Effective Communication in the Workplace

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Why Communication is so Important

Companies with high effectiveness in change management and communication are

3.5 times

more likely to significantly outperform their industry peers than firms that are not effective in these areas

Source: Willis Towers Watson. (2013). 2013-2014 Change and Communication ROI Study 10th anniversary Report. Retrieved from https://www.towerswatson.com/en-US/Insights/IC-Types/Survey-Research-Results/2013/12/2013-2014-change-and-communication-roi-study

The Time Spent on Communication

On average **80%** of the work day is spent communicating (Thrill Bovee, 2008)

We communicate through

- Speaking

- Listening

- Writing

- Reading

Source: Thrill J., Bovee, C. (2008). *Excellence in business communication* (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson

Organizational Awareness About Communication

70% of small-midsize businesses claim ineffective communication is their primary problem

Short Personal Biography

Education: Doctor of Philosophy in Communications, Regent University; Master of Arts in Communications and Bachelor of Arts in Communications, Pace University

Teaching: Purchase College, College of Mount Saint Vincent, Iona College, Westchester Community College, Naugatuck Valley Community College, Bronx Community College

Communications Corporate Consultant: online presence, brand management, digital advertising and PR, interpersonal/small group communication, and persuasive communication strategies

Presentation Topics

Communicating Negative Messages

Group Conflict Management

Persuasive Communication

Question

What are negative messages?

(or what is sometimes called bad news)

Bad News/ Negative Messages Defined

"Information that results in a perceived loss by the receiver, and it creates cognitive, emotional, or behavioral deficits in the receiver after receiving the news"

Source: Bies, R. J. (2013). The delivery of bad news in organizations: A framework for analysis. *Journal of Management*, *39*(1), 136-162.Retrieved from http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.918.3079&rep=rep1&type=pdf

How Professionals Feel About Negative Messages

"Delivering negative messages is one of the most difficult tasks facing business communicators" (Salerno, 1988)

Salerno, D. (1988). An interpersonal approach to writing negative messages. *The Journal of Business Communication (1973), 25*(1), 41-51. Retrieved from http://course.sdu.edu.cn/G2S/eWebEditor/uploadfile/20131201162905006.pdf

Politeness Theory

Politeness theory was first espoused in 1987 by Brown and Levinson

The two core assumptions are….

- people have a universal need to be treated with politeness
- people have two face needs

Positive Face Needs
The need to be admired and perceived positively

Negative Face Needs
The need to be autonomous and make our own choices

When both needs are met, compliance is more likely, conflict is less likely

Face Threats

Face threatening act- (FTA) when a message challenges the receiver's positive OR negative face needs.

Criticisms

Threatens positive face due to lack of admiration

- Performance reviews
- Work ethic
- Inadequate project/assignments

Advice

Threatens negative face because it constrains autonomy; Threatens positive face because it implies the receiver needs it to perform adequately

- Project prioritization
- Time management
- Specific advice on projects/assignments

Requests

Threatens negative face needs because it limits independence

- Project/ assignment
- Recertification
- Missing documents

Politeness Strategies

Positive Strategies to Meet Positive Face Needs	Negative Strategies to Meet Negative Face Needs
Acknowledgement of work/effort ("thanks for your time and effort on this project")	**Hedging** ("perhaps", "might", "could")
Common ground ("I understand the difficulties with....")	**Inclusive language** ("we", "us", "our")
Appreciation ("we value your work here"**)**	**Pessimism** ("you probably won't want to do this")
Optimism ("looking forward to hearing from you")	**Giving Deference/Respect-**("you would know more about this than I would")

Mock Example Context

Context: Joe has just realized that a colleague on his team, Ken, has let his certification lapse. Joe's corporate policy says all project contributors need an up to date certification. Joe has to send an email requesting Ken recertify.

