I want Tony to realize that I know a great deal about this subject," are examples of intentions. Intentions may also be mixed: "I want Mary to know I like her, but I don't want to be embarrassed," "I want Tony to tell me I'm doing a good job, but I don't want to ask for it," "I would like Alexa to know how angry it makes me when she does that but I don't want to lose her respect."

Intending our intentions.

Intentions generally are private, and are known directly only to the communicator. I know my own intentions, but I must infer yours. You know your own intentions, but you must infer mine.

Even actions are communicative. This includes actions by the sender attempting to convey a message, whether or not it is received, as well as actions that the receiver responds to as messages, whether or not the sender intended them that way. "Impact" refers to a person's inner response to the communicating actions of another.

We may describe our impact (the impact the other person's communication had on us) by openly stating what feelings, thoughts or wants were aroused by their communication/action.

Unfortunately we are often unaware of our feelings, thoughts and wants even though they are influencing how we see the other person. As a result, we often label the other person and their communication in a way that expresses our feelings, thoughts and wants even though we aren't aware of doing this!

Adding complexity: coding a message.

The interpersonal gap contains two transformations: Encoding and Decoding. The communicator's actions are an encoded expression of his or her inner state. The receiver's inner response to the communicator's action is a result of the way they decode the communication/action. If the receiver decodes the communication in the same way that it was encoded, the communicator will have produced the intended effect.

One of the important objectives of the study of interpersonal communication is to help you become aware of the silent assumptions that influence how you encode and decode.

Achieving the results you intend.

In Results-Focused Communication, the actions that contribute the most to closing the Interpersonal Gap are learned and practiced. In it participants:

- Learn to communicate with clarity, intention and confidence using specific, advanced communication

skills.

- Build self-awareness and understanding of the kind of impact they have on others.
- Learn the responses that tend to escalate or de-escalate the level of intensity that forms the backdrop to communication interactions.
- Identify their typical communication response to intense situations and practice alternatives.
- Learn how to manage their reactivity to others in moments of intensity and seek, through inquiry and curiosity, to restore the communication flow.

Some of the skills covered in Results-Focused Communication that help close the communication gap are:

- **Self-awareness and description of Intention**
- **Inquiry about Impact**
- **Self-awareness and description of Impact**
- **Inquiry about Intention**

These skills are designed to *bridge* the Interpersonal Gap, and enable each person to understand the others experience of the communication.

For more information on how to host Results-Focused Communication for your team

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PROACTION ASSOCIATES
coachpb@comcast.net