See Mock Examples

Effective Mock Example Code: Positive Strategies and Negative Strategies

Acknowledgement	Ken, Thank you for your time and effort on Project A.
Common Ground	This project seems to be much bigger than any of us expected.
Giving Deference	You would know more about this than I would but
Inclusive language & Hedging	we think your required certification for project A might have expired.
Pessimism	We know this can be a bit time consuming and tedious
Request & Explanation	but when you have a chance in the next day or two, could you please take the online training program available here. When you are finished could you please send me your recertification number as all colleagues working on Project A need to have a current certification number in order to avoid monetary fines.
Appreciation	Thanks again and as always we value the creative work you have contributed to our department.
Optimism	The end of this project is in sight. Kindly, Joe

Explanations

- People do not feel as unfairly treated when an adequate explanation is provided. Thus they are more likely to accept the outcome (Bies & Shapiro,1987).

- Do not use "company policy" as an explanation

Source: Bies, R. J., & Shapiro, D. L. (1987). Interactional fairness judgments: The influence of causal accounts. *Social Justice Research*, *1*(2), 199-218.

Ineffective Mock Example

Ken,

It has come to my attention that your certification for project A has expired. To renew, please immediately go to the online training program available <u>here</u> and send me your recertification number when you have finished.

Thank you,

Joe

Question

Should You Apologize?

Apologies

No: Do NOT apologize if no one is at fault

Yes: When it is your fault, apologizing fosters feelings of trust and satisfaction and it demonstrates effective leadership (Palanski, M. E., & Yammarino, 2009)

Source: Palanski, M. E., & Yammarino, F. J. (2009). Integrity and leadership: A multi-level conceptual framework. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *20*(3), 405-420. Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/b433/0ee14c753ace54ccf67971b1c92ee88e8c92.pdf

Survey Results for the Preferred Channel to Deliver Bad & Good News

Preferred Channel for Delivering Bad News	Preferred Channel for Delivering Good News
Face to-Face 29%	Face-to-Face 36%
Letter 24%	Letter 8%
Email 22%	Email 21%
Phone 21%	Phone 32%

Source: Tassabehji, R., & Vakola, M. (2005). Business email: the killer impact. *Communications of the ACM*, *48*(11), 64-70. Retrieved from http://technologyandtiaras.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/CACM-2005.pdf

Verbal vs. Written Communication

Verbal Delivery (in-person, video conference, phone, etc.**)** Synchronous communication

Advantages
- Richer media: more non-verbal cues & immediate feedback

Disadvantages
- Emotions can hinder delivery
- Time consuming
- Unable to document communication
- Receiver cannot reference the message later

Written Delivery (email, text message, letters, etc.) Asynchronous communication

Advantages
- Craft messages more carefully
- Document the message
- Receiver can later reference the message
- Deliver the message to more people more efficiently

Disadvantages
- Leaner media: less non-verbal cues and no immediate feedback

Source: Cardon, P. (2018). *Business communication: Developing leaders for a networked world.* New York, New York: McGraw Hill

When to use Verbal and Written Communication

Verbal Delivery	Written Delivery
Need immediate feedback	Do not need immediate feedback
Less need for permanency	More of a need for permanency
More urgent	Less urgent
Likely to be misunderstood	Less likely to be misunderstood

*the higher the severity of bad news, the stronger the need to combine delivery methods. You should use verbal first (Cardon, 2018).

Source: Cardon, P. (2018). *Business communication: Developing leaders for a networked world.* New York, New York: McGraw Hill.

Group Conflict Management

Question

What is a conflict?

Conflict Defined

Conflict is any issue that causes a dispute or tension among group members and which prevents goals from being achieved.

Why Conflict Occurs

- **Communication-** misunderstandings; too much/too little communication
- **Structure-** the larger the group, the greater the likelihood of conflict
- **Personality-** different value systems and personality clashes
- **Tasks-** disagreements about ideas or opinions related to a task

Question

Is conflict always a bad thing?

Conflict Aftermath

+	Positive Outcomes of Conflict	- Problem solving & sense of achievement - Human connection & improved relationships - Improved communication
-	Negative Outcomes of Conflict	- Lower job satisfaction & productivity - Higher burnout - Increase in sick leave rates - Resentment

Conflict Management Strategies

Strategies	Your value of your personal Goal	Your value of the other person's goal	Benefits	Drawbacks
Accommodating: giving in to the other person	Low	High	Helps preserve relationships	Long term use can result in power imbalance
Avoiding: temporarily ignoring the conflict	Low	Low	Can provide more time to consider the issue	Can be perceived as not caring
Compromising: both parties giving up a little of what they want	Medium	Medium	Expedites resolution	Can limit new creative options
Collaborating: devising new ideas both agree on	High	High	Makes both parties feel valued	Time consuming
Competing: disregarding others	High	Low	Effective when a quick decision is needed	Can strain relationship & diminish commitment

Persuasive Communication

Question

What is persuasion?

Persuasion Defined

Persuasion is a communication process in which the communicator seeks to elicit a desired action

Source: Anderson, K. (1971). Persuasion Theory and Practice: Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon
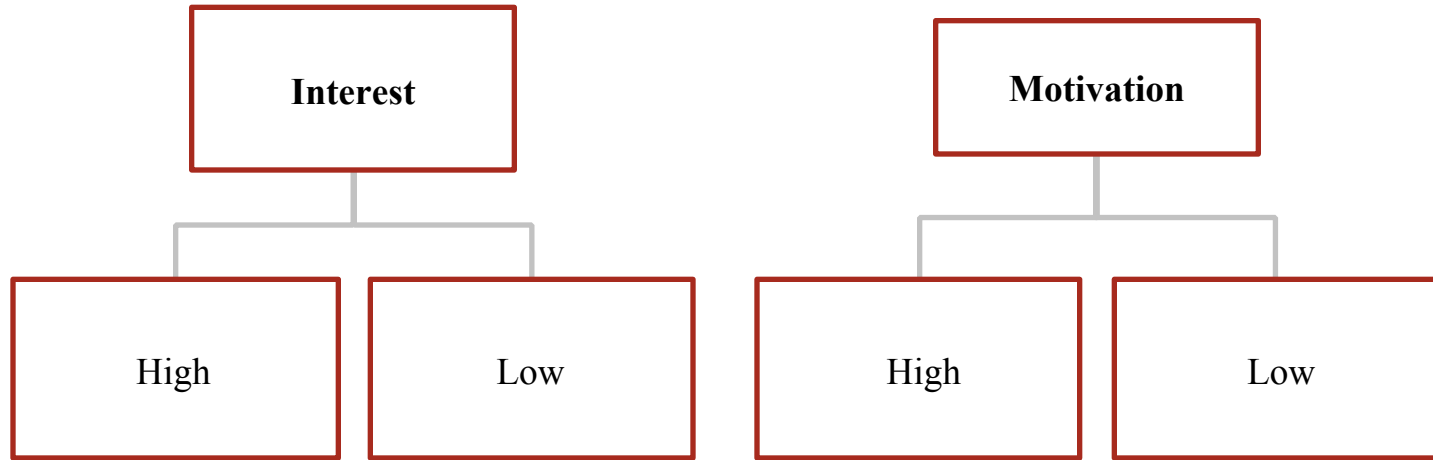
Elaboration Likelihood Model

A general theory on attitude change and persuasion created by Petty and Cacioppo
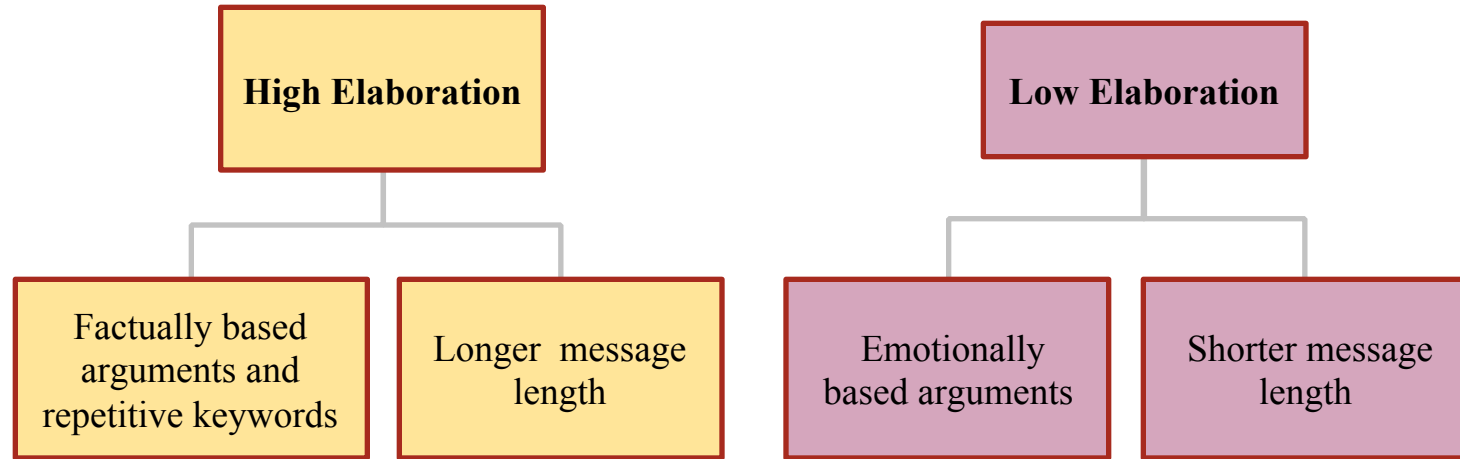
This theory attempts to explain persuasion through three areas

1. How receivers initially process a persuasive message
2. How senders elaborate on a message
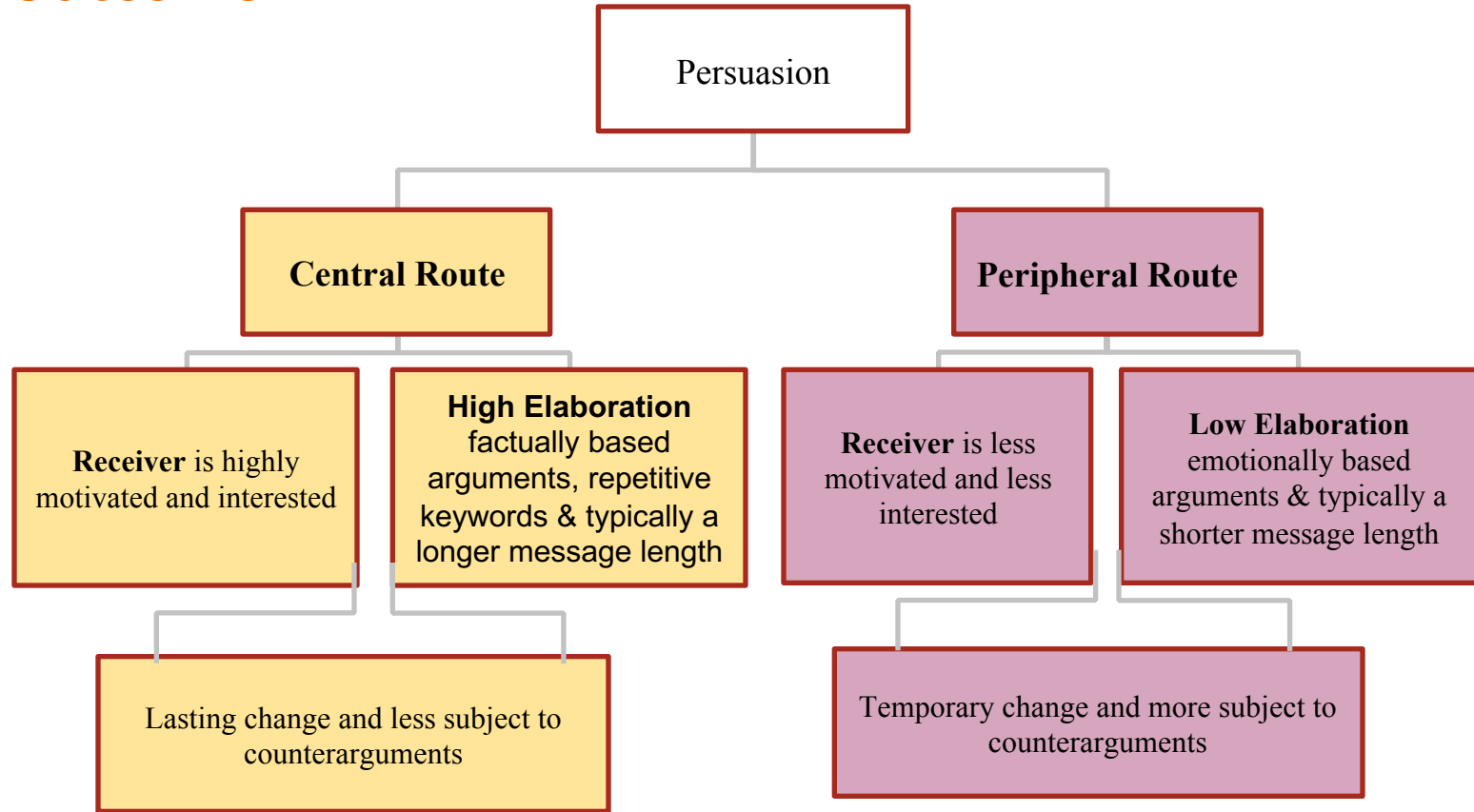3. The likelihood of the outcome based on the first two

How Receivers Process a Persuasive Message

How Senders Elaborate on a Message

High Elaboration

Factually based arguments and repetitive keywords

Longer message length

Low Elaboration

Emotionally based arguments

Shorter message length

The Outcome

Persuasion

Central Route

Receiver is highly motivated and interested

High Elaboration factually based arguments, repetitive keywords & typically a longer message length

Lasting change and less subject to counterarguments

Peripheral Route

Receiver is less motivated and less interested

Low Elaboration emotionally based arguments & typically a shorter message length

Temporary change and more subject to counterarguments

Study Done on Preferred Channel for Persuasive Communication

Preferred Channel for Persuasive Communication
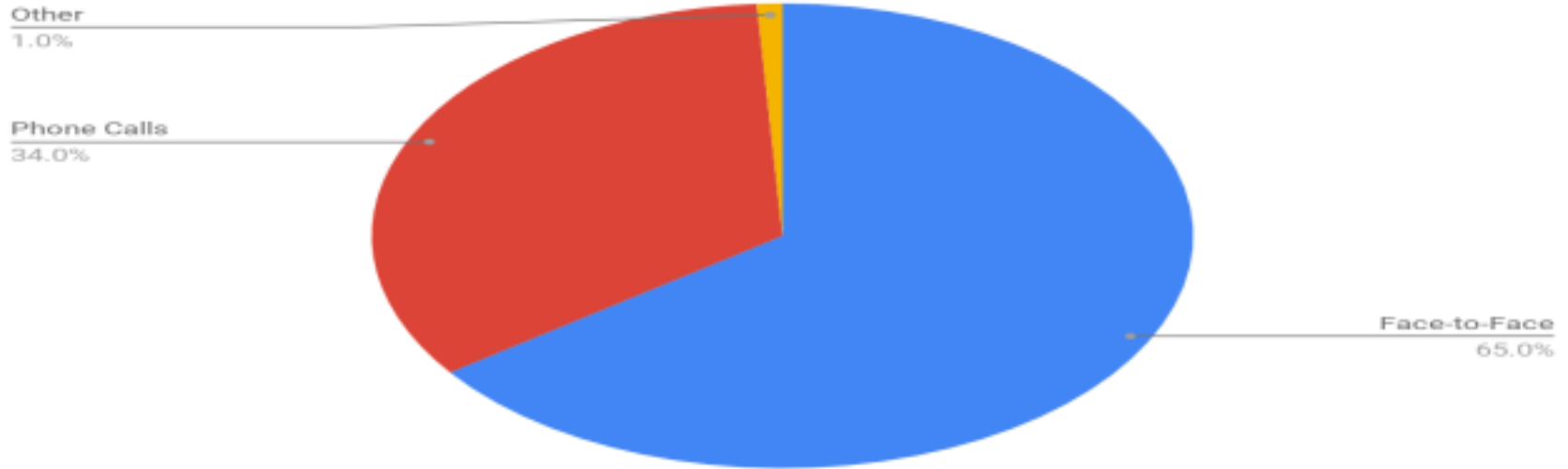
Other
1.0%

Phone Calls
34.0%

Face-to-Face
65.0%

Non-Verbal Cues That Make you More Persuasive

- **Taking up More Space** can show confidence
- **Mirroring & Matching** your colleague's actions can lead to a rapport (i.e. when they lean back, you lean back)
- **Open palms** can show honesty
- **Steeple pose** can show power, authority, and confidence but should NOT be done initially in conversations when you first meet because it can come off as arrogant

Non-Verbal Cues That Make you Less Persuasive

- **Adaptors** are behaviors that meet a personal need as one adapts to the specific situation such as tapping your pen or playing with jewelry/clothes
- **Finger pointing** makes you appear as though you are losing control of the situation & can be perceived as threatening
- **Constant eye contact** makes you appear as though you are trying too hard to be convincing & can make receivers feel uncomfortable
- **Arm crossing** can show lack of confidence. The higher the hand is on the arm the more uncomfortable you appear
- **Self-touch gesture-** repeatedly touching your face or hands can make you appear nervous

Key Takeaways of Negative Messages

Politeness Theory

- Positive Face Needs (the need to be perceived positively)

- Negative Face Needs (the need to make our own choices)

Method of Delivery

The higher the severity of bad news- the stronger the need to combine written and verbal delivery methods

Key Takeaways of Group Conflict Management

5 Conflict Management Strategies
1. Avoiding
2. Accommodating
3. Compromising
4. Collaborating
5. Competing

Using them depends on two factors
1. Your value of your personal goal
2. Your value of the other person's goal

Key Takeaways of Persuasive Communication

The Central Route Processing in the ELM Model

- Receiver is highly motivated and highly interested

- Factually based arguments, repeating keywords & typically a longer message

- This route leads to lasting change and is less subject to counterarguments

The Peripheral Route Processing in the ELM Model

- Receiver is less motivated and less interested

- Emotionally based arguments & typically a shorter message

- This route leads to temporary change and is more subject to counterarguments

Key Takeaways of Persuasive Communication

Non-verbal Cues That Make you More Persuasive

- Taking up more space
- Mirror & match
- Open palms
- Steeple pose

Non-verbal Cues That Make you Less Persuasive

- Adaptors
- Finger pointing
- Constant eye contact
- Arm crossing
- Self-touch gestures

The Importance of Communication

"Communication is no longer a soft function. It drives business performance and success".

Source: Willis Towers Watson. (2013). 2013-2014 Change and Communication ROI Study 10 anniversary Report. Retrieved from
https://www.towerswatson.com/en-US/Insights/IC-Types/Survey-Research-Results/2013/12/2013-2014-change-and-communication-roi-study